DO TERRORISTS WIN?

REBELS' USE OF TERRORISM AND CIVIL WAR OUTCOMES

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Abstract
How effective is terrorism? This question has generated lively scholarly debate and is of obvious importance to policy makers. Most existing studies of terrorism are not well-equipped to answer this question, however, as they lack an appropriate comparison. This paper compares the outcomes of civil wars to assess whether rebel groups that use terrorism fare better than those who eschew this tactic. I evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of terrorism relative to other tactics used in civil war. Because terrorism is not a tactic employed at random, I first briefly explore empirically which groups use terrorism. Controlling for factors that may affect both the use of terrorism and war outcomes, I find that while civil wars involving terrorism last longer than other wars, terrorist rebel groups are generally less likely to achieve their larger political objectives than are non-terrorist groups. Terrorism is less ineffective against democracies, but even in this context, terrorists do not win.

How effective is terrorism? This question has generated lively scholarly debate and is of obvious importance to policy makers. However, most existing studies of terrorism are not well equipped to answer this question for a simple reason – they lack an appropriate comparison. While the most systematic studies of terrorism make comparisons across terrorist organizations,[1] studies of the effects of terrorism, including those on the question of "whether terrorism works?" have not compared conflicts in which terrorism is used to those in which it is not.

This paper compares the outcomes of civil wars to assess whether rebel groups that use terrorism fare better than those who eschew this tactic.[2] I argue that terrorism is not a particularly effective tactic for winning outright, nor for obtaining concessions at the bargaining table. On balance, terrorists undermine rather than enhance their military effectiveness by attacking civilians indiscriminately. While terrorism is effective for rebel organizations' survival, terrorist rebels fare no better than non-terrorist rebels in terms of achieving the larger political goals for which they ostensibly fight.

The next section of the paper reviews the literature and debate over the effectiveness of terrorism, and argues that we can draw on literature (and data) on civil wars to gauge the relative success of terrorism. The following section presents definitions and explains how "terrorist" rebel groups are distinguished from others, as well how I use war outcomes to gauge "success." I examine the strategic uses of terrorism to evaluate theoretically its advantages and disadvantages and to generate hypotheses about its effects on war outcomes. I then discuss how

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[1] For example, Bapat 2006, 2007; Cronin 2006; Jones and Libicki 2008; McCormick 2003, and the literature reviewed therein; Shapiro 2008.

[2] This study is limited to examining the effects of rebel use of terrorism rather than government use of such tactics (state terrorism), thus sidestepping the question of whether the definition of terrorism should be limited to non-state actors. On definitions, see more below.

selection effects and endogeneity issues affect this study. Terrorism, while often representing seemingly "random" violence, is not a tactic chosen at random. In order to assess its effectiveness accurately, we therefore have to take into account why some rebel groups use terrorism while others do not.

After describing the data, I turn to empirical findings. I take a brief detour to look at terrorism as a dependent variable, then return to the main analysis of the effect of terrorism on war outcomes. The data support hypotheses that while civil wars involving terrorism last longer than other wars, terrorist rebel groups are less likely than those who eschew terrorism to achieve outright victory or concessions at the negotiating table. Terrorism is less ineffective against democracies, but even in this context, terrorists do not win.

The State of the Debate

A number of authors have argued that terrorism works. Robert Pape, for example, argues that suicide terrorism is on the rise because terrorists have learned that it pays.[3] He maintains that suicide terrorism is effective, in the sense of generating "gains for the terrorists' political cause" about half the time.[4] Kydd and Walter make a similar argument for terrorism more generally, that "terrorist violence is a form of costly signaling" and that "terrorism often works."[5] Wood argues that violence against civilians "pays" for insurgents in that it postpones their

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[3] Pape 2003, 2005. See also Dershowitz 2002.

[4] Pape 2003, 351. Pape is ambiguous on whether his argument applies to terrorism more broadly, arguing that suicide terrorism is to terrorism as lung cancer is to cancer – a particularly virulent strain. Discussion with the author November 11, 2010; Pape and Feldman 2010.

[5] Kydd and Walter 2006, 49-50.

demise and denies victory to the government.[6] Some scholars suggest that while terrorism can

sometimes backfire and effects may be non-linear, it is, on balance, effective.[7]

Others, however, maintain that terrorism is not particularly effective. Max Abrahms

argues that the prevailing view that terrorism is an effective coercive strategy rests on scant

empirical footing and that campaigns of violence that primarily target civilians almost never

succeed.[8] Jones and Libicki conclude that "there is rarely a causal link between the use of

terrorism and the achievement of [group] goals."[9] Merari and Cronin both argue that, while

terrorist groups may achieve partial or tactical (e.g., recruitment) objectives, they almost never

achieve their strategic goals in full.[10]

Some of this debate hinges on what one counts as success: only full achievement of the

group's goals, or any political concession, or achievement of intermediate goals meant

eventually to help a group achieve its goals? – an issue I return to below. Whether terrorism is

considered effective or not also depends on what the chances of success, however defined, are if

terrorism is not used. Not surprisingly, terrorists achieve higher levels of success when groups

have limited objectives that do not impinge on the core interests of the target state.[11]   So perhaps

terrorism only "works" when achieving political change is relatively easy. Success rates cannot

be judged without some sort of context.

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[6] Wood 2010.

[7] Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007; Gould and Klor 2010.

[8] Abrahms 2005; 2006, 43; 2012.

[9] Jones and Libicki 2008, 32-3.

[10] Merari 1993, 238-9; Cronin 2009, 11.

[11] Jones and Libicki 2008, 34; Abrahms 2006, 53-54; Pape 2003, 355.

Claims that terrorism "works" or "does not work" reflect a causal argument; that terrorism leads (or does not lead) to political change in favor of the group using it. Implicit in any causal argument is an argument about variation: using terrorism leads to more change (or no more change) than not using terrorism. But almost none of these empirical studies examine variation on the independent variable; they look only at terrorist organizations, with no comparison to otherwise similar groups that do not use terrorism.[12]

I use data on civil wars to introduce variation. Civil wars represent a universe of cases in which a group has a serious enough perceived grievance against the state to launch a violent rebellion, in which some groups choose to use terrorism as part of their repertoire of tactics while others do not. Data on civil wars are relatively well developed, allowing me to explore and control for a number of factors that are likely to affect both this tactical choice and the outcome we wish to explain.

The study of terrorism and the study of civil wars have generally proceeded in isolation from one another.[13] However, if we think of prominent cases such as the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the PLO or Hamas, the IRA, the PKK in Turkey, or the MNLF and MILF in the Philippines, it is clear that much terrorism takes place in the context of civil war. Indeed the vast majority of terrorism is domestic.[14] This paper merges insights from the two literatures.

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[12] Wood 2010 is an exception. Abrahms' work has more variation than some others, however, because his study is limited to groups designated as "foreign terrorist organizations" by the State Department, variation on the independent variable is truncated.

[13] Exceptions include Sambanis 2008; Findley 2011; Boulden 2009.

[14] Domestic terrorism is estimated to account for 75-85% of all terrorism. Enders et al. 2011, p.323; LaFree and Dugan 2007, p.187; Asal & Rethemeyer 2008a, p.447 (cited in Sánchez-Cuenca & de La Calle 2009, p.32).

This brings us to the thorny question of the definition of terrorism, however, because some scholars maintain that in the Venn diagram of political violence, terrorism and civil war do not overlap, while for others they overlap completely.

Definitions

"Terrorist" Rebel Groups

Defining terrorism is notoriously difficult; as the cliché goes, one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter, and this is particularly true in the context of civil wars. Because it is such a loaded term, its definition is highly contested.[15] I define *terrorist rebel groups* as those who employ a systematic campaign of indiscriminate violence against public civilian targets to influence a wider audience. The ultimate aim of this type of violence is to coerce the government to make political concessions, up to and including conceding outright defeat. This definition allows for distinctions among rebel groups, and does not include in the definition other variables whose relationship to terrorism we wish to examine.

For many scholars of terrorism, though by no means all,[16] a defining characteristic of terrorism is that it deliberately attacks civilians.[17] Violence against civilians distinguishes

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[15] McCormick 2003, 473. For a good discussion of definitions, see Merari 1993.

[16] Many definitions in the literature are so broad as arguably to encompass all rebel groups in all civil wars. Indeed, much of the terrorism literature could easily substitute *rebellion* or *insurgency* for *terrorism*. See, for example, Hoffman 2006, 40. Other definitions draw a distinction, often based on group size or strength or even the regime type of the opponent, between terrorism and guerrilla warfare or insurgency. These definitions exclude all rebel groups, and preclude the examination of the relationship, for example, between terrorism and group strength. See Schmid and Jongman 1988, esp. 13-18; Silke 1996; Cronin 2006, 31-32; Sambanis 2008.

[17] Cronin 2002/2003, 32-33 lists the deliberate targeting of the innocent among "aspects of the concept that are fundamental" to the definition of terrorism. The others are its political nature,

terrorism from "normal" rebel attacks on military targets. However, Stanton's research shows

that almost all rebel groups (and almost all governments involved in civil wars) attack civilians

in some way or another, making violence against civilians too broad a criterion by itself to

distinguish terrorist rebel groups from others. The most common strategy of civilian targeting is

what Stanton refers to as "control" – the use of "violence as a means of coercing civilian

cooperation and deterring civilians from providing aid to the opponent."[18] Targeting civilians in

this fashion is ubiquitous.[19] Moreover, this type of violence against civilians to punish or deter

collaboration with the other side is not what we normally think of as "terrorism."

By narrowing the definition to deliberately indiscriminate violence, I exclude this more

common form of violence and focus on that which makes terrorism so terrifying: its randomness;

and so outrageous: the targeting of innocent civilians (as opposed to collaborators). This

definition also captures what the literature often refers to as the "symbolic" nature of terrorism:

that it aims not to influence the victims of the violence but to send a political message to a wider

audience.[20] Here the distinctions Stanton draws between different strategies of violence against

civilians are particularly valuable. She distinguishes strategies of "coercion" from the

abovementioned control (and other strategies, such as cleansing or destabilization) by focusing

on the "the use of violence as a means of forcing the opponent to take a particular desired action

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nonstate character, and its seeming randomness.

[18] Stanton 2008, 31. Kydd and Walter 2006, 66 ff., refer to this as a strategy of intimidation. See also Kalyvas 2006.

[19] In Stanton's data there are only three rebel groups that do not engage in this type of violence against civilians.

[20] Crenshaw 1981, 379; McCormick 2003, 474.

– to agree to negotiations, to reduce its war aims, to make concessions, to surrender." This strategy is "intended not to coerce civilians themselves, but to coerce *the opponent* into making concessions" (her emphasis).[21] An attack on a public market, for example, is intended to influence the government, not shoppers.

Stanton's strategies of destabilization and cleansing, which she distinguishes from coercion, also sound like terrorism to some degree. These involve attacks on civilians intended to destabilize a country or to force people to flee by terrorizing the population. However, Stanton's operational coding of these strategies involve massacres and scorched earth campaigns (burning homes and crops), which, while involving "terror" are farther from our intuitive understanding of terrorism than the indiscriminate attacks she codes under coercion.[22] Thus, not all who "terrorize" a population are "terrorist" as I use the term here – groups like the RUF in Sierra Leone or the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda are not coded as terrorist under my definition, for example. Some terrorist groups (such as the FMLN or the IRA, depending on one's political leanings) might thus be considered morally preferable to some non-terrorist groups.[23] Indeed, it is important that we not let our judgements of the morality of a group's cause influence our use of the term terrorism.

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[21] Stanton 2008, 34-35. In more recent work, Stanton (forthcoming) refers to this strategy as *terrorism*.

[22] Some of the groups that engage in these strategies are also coded as engaging in coercion (Stanton's strategies are not mutually exclusive), so will be included in our list of terrorist rebel organizations in any case. Investigating the causes and effectiveness of these other types of strategies of violence against civilians is beyond the scope of this paper.

[23] On judging the relative morality of terrorism, see Crenshaw 1983, 3 and Merari 1993, 227-231.

<u>War Outcomes and Relative "Success"</u>

Civil wars end in one of four ways: either the government or the rebels win outright, or they reach a peace agreement of some sort, or the rebellion peters out. A fifth possible "outcome" is ongoing fighting. These five possibilities can be thought of as representing a continuum of "success" for the rebel group. Government victory and rebel victory obviously lie at opposite ends of this continuum. I argue that "agreement" represents a second-best outcome from the rebels' perspective. Agreements entail concessions and compromise by both sides, but given that rebels in civil war are fighting to change the status quo, while the government is fighting to maintain it, that the government agrees to any concessions represents at least a partial political victory for the rebels. Moreover, agreements indicate that the government has accepted the rebels as a legitimate negotiating partner, itself a significant concession. Indeed, many civil wars coded as ending in a peace agreement could easily be considered rebel victories in political if not military terms. For example, the peace agreement between South Africa and the ANC represented the fulfillment of that group's primary goal, the end of apartheid.

One might object that terrorism is sometimes used to prevent rather than encourage a peace agreement.[24] However, this spoiler argument maintains that a group is trying to prevent an agreement between another more moderate group and the government. This can prolong a conflict overall (see below), but the data used here code separately the outcome for each group within a conflict. It is hard to argue that an extremist group would see an agreement between itself and the government as a failure.

Second worst from the rebels' perspective are wars that end when the rebellion fizzles

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[24] Kydd and Walter 2002.

out with violence ending or falling to such a low level that the conflict is no longer considered ongoing.[25] While the rebel group may still exist, it is clearly not causing much trouble at this extremely low level of violence. Most rebellions in this category have been largely defeated, though not eliminated outright. Examples include Sendero Luminoso in Peru, which ended its fight after the capture of its leader, and the MQM in Pakistan, which "decided to pursue a peaceful strategy rather than a violent one" after the Pakistani military dealt "a serious blow to the militants."[26]

Scholars debate whether ongoing conflict should count as failure (to achieve goals),[27] or success (organizational survival).[28] I resolve this by placing ongoing conflict in the middle of a continuum of outcomes; neither side has been able to defeat the other, no significant concessions have been agreed to, but the rebel group continues to exist and to inflict pain on the country.

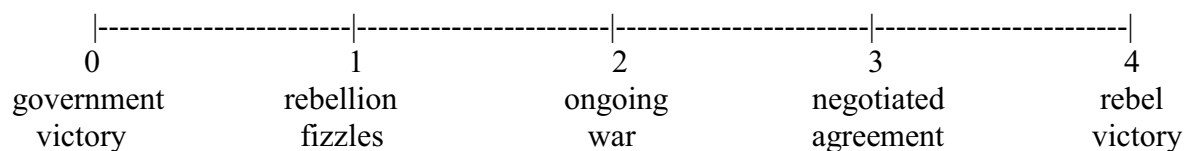We can thus rank the five outcomes as follows, in ascending order of desirability from the perspective of the rebel group.[29]

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[25] The Uppsala Armed Conflict Data project refers to this as "low or no activity."

[26] Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan (CGS) Data Coding Notes 2009, 350.

[27] Abrahms 2006.

[28] Jones and Libicki 2008; Wood 2010.

[29] There is admittedly some noise in this measure. There are occasionally agreements reached even though rebels were largely defeated (e.g., the RUF in Sierra Leone), or wars that fizzled out arguably because some of the rebels' demands had been met (e.g., de facto autonomy for Kurds in Iraq after the Persian Gulf War). However, in the vast majority of cases agreements represent a relatively high measure of political success for the rebels, while in cases coded as ending in low or no activity, rebels were all but defeated militarily, making this variable a reasonable proxy.

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
0                       1                       2                       3                       4
government              rebellion               ongoing                 negotiated              rebel
victory                 fizzles                 war                     agreement               victory
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This outcome variable is the dependent variable for the main analyses below. The question is whether terrorist rebel groups fare better or worse along this continuum than other rebel groups.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Terrorism

Terrorism has both advantages and disadvantages as a tactic. I argue that the advantages tend to help rebels survive rather than to win, while the disadvantages make it harder for terrorists to achieve political concessions or to win outright. Much of the literature considers the usefulness of terrorism in isolation. The implicit comparison is thus effectiveness relative to doing nothing. But how effective is terrorism relative to other tactics a rebel organization could employ? All rebel groups attack military targets; terrorist rebel groups are distinguished by the fact that they also purposively attack civilians indiscriminately to influence a wider audience.[30]

There are several potential audiences to consider. The primary audience is, of course, the government, which rebels hope to induce to make concessions or to give up the fight. There are also secondary audiences, those whose support rebels attempt to win, and those rebels hope to induce to put pressure on the government. Within the country, there is an "aggrieved" population, on whose behalf the rebel organization claims to fight.[31] There are also civilians on

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[30] Terrorist groups may also attack civilians in other, more discriminating ways, as discussed above (e.g., attacks to punish collaboration with the enemy). Groups that attack **only** civilians and no military targets are unlikely to be involved in conflicts that reach the threshold of civil war – on selection effects, see below.

[31] Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007, 369.

the other side of the conflict – those who generally support the government or generally consent

to be governed by it. For lack of a better term, I refer to this group as the "mainstream." It

includes both "complicitous civilians"[32] who benefit from and support the state and its use of

violence against the rebel group, and "fence-sitters" who are neither members of the aggrieved

group nor active supporters of the state's policies toward it. Finally, there is international public

opinion and support, particularly among countries (great or regional powers, neighboring states,

those housing relevant diaspora populations) in a position to aid or put pressure on one side of

the civil war or the other.

Terrorism has obvious disadvantages as a military tactic. Attacking civilians

indiscriminately in public places is not useful for taking and holding territory or the capital. It is

thus much less effective than other tactics for winning outright. Unlike attacks on the

government's military forces, or even other types of attacks on civilians (such as ethnic

cleansing of territory, or attacks to prevent collaboration with the enemy), indiscriminate attacks

on public targets such as markets or buses have no direct military value.

Terrorism is used, rather, in less direct ways. The terrorism literature identifies a number

of strategies through which it is thought to "work." These include 1) attrition, 2) advertising the

cause, 3) provocation, 4) outbidding, and 5) spoiling.[33] Of these, attrition is arguably the most

important as it entails the most direct (or least indirect) link between rebel actions and the

achievement of political goals. The other strategies aim at intermediate goals, including

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[32] The term is from Goodwin 2006.

[33] Kydd and Walter 2006; Thornton 1964; Crenshaw 1981; 2011. Kydd and Walter also discuss intimidation. As explained above, intimidation consists primarily of the ubiquitous practice of punishing collaborators with the other side or enforcing cooperation with one's own side, and is not considered terrorism in this study.

mobilizing support (advertising the cause, provocation, and outbidding), and/or preserving organizational survival (spoiling), often in competition among groups claiming to represent the same aggrieved population (outbidding, spoiling). I discuss each of these strategies in turn, considering both the advantages and disadvantages of terrorism for the rebels' larger military effort.[34]

Attrition

The most important way terrorism is used to effect political change is part of an attrition strategy meant to inflict pain on the other side so as to undermine the adversary's will, rather than its capacity, to fight.[35] However, terrorist attacks are not the only way to fight a war of attrition. Insurgency or guerrilla warfare tactics classically employ hit-and-run attacks to dog the adversary's forces and undermine its will to continue the fight. Unlike other forms of insurgency, terrorist tactics, by definition, do not target military forces and thus do not degrade the adversary's military capacity.

Terrorist attacks do entail some advantages in terms of the sheer ability to inflict pain in a cost-effective manner. It is less costly (at least in material terms) to attack "soft" civilian targets than "hard" military ones. Because terrorism attacks targets that are inherently hard to defend against, preventing every single attack is difficult. As Condoleeza Rice described counter-

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[34] For a related argument, see Goodwin 2006, esp. 2038.

[35] Pape 2003, 346; Kydd and Walter 2006. On the distinction between direct and indirect strategies of warfighting, see Arreguín-Toft 2001, esp. 105.

terrorism efforts: "They only have to be right once. We have to be right 100% of the time."[36] It takes relatively fewer people to organize and carry out a terrorist attack, so fully eliminating a terrorist group is more difficult than eliminating other rebel groups; mere remnants can continue to inflict damage. This makes terrorist rebels quite difficult to defeat or eliminate.

Terrorism is also a relatively cheap way to impose costs on civilians such that the mainstream population pressures its government to give in to terrorist demands. There is some evidence that this can be effective, up to a point,[37] perhaps particularly so in democracies (see below). However, terrorism can also make it harder for governments to concede. First, it can backfire, creating a rally-round the flag effect among the complicitous population, and undermining support among fence-sitters who might otherwise support concessions but who are disgusted by indiscriminate attacks on civilians. This can produce popular pressure not to concede. Second, for similar reasons, terrorism is likely to undermine international support, reducing international pressure on the government to concede.[38] Third, many governments have a stated policy never to negotiate with terrorists. This is often observed only in the breach, and governments are always reluctant to negotiate with and grant concessions to any rebel group. The rhetoric of non-negotiation with terrorists can nonetheless make it especially politically difficult to do so.

More than its direct effects of inflicting pain on the other side, terrorism is thought to be

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[36] Quoted in Nina Easton, "Condi: The Should-Be Face of the GOP" *Fortune Magazine* September 22, 2009.

[37] Gould and Klor 2010.

[38] This effect may be particularly pronounced after September 11, 2001 and the US-led strengthening of the norm against terrorism.

a communication device. Terrorism is often said to be an effective signal of strength and resolve, meant to communicate to the opponent that the war of attrition will be long and costly, in the hopes that the opponent will thus choose to concede now rather than later.[39] Compared to not attacking anyone or anything, terrorism may indeed be effective as a costly signal, but compared to attacks against the military, the effectiveness of terrorism as a signal of resolve is unclear at best, and terrorism signals weakness rather than strength.

Terrorism signals a willingness to use extreme tactics that violate widely held norms, and this may be interpreted as a signal of resolve. However, extremism and resolve are not necessarily the same thing. A willingness to attack civilians signals a willingness to impose these costs in the future. To the extent that the government cares more about the loss of civilian life than the loss of soldiers' lives, this willingness potentially provides a signaling advantage to terrorist tactics.

There are also downsides to signaling extremism, however. By deliberately violating the norm against targeting noncombatants, terrorists place themselves beyond the pale, painting themselves as untrustworthy; likely to break their promises rather than abide by a negotiated agreement.[40] The targets of terrorism may also infer from the extreme nature of the tactics used that the groups' demands are also extreme; that terrorists seek to destroy their society.[41] Opponents will therefore view negotiations as an act of appeasement. Use of extreme tactics may credibly signal resolve to carry on the fight, but it undermines the credibility of promises to

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[39] Kydd and Walter 2006, 59-60; Merari 1993.

[40] Bapat 2006, 214.

[41] Abrahms 2012, 22.

reward concessions with peace.

Terrorism can also make it harder for rebels to accept concessions. Terrorist rebel groups may be particularly suspicious of the government in any potential negotiations to end the conflict. This may be, in part, due to a selection effect if only particularly hardline groups choose terrorist tactics. But it could also be induced by this choice. Having committed terrorist attacks, rebels may not believe that they will be accepted into a peaceful post-war political order.[42] Government promises of amnesty or of a power-sharing role for rebels may therefore not be credible to terrorist rebel groups. Mistrust and problems of credible commitment plague all civil wars,[43] but terrorism makes them even worse. For a number of reasons, then, signaling extremism can make one's would-be negotiating partner less, rather than more, willing to make political concessions.

As a signal of strength, moreover, terrorist attacks are clearly inferior. Despite the empirical (non)finding presented below, the deeply embedded conventional wisdom is that terrorism is a "weapon of the weak." Its use thus signals military impotence rather than strength. Indeed, precisely because it is less costly to attack "soft" civilian targets than hardened military ones, and because to be credible, signals have to be costly, terrorism serves as an ineffective signal of strength.

What of the remaining strategies? Rebellion, particularly insurgency or guerrilla warfare,

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[42] This can make terrorism a self-perpetuating tactic. Laitin and Shapiro 2008, 222-3

[43] Walter 2002.

as Mao famously stressed, requires a supportive population.[44] Though Mao would disagree, the

terrorism literature generally maintains that terrorism is a strategy used to mobilize support.[45]

Do indiscriminate attacks on civilians enhance or undermine popular support?[46]

Advertising the Cause

One way terrorism is thought to mobilize support is by publicizing grievances – the

"propaganda of the deed" – and putting the cause on the political agenda.[47] Precisely because

they are more outrageous, terrorist attacks usually generate more publicity than attacks against

the military. This attention can create a sense of urgency about resolving a political issue.

At whom is such a strategy aimed? The aggrieved population is already aware of the

grievances (hence the term),[48] and in situations that have escalated to the level of civil war, the

mainstream population likely does as well. So publicizing grievances probably plays less of a

role in civil wars than in lower-level conflicts. It could, however, be important for publicizing

grievances to an international audience if the parties are vying for international public support;

or in some conflicts over secession or autonomy, for publicizing the plight of an aggrieved

population whose lives are quite remote to citizens in other parts of the country.

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[44] Mao 1937. See also Arreguín-Toft 2001, 104.

[45] See for example, Pape 2003; Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007; DeNardo 1985.

[46] To my knowledge, there is no empirical work supporting the contention that terrorism mobilizes support more effectively than other forms of resistance.

[47] Crenshaw 2011, 118; Thornton 1964, 82-83.

[48] Terrorism could be used to signal commitment to the cause to one's own side as part of a process of outbidding among rival factions (on which more below).

The disadvantages of targeting civilians to generate their support is obvious. While some may see such attacks as justified given their view of the justness of the terrorists' cause, these people are almost by definition the most radical of the aggrieved population, likely already to support the rebellion. Terrorism "preaches to the choir." Those potential supporters who might be mobilized – less radical or politicized members of the aggrieved population, "fence-sitting" members of the mainstream population who are generally sympathetic to the plight of the aggrieved, and the international community – are more likely to feel revulsion at the taking of innocent life. Moreover, as Abrahms argues, the publicity gained by terrorism often focuses on the "senseless" or irrational nature of the violence rather than the grievances or demands the terrorist group wishes to make.[49] In the battle for legitimacy and "hearts and minds," terrorism is counterproductive.[50]

Provocation

Another way that the literature suggests terrorism can be used to mobilize support is by provoking the state to over-react. This strategy works by inducing the government to crack down on the aggrieved population, thus creating a backlash in favor of the rebels.[51] By causing pain to be inflicted on the aggrieved population, this provocation creates new grievances and exacerbates old ones, thus potentially inducing more support for the rebel organization.

Because they violate norms of warfare, terrorist attacks may be more likely to provoke an

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[49] Abrahms 2012, 21.

[50] Cronin 2009, 93. See also Stephan and Chenoweth 2008 who argue that violence in general decreases legitimacy and discourages broad-based participation.

[51] Kydd and Walter 2006, esp. 69-72; Lake 2002; Crenshaw 2011, 119.

overreaction than insurgent attacks on military targets, but using terrorism for this purpose is also risky for two reasons. First, this strategy assumes that the aggrieved will blame the government for the crackdown, rather than the rebel group that provoked it.[52] Second, by attacking civilians, terrorist attacks make it easier for the government to justify – both domestically and internationally – draconian measures to crush the rebellion. The opprobrium directed against a government that employs extreme measures will be lower when it is fighting a terrorist rebel group than a non-terrorist rebel group.[53] As Kydd and Walter explain, for provocation to work, the rebels must be able to goad the government into a "middling level of brutality."[54] A government that is strongly committed to human rights and the rule of law is difficult to provoke, while one willing and able to resort to extreme levels of brutality in its fight will be able to wipe out the rebels and the constituency they claim to represent.[55] As compared to non-terrorist attacks, attacks on civilians may make it more likely that a government will move from "too soft" to this middling level where provocation is possible, but it will also make it more likely that a government otherwise in the middle will move to the "too hard" end of the spectrum, allowing the government to justify measures to crush the rebels rather than creating a backlash of support in their favor.

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[52] Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007, 375 suggest that the aggrieved face a commitment problem in that they cannot credibly threaten to punish extremists for provoking the government's crackdown because the crackdown itself (by diminishing economic opportunities) makes the population inclined toward direct struggle. But why should the population react to diminished opportunities brought on by the conflict by choosing to continue it, rather than settle?

[53] Hence the attempt by almost all governments to label rebels as "terrorists" whether they employ terrorist tactics or not.

[54] Kydd and Walter 2006, 70.

[55] Arreguín-Toft 2001, 109.

Outbidding

Terrorism is often said to be used as a means of competing for support with other rival groups that claim to represent the same aggrieved population. Outbidding is intended to mobilize popular support for a group by demonstrating commitment to the cause and ability to fight for the interests of the aggrieved.[56] If successful, this makes settlement less likely, though it could eventually lead to a settlement on terms more favorable to the aggrieved. It is not clear, however, why the aggrieved population should support groups that use terrorism over those who do not. Kydd and Walter argue that it can be advantageous to be represented by an agent who will drive a harder bargain than oneself, and use of extreme tactics may signal a tougher negotiating stance. This argument discounts the cost of continued conflict to the aggrieved population, however. Supporting a group whose reservation price is higher than one's own by definition means ruling out settlements one would prefer to ongoing conflict. If one fears the government will never compromise (Kydd and Walter's second answer), then one should prefer not a more extreme agent, but a militarily more competent one.[57] Given that terrorism signals military weakness rather than strength, it is not at all clear how outbidding by attacking civilians rather than military targets might win the competition for political support.[58] While competition among groups and factions is undoubtedly an important motive for rebel behavior, it is questionable how terrorism serves these competitive purposes better than other tactics.

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[56] Bloom 2005.

[57] Kydd and Walter 2006.

[58] Terrorist attacks are likely to signal lack of popular support to the aggrieved, rather than strength. Laitin and Shapiro 2008, 216.

<u>Spoiling</u>

Spoiling is also a manifestation of competition among rebel groups. It occurs when a more extreme group is threatened by the prospect of peace between the government and a more moderate group. By launching a terrorist attack and inducing doubt about the moderates' ability or willingness to control terrorism, extremists can derail peace.[59] This can help ensure the survival of an extremist group that might otherwise become obsolete in the face of peace. The spoilers' hope is that the eventual outcome will be more favorable to their cause than the one moderates were willing to settle for, but spoiling does nothing to ensure this more favorable outcome rather than a less favorable one (such as defeat). Terrorism driven by spoiling thus leads to longer conflicts, but does nothing to help a group achieve its political goals.

Hypotheses

This evaluation of the pros and cons of terrorism relative not to inaction but to other types of attacks (most notably attacks on military targets), leads to several hypotheses. On balance, terrorism generally undermines military effectiveness. It has no direct value for winning the war outright. It does not degrade the government's military capability, nor can it be used to take and hold territory. It is a cheap way to inflict costs on the enemy and may help signal resolve, but its low cost also signals weakness. It may help advertise the cause, but it also drives potential supporters away. It can provoke a government into self-destructive overreaction, but it can also help the government justify draconian measures in their fight against rebels.

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[59] Kydd and Walter 2002.

H1: Terrorist rebels are unlikely to achieve outright military victory compared to

non-terrorist rebels.

Terrorism also makes the second best outcome for rebels less likely. First, governments will be less likely to grant concessions to a less militarily effective opponent. Second, by signaling extremism, terrorist rebel groups make it harder for the government to negotiate an agreement. Terrorism exacerbates the problems of trust and credible commitment that plague all civil wars. Third, terrorism driven by competition among rebel groups can prevent settlements through processes of spoiling and outbidding.

H2: Rebels using terrorism are less likely than those who eschew terrorism to

achieve negotiated settlements.

There are, however, some advantages to terrorism for organizational survival. Terrorist rebel groups are hard to eliminate entirely, and spoiling can prevent peace with more moderate groups from making extremist groups obsolete. For both these reasons, and because terrorism prevents negotiated settlements that would otherwise end the war more quickly, terrorism should increase civil war duration.

H3: Wars involving terrorist rebels are likely to last longer than those involving

non-terrorist rebels.

There are several reasons to think that terrorism might be more effective (or less ineffective) against democracies than against autocracies. First, democratic governments are

likely more sensitive to civilian loss of life.[60] If terrorism is meant to work by inflicting pain on

civilians who then pressure their government to make concessions, then it stands to reason that

the more accountable the government is to popular pressure, the more likely this strategy will

work.

Second, democracies are thought to have trouble repressing or preventing and policing

terrorist groups.[61] Because they start on the "soft" end of the spectrum, democracies should be

more likely to be provoked by terrorism into the "middling level of brutality" discussed above,

while anocracies and autocracies will be provoked into a response that is "too hard" and that

brutally but effectively represses rebellion.

Terrorist violence may also be less likely to backfire in terms of mobilizing support

among the aggrieved when its victims are seen as "complicitous" in government policy, such as

when they have voted the government into power in democratic elections. We should thus

expect:

> *H4: Terrorism will be relatively more effective against democratic governments than*
>
> *against non-democratic governments.*

Selection and Potential Confounders

Because I look at the use of terrorism only in the context of civil wars, this study does not

cover all terrorist organizations, raising issues of selection bias. This analysis excludes

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[60] Stanton 2008; Heger 2010.

[61] Cronin 2006, 31; Crenshaw 1981, 383. Pape 2003, 349-350. See also Eubank and Weinberg
1994. But see Lyall 2010 for evidence that democracies are no more likely to lose against
insurgencies more generally.

transnational and international terrorist groups that attack primarily across borders rather than in their home state.[62] It also excludes organizations involved in conflicts that do not meet the standard 1,000 battle death threshold of a civil war.[63] The smallest and weakest groups are thus excluded.[64] As a subset of terrorist groups, the selection of those involved in civil wars likely also over-represents ethnonationalist/separatist organizations, which are more likely to have clear political or territorial goals that are more easily negotiable than the goals of other types of terrorist organizations.[65] The data used here also exclude coups,[66] which are quite unlikely to involve terrorism and which may be more often successful than other types of rebellion. All of these selection issues bias the study toward finding terrorism successful, and against my own argument.

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[62] It is not clear what the equivalent non-terrorist actors would be for a comparison with transnational terrorist groups.

[63] Battle deaths exclude civilian deaths, so this criterion could in theory lead to the exclusion of highly lethal terrorist groups that did not also engage in significant attacks on military targets. However, in practice, GTD data indicates that this concern is moot. In the time period examined here, the only group responsible for 1,000 deaths in a year not otherwise included in my data is al-Qaida in 2001, which is excluded because the attacks of 9/11 were transnational not domestic.

[64] In some terrorism data bases, the majority of "terrorist" groups have never killed anyone. Asal and Rethemeyer 2008b. Sánchez-Cuenca and de la Calle 2009, 35. The exclusion here is not definitional, merely driven by data availability. It is defensible on policy grounds, however, as we should arguably care most about the deadliest groups. It does, however, limit the generalizability of my findings. I evaluate terrorism by groups capable of mounting civil war, not terrorism relative to other options for those without this capability. Note, however, that the notion that terrorism is used only by those with no other option is belied by the terrorist rebel groups examined here, who by definition can mount a civil war.

[65] Cronin 2002/2003, pp .39-40. Among rebel groups, separatist or identity based groups are no more likely to use terrorism (see below), but terrorist groups with these goals may be more likely involved in conflicts that reach the level of civil war.

[66] Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009.

The temporal bounds of the data used here (post-1989) do not cover the era of decolonization, and therefore exclude a set of highly successful rebellions; virtually all of these cases led to independence. Some notable cases of terrorist success (e.g., Algeria) are thus omitted. If terrorism was used disproportionally in anti-colonial wars of this era (an open empirical question), excluding this era will bias the results away from finding terrorism effective. On the other hand, anti-colonial struggles were seen as particularly legitimate, and relationships in that era may not apply to more recent conflicts.

Arguably more important as a concern than selection bias is the thorny issue of endogeneity; for while terrorism inflicts random violence, it is not a tactic chosen at random. To assess the effectiveness of terrorism accurately, I must therefore pay particular attention to any variables that might affect both the use of terrorism and the outcome of the war. The literature on the causes of terrorism, particularly on why terrorism rears its ugly head in some places rather than others, identifies several potential confounders: the relative strength of the group, democracy, rebel aims, religious difference, population, GDP per capita, geography (region and terrain), and the number of rebel groups. I explore the relationships between these factors and the use of terrorism in greater depth elsewhere, but discuss them briefly here.[67]

The most obvious potential confounding variable is the relative strength of the rebel group. If terrorism is a tactic chosen by groups whose militarily capacity is relatively feeble compared to the government, failure to take this into account will make terrorism look less effective than it really is. That terrorism is a "weapon of the weak" is perhaps the most common

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[67] [Author citation removed].

explanation of why some groups choose terrorism while others do not.[68] Very little empirical

work has tested this conventional wisdom directly, however.[69]

The relationship between democracy and terrorism has generated significant theoretical

and empirical debate,[70] but many see a positive relationship between democracy and terrorism, in

part because it is thought to be more effective against democracies, as discussed above.[71]

Terrorism is also often thought to be a tactic used by groups with particularly extreme

aims. This argument is often nothing more than a tautology: groups that use extreme tactics such

as terrorism are considered extremist, therefore extremist groups use terrorism by definition.

But it is possible to assess group aims independent of their tactics by focusing on how far rebels'

stated aims are from the status quo. I argue elsewhere that in wars over a particular region,

secessionist rebels can be considered more extreme than those who fight for autonomy, while in

wars over control of the state, those who seek to transform society in fundamental ways (e.g., by

instituting Sharia in a formerly secular state, or communism in a formerly capitalist state, or vice

versa) are more extreme than those engaged in a power struggle to take the reins of power but

not to alter society in fundamental ways (the fight between Lissouba and Sassou-Nguesso in

Congo-Brazzaville is a good example).[72]

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[68] Among many examples, see, Crenshaw 1981, 387; McCormick 2003, 483. Merari 1993, 231; Pape 2003, 349; Sánchez-Cuenca and de la Calle 2009; DeNardo 1985, 230; McCormick 2003, 483; Merari 1993, 225-226, 245.

[69] That which has comes to contradictory conclusions. See Stanton 2008; Forthcoming; Goodwin 2006; Metelits 2010.

[70] For a good overview, see Chenoweth 2010.

[71] See, for example, Stanton 2008.

[72] [Author citation removed]

Secessionist aims are particularly important to consider because scholars such as Pape and Stanton suggest that terrorism should be especially likely in secessionist conflicts.[73] Fazal suggests just the opposite, however; that separatist movements are more likely to comply with the laws of war, and therefore avoid targeting civilians indiscriminately, because they desire to become accepted members of the international system.[74] Either way, if extremism and/or secessionism affect civil war outcomes, I need to take them into account. Pape also argues that suicide terrorism is especially likely where the occupied and occupier are from different religions, while other scholars link religious conflict to terrorism more generally.[75]

A number of studies have found an association between a state's population and domestic terrorism, either because more populous states have a harder time finding and fighting terrorists, or simply because a larger population increases the number of potential radicals by increasing the number of people in the tails of the distribution of opinion.[76] I also include GDP per capita because while studies have debunked the theory that individual terrorists tend to be poor, there may be a relationship between a country's economic state and the likelihood of terrorism.[77]

Laitin and Shapiro suggest that terrorism is more likely where rebels do not have the advantage of rough terrain to make other forms of insurgency easier to wage.[78] Meanwhile,

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[73] Pape 2005, 23. Stanton 2008, esp. Chapter 5. More recently, Pape and Feldman 2010 argue that suicide terrorism occurs against foreign occupation by a democracy.

[74] Fazal 2013; Forthcoming.

[75] Pape 2005, 22; Svennson 2007; Asal and Rethemeyer 2008a; Stanton Forthcoming.

[76] Chenoweth 2010; Sánchez-Cuenca and de la Calle 2009.

[77] On economic conditions and terrorism, see e.g., Burgoon 2006; Li and Schaub 2004; Abadie 2006.

[78] Laitin and Shapiro 2008, p.213.

Boulden notes that terrorism is less likely to occur in Africa than in other regions of the world.[79]

Reasons for this regional variation have not been explored theoretically or empirically,

nonetheless, regional variation in terrorism is worth investigating, not least because civil war has

been so prevalent in Africa. The outbidding argument suggests that terrorism is more likely

when there are several rebel groups active as part of the same struggle.[80]

This set of variables by no means exhausts the list of factors that might make rebel

groups more likely to choose terrorism – this is obviously an important question in its own right.

For the purposes of this paper, however, my focus is on variables that likely also affect the

outcome of war, and whose omission could thus lead to spurious findings about the effectiveness

of terrorism.[81]

The Data

The data analyzed here consist of 104 rebel groups involved in full-scale civil wars active

between 1989 and 2004. Much of the data come from Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan's

Non-State Actor data set (hereafter CGS),[82] which build on and expand the well-known Uppsala-

[79] Boulden 2009, 13.

[80] Bloom 2005; Nemeth Forthcoming. But see also Young and Findley 2011; Stanton 2008, 232-33.

[81] On the relationship between these variables and war outcomes, see Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009; DeRouen and Sobek 2004; Fortna 2008; Enterline and Balch-Lindsay 2002; Mason, Weingarten, and Fett 1999.

[82] Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009, Version 2.4

PRIO Armed Conflict Data (hereafter UCDP)[83] by identifying each non-state (or rebel) actor.[84]

These data are particularly useful for several reasons. First, the unit of analysis is the

government-rebel group dyad, rather than the conflict as is common in many data sets on civil

war. Second, the relative strength of the government and each rebel group is coded. The time-

varying version of the CGS data, in which the observation is the dyad-period allows for variables

that change over the course of the conflict, for example, changes in the relative strength of the

actors, or changes in democracy or economic variables.

As explained above, the dependent variable for this study is war outcome. The CGS data

include the war's outcome, as coded by UCDP, for each dyad as of 2003, covering five

possibilities: government victory, rebel victory, agreement (including peace agreements and

cease-fire agreements), low or no activity, and ongoing. I updated this through 2009, and

corrected a few cases.[85]

The measure of the main independent variable, whether a rebel group uses terrorist

tactics, comes from Stanton, who codes:

> whether or not a rebel group used small-scale bomb, such as car bombs, suicide
> bombs, or improvised explosive devices (IEDs), to attack unambiguously civilian

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[83] UCDP; Gleditsch et al. 2002.

[84] Note that while the overall conflict must reach the 1,000 battle death threshold, it is not the case that each rebel group-government dyad included here reaches this threshold.

[85] For example, I updated the Sri Lanka-LTTE to reflect the government victory in 2009. This introduces possible inconsistencies as some variables are only coded through 2003. I also recoded cases in which a peace agreement was reached shortly after UCDP codes a war as terminated in low activity (e.g., the Good Friday Agreement settling the Northern Ireland conflict). This change improves the outcomes for two terrorist rebel groups (Provisional IRA and the MNLF in the Philippines) thus working against the argument made here. I also corrected two clearly miscoded cases: Burundi-CNDD, and UK-Real IRA. Cases affected by these changes are dropped in robustness tests.

targets.

She further distinguishes between "low-casualty" and "high-casualty terrorism" by excluding

from the latter attacks on infrastructure (e.g., power stations, pipelines, bridges) which impose

costs on civilians, but in which casualties are rare.[86] I use the more restrictive, high-casualty

only measure as it best captures the deliberate and indiscriminate killing of civilians on which

my definition and theory focus. Of the 104 cases examined here, 24 (23%) use high-casualty

terrorism.

This measure captures groups generally classified as "terrorist" by other sources, such as

the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the Taliban in Afghanistan (after 2003), the FARC in Colombia, the

Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland, and so on. One advantage of using Stanton's data to code

terrorist rebel groups rather than the databases more commonly used in the terrorism literature is

that this minimizes some of the well-known geographical biases in the terrorism data,

particularly their over-representation of terrorism in Western democracies and under-

representation or spotty coverage of groups in Africa and other strategically less important (to

the US) places. The main disadvantage of this measure is that it is limited to full-scale civil wars

active between 1989 and 2004, thus providing the bounds of the empirical analysis. Merging the

CGS and Stanton data yields 104 cases and 566 observations over time.[87] The cases are listed in

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[86] Stanton Forthcoming, pp.14-15. For further discussion, see also Stanton 2008. In some cases,
Stanton's coding for a single case was applicable to more than one dyad in the CGS data (e.g.,
Stanton codes Fatah and Hamas together in a single conflict against Israel). Notes on the
merging of these two data sets available from the author.

[87] Because 34 cases involve wars that began before 1989, there are another 449 observations in
the data that are used for some robustness checks.

the appendix.[88]

Stanton found surprisingly little variation over time within conflicts in the types of strategies rebels and governments used in terms of targeting civilians. With very few exceptions, groups that used terrorism did so throughout the conflict, while those who eschewed the tactic early on continued to avoid it later.[89] This in itself is quite interesting, and suggests that rebel organizations' choices about using terrorism are remarkably "sticky."

The CGS data set includes a 5-point indicator of rebel group strength relative to the government, ranging from much weaker to much stronger. This variable summarizes assessments of the rebel group's ability to mobilize supporters, arms procurement ability, and fighting capacity, which Cunningham et al. argue capture the rebel group's ability to target government forces, or "offensive strength."[90] To capture the effects of war aims, I include two dummy variables. The first marks whether the group seeks full independence, and is taken from Coggins' data on secessionist movements.[91] The second differentiates among groups not associated with a secessionist movement, marking those who aim to transform society in fundamental ways. This I coded myself, based on case descriptions in the CGS data coding notes, Minorities at Risk (MAR), START's Terrorist Organization Profiles (TOPs), UCDP's

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[88] Replication data and codebook are available at [author identifying URL removed].

[89] The PKK turned to terrorism after 1993 (a shift reflected in the time-varying data used here). The MILF (Philippines) did so after 1986 (before the start of the data). Email correspondence with author, July 25, 2008. The Taliban did not use terrorism, as defined and measured here, in its fight against the Rabbani government of Afghanistan in the 1990s, but used terrorism against the Karzai government and its Western backers in the 2000s. These are treated as separate conflicts here.

[90] Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009.

[91] Coggins 2011.

case summaries, and case specific sources.[92] Together, the independence and transform dummy variables can be compared to an omitted category of relatively "moderate" rebels who aim either for autonomy, or who are engaged in power struggles at the top and do not desire to change society in fundamental ways.

Democracy is measured with a dummy variable (from CGS) marking cases with a Polity score of 6 or higher. Measures of the natural log of population and the natural log of GDP per capita are also from CGS. I include a measure of whether the rebel group's religion differs from that of government.[93] A dummy variable identifies whether the civil war was fought in Sub-Saharan Africa. A (logged) measure of mountainous terrain in the country captures the effect of rough terrain.[94] A dummy variable (from CGS) marks conflicts in which multiple rebel groups were active, as a proxy for outbidding dynamics.

In all of the results reported below, I calculate robust standard errors with cases clustered by country. Results are robust, and often stronger, if clustered by conflict instead of country.

Which Groups Use Terrorism?

Before turning to tests of the hypotheses listed above, I take a brief detour to address the endogeneity question, examining the effects of potentially confounding variables on the use of terrorism. Of the rebel groups involved in civil wars between 1989 and 2004, fewer than a third

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[92] Detailed coding notes available from author.

[93] From Svennson 2007 and Lindberg 2008 and the sources listed in Lindberg's appendix. It captures differences within as well as between major religions (distinguishing among Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians, and among Sunni and Shia Islam, for example).

[94] Fearon and Laitin 2003.

used terrorism as a tactic in their fight against the government, while the rest did not. What

accounts for this variation? Table 1 shows the results of logistic analysis with terrorist rebel

group as the dependent variable.[95]

[Table 1 about here]

This analysis of terrorism as the dependent variable, rather than the independent variable

as it is in the rest of the paper, suggests that terrorism is most likely in civil wars in democracies,

where rebels face governments representing a different religion,[96] and is seldom seen in Africa

(indeed in the data used here, there are no cases of high-casualty terrorism by African rebel

groups).[97]

Given how deeply entrenched it is, the conventional wisdom that terrorism is more likely

to be used by weaker groups receives surprisingly weak support. The relationship between

relative strength and terrorism is negative, but it is never statistically significant.[98] I also find

little evidence of a link between a group's war aims and its use of terrorism. Those fighting for

secession are, if anything, less likely to use terrorism, while those aiming to transform society

appear more likely to do so, but neither effect is significant. Together, these findings indicate

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[95] Independent variables are from the first observation in each dyad (even if this occurs before 1989 as is true of wars that were ongoing at that point) because, as noted above, the use of terrorism only varies over time in one case. Results are robust to using 1989 data for wars that begin before then, and to including all observations (in which case population and GDP become significant).

[96] Coefficient just misses tests of significance when cases clustered by conflict.

[97] More recent use of terrorism in Nigeria and Somalia may, unfortunately, temper this finding.

[98] This could be the result of selection effects; this analysis covers only the strongest opposition groups, those involved in full-scale civil wars. However, among these relatively strong groups, it is clearly not the case that only weak groups resort to terrorism.

that the extremity of a group's aims are not necessarily associated with the extremity of its tactics. I find no relationship between rough terrain and terrorism, nor between the number of groups involved in the conflict (outbidding) and terrorism.

While these findings shed some light on questions about when and where terrorism arises, fuller theoretical and empirical analysis of why some rebels resort to terrorism while others refrain from targeting civilians in this way is beyond the scope of this paper.[99] However, now that we have some sense of which rebel groups are most likely to use terrorism, we can return to the question that motivates this paper – is terrorism an effective tactic for rebels in civil war?

Do Terrorists Win? The Effects of Terrorism on War Outcomes

Figure 1 shows the percentage of terrorist and non-terrorist rebellions ending in each outcome. While these bivariate relationships obviously do not yet take into account the endogeneity of terrorism, the figures do suggest preliminary support for hypotheses 1-3. Most tellingly, no group that deliberately killed large numbers of civilians through terrorist attacks has won its fight outright. Peace agreements, which I argue represent significant concessions to the rebel cause, are also much less frequent when rebels use terrorism. Meanwhile, government victories and wars ending through low or no activity are slightly more common in civil wars involving terrorism. Wars in which rebels use terror are much more likely to be ongoing as of 2009 than are wars with non-terrorist rebels, suggesting that terrorism makes wars particularly difficult to terminate.

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[99] See [author citation removed].

[Figure 1 about here]

I employ several different multivariate models to test the effects of terrorism on the duration and outcome of war, controlling for the possible confounding variables discussed above.[100] Because it is most straightforward (and forms a baseline for subsequent models), I first discuss hypothesis 3, on terrorism and the duration of war. Table 2 shows the results of a Cox proportional hazards model.[101] Because some cases involve wars that were already underway as of 1989 when my data begin, I control for the age of the war at this point.[102] In duration models such as this one, hazard ratios are interpreted relative to 1. Hazard ratios less than 1indicate variables associated with longer wars; those with hazard ratios greater than 1 with shorter wars. The hazard ratio of 0.41 for terrorism indicates an estimated 59% reduction in the hazard of war termination, all else equal; an effect that is highly statistically significant. Figure 2 shows the same results graphically, depicting the survival function for wars in which terrorism is and is not used.[103] Civil wars in which rebels use terrorism last longer than those in which rebels do not.

[Table 2 and Figure 2 about here]

There are several ways to test the effect of terrorism on war outcomes as opposed to

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[100] Because I found no evidence that rough terrain or multiple groups influence the use of terrorism, I exclude them from the analysis that follows. Results are robust to including them.

[101] Tests based on Schoenfeld residuals show no violation of the proportional hazards assumption. Results are substantively the same if a Weibull model is used instead.

[102] Results are robust to including earlier observations on the (necessary but questionable) assumption that groups' use of terrorism is the same before and after 1989.

[103] All other variables are held at their median or modal values.

duration. None of them is perfect, however, so I use different models to triangulate. Because the rank ordering of outcomes as a measure of rebel "success" represents an argument rather than an established fact, and especially because my argument is that terrorism's effect on outcomes is non-monotonic (as terrorism increases the duration of war), I first employ a multinomial logistic regression model, in which no assumption is made about the order of the five outcomes categories.[104] I also control for the log of the duration of war to date (or "time at state") to account for the effects of time and duration dependence.[105]

[Table 3 about here]

The basic pattern in the bivariate analysis represented in Figure 1 generally holds, even when potential confounders are controlled for. While there is little difference between ongoing war (the omitted baseline category) and rebel defeat or wars that fizzle out, the "good" outcomes for rebels, peace agreements and rebel victory, are both significantly less likely when rebels employ terrorism as a tactic, supporting hypotheses and 1 and 2.

I also test these hypotheses with a competing risks model.[106] As before, I control for

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[104] Multinomial logit assumes the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA), an assumption that is hard to make in this case (the choice between ongoing war and negotiating a settlement is clearly affected by the possibility of winning or losing outright). However, as Dow and Endersby 2004 explain, the alternative, multinomial probit (which does not assume IIA) introduces other potentially serious problems, including optimization problems and failure to converge or imprecise estimates that make statistical inferences suspect, especially in the absence of a very large (tens of thousands)-N. They also note that in most cases the results of the two models are virtually indistinguishable, and argue that in cases where the set of choices is quite stable (as is true here), violation of the IIA assumption is not terribly important. Attempts to run multinomial probit models here indicate that convergence issues are indeed problematic.

[105] Following Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009.

[106] This framework is not ideal because tests of the proportional subhazards assumption suggest that it does not necessarily hold for all independent variables, in particular, for the democracy measure. More problematically, the terrorism variable also fails some but not all tests of

potentially confounding variables such as relative rebel strength, democracy, etc., and because

some wars began, and were therefore at "risk" of ending before 1989, I also control for the

duration of war up to that point. The results, presented in Table 4, indicate the same pattern as

the multinomial logit. The reported subhazard ratios, are, like the hazard ratios in Table 2,

interpreted relative to 1; those significantly less than 1 indicate variables associated with a lower

risk of each war outcome, those greater than 1 with a higher risk. This analysis indicates that the

use of terrorism increases the risk of government defeat by more than 4 times, though it has no

appreciable effect on the likelihood of war fizzling out. Meanwhile, the use of terrorism reduces

the likelihood that rebels reach a negotiated agreement by 80%, and reduces the chance of a

rebel victory to zero; both results easily pass tests of statistical significance. In other words, we

again see strong support for hypotheses 1 and 2.[107]

Figure 3 shows the results of the competing risks analysis graphically, plotting the

cumulative incidence rate of each outcome over time for terrorist and non-terrorist rebels,

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proportionality. However, this framework better models the fact that ongoing war is not actually
an outcome so much as a lack thereof, and can handle the censored nature of the data.

[107] Models that include interactions with time or ln(time) to fix violations of the proportional
hazards assumption show that terrorism is associated with a low risk of government victory or
low activity at the outset but that these risks grow significantly over time. The risk of agreement
and of rebel victory also appear to start low for terrorist rebels and to grow over time, however
terrorism*time interaction terms are not significant in most models for agreements and since
there are no cases of rebel victory for terrorist rebels, the results of PH tests for this outcome are
suspect. Interactions between democracy and time or ln(time) indicate that the risk of bad
outcomes for rebels (government victory and low activity) start off very high and decline over
time, while the risks of good outcomes (agreements and rebel victory) display the opposite
pattern. In other words, democratic governments tend to defeat rebels quickly, but rebels that
can survive over time, fare rather well.

holding other variables at their mean or modal values.[108] As can be seen, the incidence of the

best outcomes for rebels, negotiated agreement and rebel victory, are lower for those who resort

to terrorism, while the worst outcomes are, if anything higher for terrorist rebels.

[Table 4 and Figure 3 about here]

In sum, rebel groups who deliberately and indiscriminately kill civilians are much less

likely to win outright or to achieve concessions in the form of an agreement than are non-

terrorist rebel groups, all else equal, but are no less likely to fizzle out or be defeated rather than

to live to fight another day.[109]

I turn, finally, to analysis of the relative effects of terrorism against democratic and non-

democratic governments to test hypothesis 4. Because there are relatively few cases of civil war

in democracies (the government is democratic in a third of the observations in these data), it is

difficult to examine the finer-grained distinctions among war outcomes. We can compare,

however rebel "success" (combining rebel victory and negotiated agreements) and "failure" (low

activity and government victory). An interaction term between terrorism and democracy allows

us to see whether terrorism is more effective against democracies. Table 5 presents the results of

logistic regression in which ongoing wars are dropped from the analysis (model 1); a

multinomial regression of these two categories as compared to ongoing war (model 2); and a

competing risks model of these combined outcomes.

[Table 5 about here]

In all of these models we see that the negative effects of terrorism on rebel success are

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[108] Cumulative incidence functions shown here do not take violations of the PH assumption into account, and so should be taken with a grain of salt.

[109] Contra Wood's 2010 finding that rebel violence against civilians helps them avoid defeat.

reduced in democracies, as hypothesis 4 suggests. As always, interaction terms must be interpreted along with the relevant base terms.[110] The coefficients and subhazard ratios for terrorism capture estimated effects against non-democracies and are consistent with the findings reported above.[111] The coefficients and subhazard ratios for the interaction term must be compared to those for democracy to see the estimated effect of terrorism against democratic governments. In the logit model and the success column of the multinomial logit model, the coefficient for the interaction term is higher than that for the democracy base term, indicating that success is, if anything more likely for terrorists than for non-terrorists in this context. This difference is not even close to statistically significant (the confidence intervals overlap substantially), but the negative effect of terrorism has clearly fallen away. The competing risks analysis indicates that while terrorism increases the risk of failure and reduces the chances of success against non-democracies, there is virtually no difference in the subhazard ratios for terrorist and non-terrorist rebels when fighting against democracies. Of the terrorist rebel groups that succeeded in reaching a negotiated agreement, 3 out of 4 fought democratic governments.[112] To put this finding another way, terrorist rebels are more likely to succeed against democratic governments than non-democratic governments, but they are still less likely to succeed than rebels who do not use terrorism.

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[110] Braumoeller 2004.

[111] These results are not quite statistically significant at conventional levels due to smaller numbers of cases in each category once one parses the data by democratic and non-democratic governments.

[112] These include: Fatah vs Israel, IRA vs. the United Kingdom, and the MNLF vs. Philippines (all 3 cases in 1993). The only case of an agreement with terrorist rebels in a non-democracy is the CPN-M/UPF vs. Nepal in 2003.

Conclusion

Research on terrorism has exploded (no pun intended) since 2001 for obvious reasons. The ability of this literature to answer fundamental questions has been hampered by a lack of variation on the phenomenon, however. This project uses variation within civil wars, namely the fact that some rebel groups use terrorism while others do not, to help resolve the debate about the effectiveness of terrorism.

I argue that the disadvantages of terrorism generally outweigh its advantages. It is a cheap way to inflict pain on the other side, and terrorist groups are hard to eliminate completely, but it is useless for taking or holding territory. It may help signal commitment to a cause, but because it is cheap, it signals weakness rather than strength. It may be useful for provoking an overreaction by the government, but it also helps justify draconian measures to crush the rebellion. Its outrageous nature may help bring attention to a cause, but also undermines legitimacy and alienates potential supporters. Empirically, I find much more support for the argument that terrorism is likely to backfire than for the notion that it is effective.

Terrorism may help achieve tactical results, but these apparently do not translate into strategic success. It may also be useful at lower levels of conflict or for groups that do not have the ability to wage full-scale war (a question I cannot yet address with available data). Terrorism helps rebel organizations survive longer.[113] However, rebels who use terrorism never win outright, and they are less likely to achieve concessions in a negotiated outcome. This negative effect is attenuated when rebels fight against democracies rather than autocracies. But even in democratic states, terrorist rebels groups do not achieve victory and are unlikely to obtain

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[113] See also Wood 2010.

concessions at the negotiating table. The short answer to the question "Do terrorists win?" is "No."

This study begins to shed light on the causes of terrorism, as well as its effects. I only examine this question briefly here, focusing on variables that might also affect war outcomes, to avoid spurious results. The results are intriguing, however. They cast doubt on the conventional wisdom that terrorism is a "weapon of the weak." Among rebels fighting full-fledged civil wars, there is surprisingly little evidence that weaker groups are more likely to use terrorism than stronger ones. Nor is terrorism more likely, again contrary to conventional wisdom, in secessionist wars or when rebels profess extreme aims. Terrorism is more likely, however, in civil wars in democracies, as many have argued; and where religious differences separate rebels from the government they fight. It is much less likely to be used in Africa, a finding that remains to be explained theoretically. Expanding the analysis of why some groups turn to terrorism while others do not is an obvious avenue for further research.

Extensions of this study to further our understanding both of where terrorism arises and how successful it is will require collecting new data. Data are currently available only for a relatively short period (1989-2004) and for full-fledged civil wars. Extending the analysis temporally before the end of the Cold War and to include more recent conflicts, and especially to lower level conflicts will strengthen the analysis, and in particular allow fuller testing, for example, of the notion that terrorism is a "weapon of the weak."[114]

If terrorism is so ineffective, one might reasonably ask why rebel groups use it,

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[114] Both extensions are possible with the CGS data, which include minor conflicts involving as few as 25 deaths annually as far back as 1945, but the coding of whether rebel groups use terrorism needs to be expanded to cover the longer time span and these smaller conflicts.

especially rebels who are not fighting democratic governments.[115] The answer may lie in the

finding that terrorist wars last longer than others. The use of terrorism contributes to rebel

organizations' survival. Rebels thus face a dilemma – using terrorism as a tactic is good for the

immediate goal of survival, but comes at the expense of the long-term political goals for which

they are, ultimately (or ostensibly) fighting.

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[115] Forty-two percent of the rebels who use terrorism were engaged in civil war in a non-democratic state (measured in the year the war started).

Table 1: Determinants of Terrorism in Civil War (logit)

	Coef. (RSE)	P>|z|
Rebel Strength	-0.84 (0.76)	.264
Democracy	1.55 (0.72)	.031
Independence	-0.24 (1.56)	.878
Transform	1.37 (1.65)	.408
Different Religion	1.23 (0.51)	.016
Population	0.22 (0.25)	.383
GDP/per capita	0.44 (0.33)	.183
Africa	omitted**	
Mountains	-0.06 (0.31)	.855
Multiple Groups	0.10 (0.73)	.889
Constant	-7.23 (5.19)	.163
N	70**	
Pseudo-R^2	0.31	

** Africa predicts "failure" perfectly – 34 observations in Africa therefore dropped.

Table 2. Terrorism and the Duration of War (Cox PH Model)

	Hazard Ratio (RSE)	P>|z|
Terrorist Rebels	0.41 (0.13)	.005
Rebel Strength	1.16 (0.23)	.455
Democracy	0.59 (0.24)	.185
Independence	0.53 (0.19)	.075
Transform	0.53 (0.15)	.025
Population	0.94 (0.09)	.502
GDP/Capita	0.92 (0.17)	.641
Africa	0.57 (0.17)	.055
Different Religion	1.54 (0.45)	.139
War Age in 1989	0.96 (0.03)	.214
N	566	
Subjects	104	
Failures	86	
Log Pseudo-Likelihood	-261.95	

Table 3. Terrorism and War Outcomes: Multinomial Logistic (Baseline: Ongoing War)

	Government Victory		Low or No Activity		Negotiated Agreement		Rebel Victory	
	Coef. (RSE)	P>|z|	Coef. (RSE)	P>|z|	Coef. (RSE)	P>|z|	Coef. (RSE)	P>|z|
Terrorist Rebel Group	0.56 (0.89)	.345	-0.29 (0.51)	.576	-1.85 (0.60)	.002	-13.39 (1.51)	.000
Relative Rebel Strength	0.25 (0.46)	.583	-1.20 (0.45)	.008	0.72 (0.26)	.006	0.40 (0.49)	.418
Democracy	-2.08 (0.77)	.007	-1.72 (1.00)	.084	0.36 (0.53)	.498	-14.41 (1.79)	.000
Secessionist	-0.18 (1.01)	.861	-0.94 (0.98)	.338	-0.73 (0.41)	.078	-0.90 (0.66)	.177
Transform	-15.75 (1.07)	.000	-0.47 (0.89)	.599	-0.72 (0.56)	.203	-0.74 (0.68)	.279
Population	0.16 (0.27)	.564	0.25 (0.23)	.271	-0.21 (0.16)	.197	0.46 (0.39)	.248
GDP/capita	0.43 (0.55)	.439	0.75 (0.42)	.071	0.05 (0.31)	.884	-0.68 (0.78)	.385
Africa	-15.67 (0.70)	.000	0.01 (0.73)	.992	-0.32 (0.35)	.345	-0.21 (0.93)	.821
Religious Difference	-0.55 (0.85)	.513	-0.22 (0.58)	.705	1.12 (0.44)	.010	-0.32 (1.08)	.765
Log Duration to Date	-0.32 (0.17)	.063	-0.18 (0.19)	.330	0.14 (0.11)	.176	-0.07 (0.28)	.814
Constant	-5.26 (6.41)	.412	-8.53 (4.68)	.068	-1.85 (3.31)	.576	-1.64 (6.54)	.802

N	566	Pseudo R^2	0.15	Log Pseudo Likelihood	-294.98

Table 4. Terrorism and War Outcomes: Competing Risks Analysis

	Government Victory		Low or No Activity		Negotiated Agreement		Rebel Victory	
	SHR (RSE)	P>|z|	SHR (RSE)	P>|z|	SHR (RSE)	P>|z|	SHR (RSE)	P>|z|
Terrorist Rebel Group	4.12 (2.52)	.021	1.01 (0.54)	.991	0.20 (0.13)	.011	0.00 (0.00)	.000
Relative Rebel Strength	0.94 (0.38)	.882	0.22 (0.10)	.001	1.51 (0.43)	.145	1.33 (0.56)	.492
Democracy	0.14 (0.15)	.064	0.51 (0.48)	.472	2.12 (1.03)	.124	0.00 (0.00)	.000
Secessionist	0.88 (1.00)	.909	0.64 (0.62)	.646	0.79 (0.39)	.632	0.48 (0.33)	.280
Transform	0.00 (0.00)	.000	1.84 (1.58)	.477	0.75 (0.41)	.603	0.84 (0.50)	.767
Population	1.13 (0.30)	.646	1.12 (0.22)	.544	0.75 (0.12)	.063	1.16 (0.41)	.663
GDP/capita	1.45 (1.02)	.597	2.00 (0.77)	.073	0.85 (0.27)	.614	0.36 (0.31)	.232
Africa	0.00 (0.00)	.000	1.36 (1.03)	.689	0.82 (0.38)	.674	0.66 (0.65)	.676
Religious Difference	0.35 (0.36)	.303	0.73 (0.43)	.589	3.51 (1.86)	.018	1.16 (0.81)	.835
War Age in 1989	0.95 (0.08)	.578	1.24 (0.07)	.000	1.18 (0.05)	.000	1.41 (0.09)	.000
Failed	9		18		44		16	
Competing	78		69		43		71	
Log Pseudo Likelihood	-29.04		-57.71		-151.39		-44.92	
N	566		Subjects				104	

Table 5. Effectiveness of Terrorism against Democracies

|	(1) Logit		(2) Multinomial Logit					(3) Competing Risks			
	Success		Failure		Success			Failure		Success	
Terrorist Rebel Group	-2.49	.099	-0.002	.996	-1.86	.122		1.78	.220	0.20	.182
	(1.51)		(0.48)		(1.20)			(0.85)		(0.24)	
Democracy	0.55	.672	-1.51	.258	-0.02	.968		0.51	.552	1.24	.682
	(1.29)		(1.34)		(0.51)			(0.57)		(0.65)	
Democracy*Terrorism	2.23	.282	-0.46	.731	0.16	.895		0.49	.537	1.29	.844
	(2.07)		(1.33)		(1.25)			(0.57)		(1.66)	
Relative Rebel Strength	1.85	.001	-0.63	.042	0.65	.006		0.39	.001	2.03	.001
	(0.57)		(0.31)		(0.24)			(0.11)		(0.42)	
Secessionist	-0.50	.473	-0.54	.432	-0.70	.027		0.84	.774	0.61	.113
	(0.69)		(0.69)		(0.32)			(0.51)		(0.19)	
Transform	-0.05	.957	-0.90	.256	-0.77	.003		0.70	.630	0.59	.097
	(0.93)		(0.79)		(0.36)			(0.52)		(0.19)	
Population	-0.04	.889	0.20	.341	-0.09	.514		1.10	.580	0.84	.162
	(0.26)		(0.21)		(0.13)			(0.19)		(0.10)	
GDP/capita	-0.53	.198	0.63	.098	-0.18	.565		1.71	.121	0.56	.051
	(0.41)		(0.38)		(0.31)			(0.59)		(0.17)	
Africa	0.75	.385	-0.75	.296	-0.30	.418		0.57	.423	0.75	.326
	(0.86)		(0.72)		(0.38)			(0.40)		(0.22)	
Religious Difference	1.44	.043	0.26	.471	0.75	.053		0.61	.147	3.32	.001
	(0.71)		(0.36)		(0.39)			(0.21)		(1.22)	
Time at State			-0.23	.077	0.07	.537	War Age	1.13	.024	1.16	.000
			(0.13)		(0.12)			(0.06)		(0.04)	
Constant	3.43	.418	-6.40	.165	-0.26	.921					
	(4.24)		(4.61)		(2.68)						
Failed/Competing								27/60		60/27	
N/Subjects	87		566					566/104		566/104	
Pseudo R^2	.28		.12								
Log Pseudo-Likelihood								-108.68		-222.16	

Figure 1. Terrorism and War Outcomes (percentage)
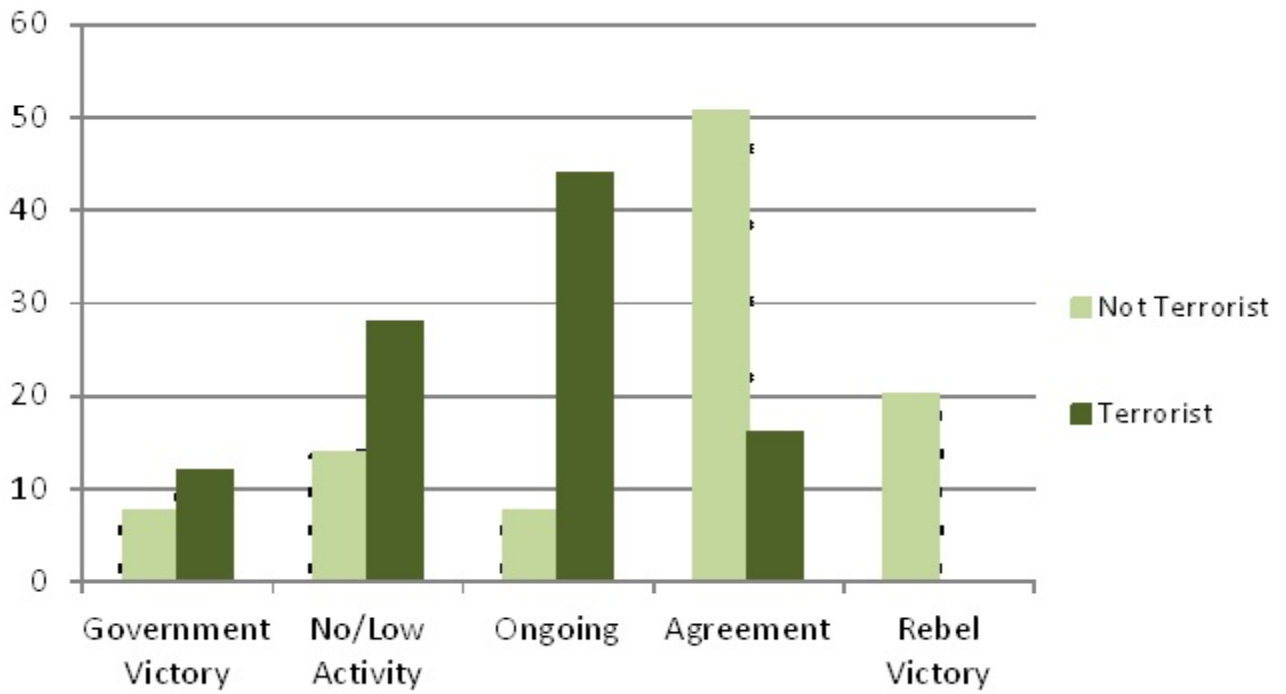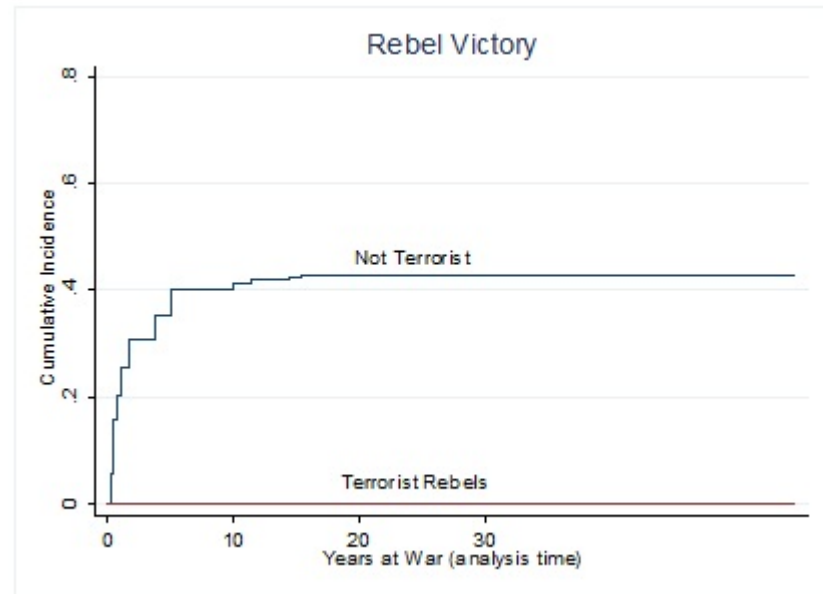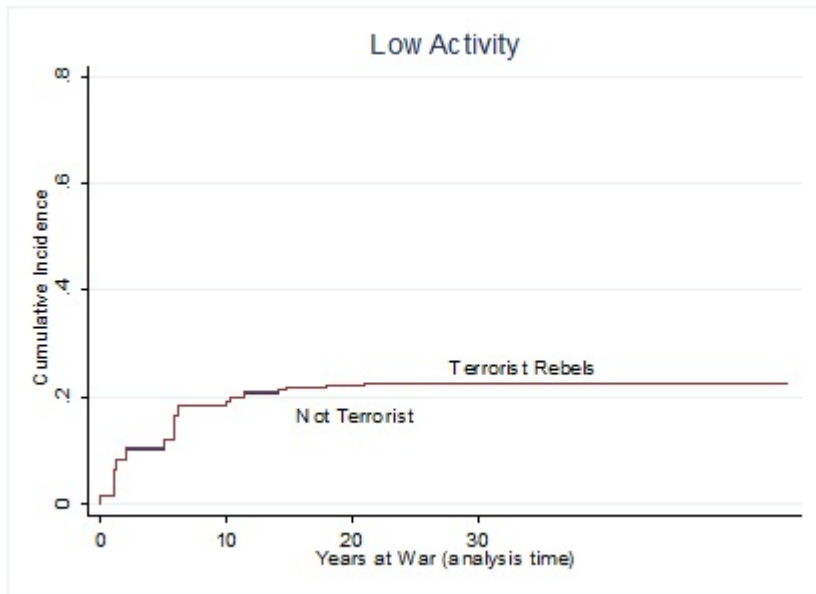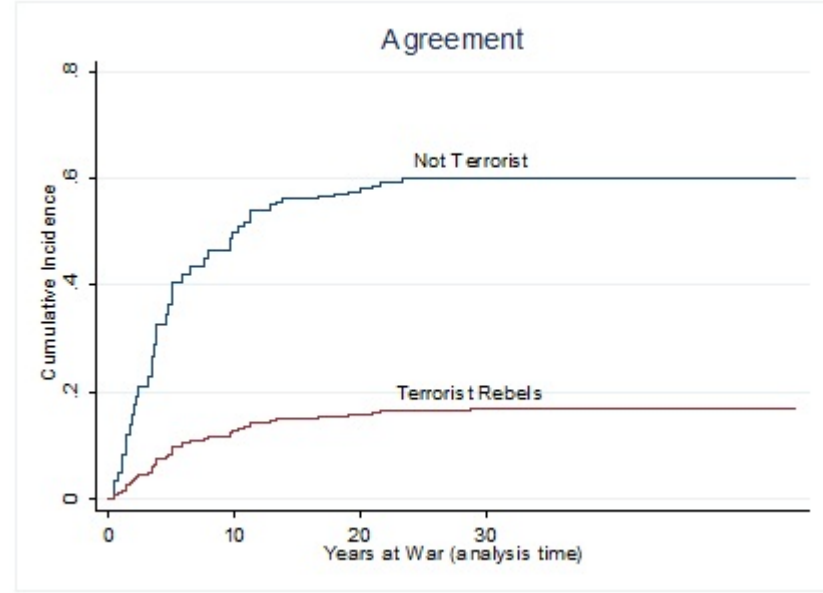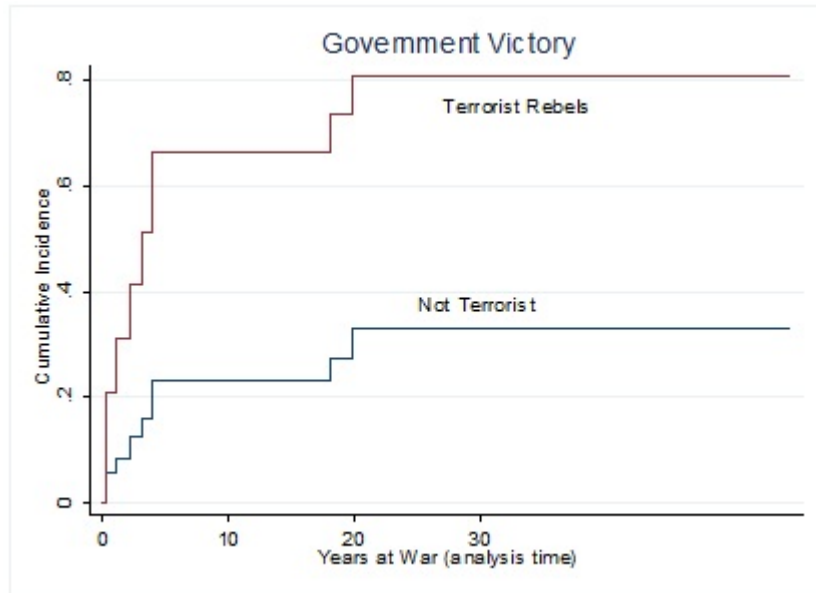
Figure 2. Terrorism & the Duration of War
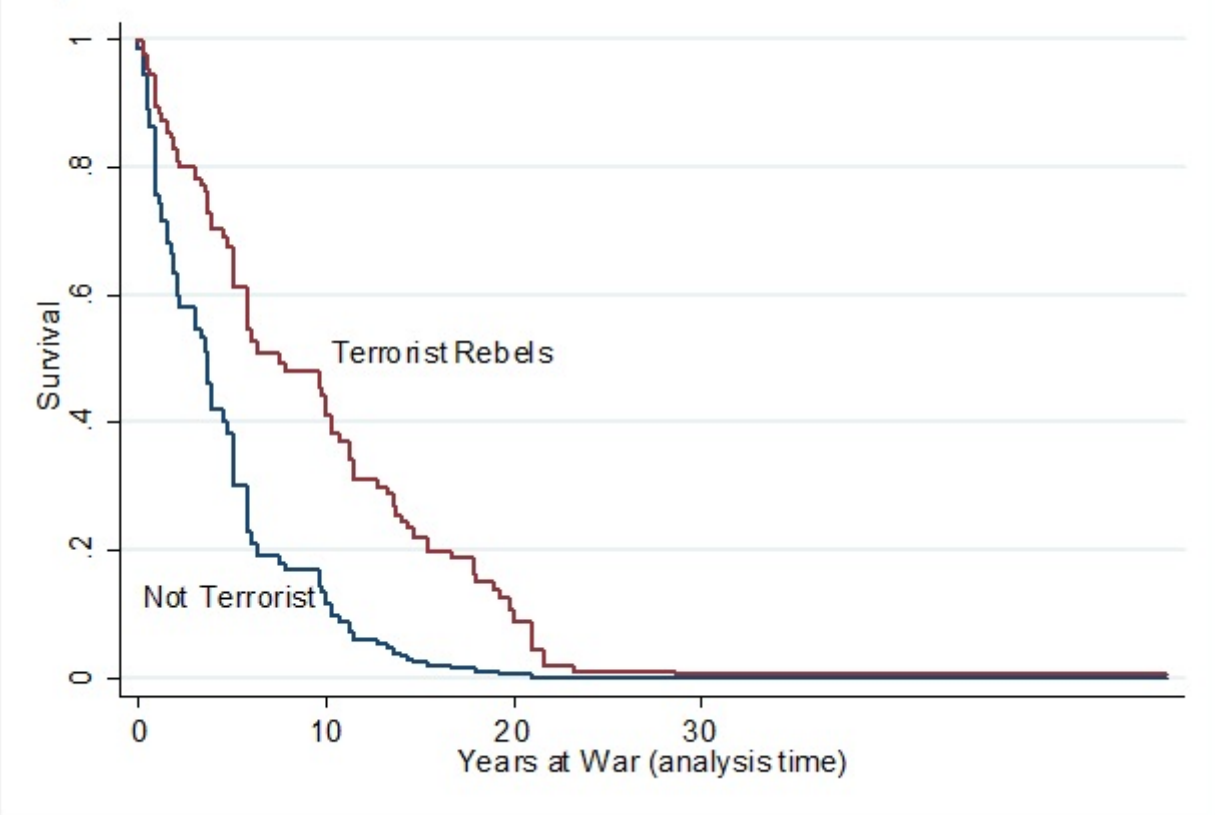
Figure 3. Terrorism and War Outcomes (Competing Risks)

Appendix. The Cases (Government-Rebels year ended)

	Government Victory	Low Activity	Ongoing War	Agreement	Rebel Victory
Not Terrorist	Cambodia-KR/PDK 1998 Croatia-Serb irregulars 1995 Croatia-Krajina 1995 Indonesia-GAM 1991 Sri Lanka-JVP 1989 Yemen-D.R.Yemen 1994	C.Brazza.-Ninjas 1999 Mali-FIAA 1994 Indonesia-Fretilin 1989 Indonesia-Fretilin 1992 Iraq-KDP/DPK 1993 Iraq-PUK 1993 Iraq-SAIRI 1996 Morocco-POLISARIO 1989 Pakistan-MQM 1996 Rwanda-Opposition 2002 Uganda-UDCM/UPDCA 1991	Angola-FLEC Burma-KNU Burma-SSA Colombia-ELN India-Naxalites Uganda-LRA	Algeria-FIS 1997 Angola-UNITA 1994 Angola-UNITA 2002 Azerbaijan-Nagorno K. 1994 Bangladesh-JSS/SB 1992 Bosnia-Croatian RB&H 1994 Bosnia&H-Croatian irreg 1994 Bosnia&H-Serbian irreg. 1995 Bosnia&H-Serbian R. B&H 1995 Burma-MTA 1996 Burundi-CNDD 1998 Burundi CNDD-FDD 2003 Burundi-Palipehutu-FNL 2003 Cambodia-FUNCINPEC 1991 Cambodia-KPNLF 1991 Chad-CSNPD 1994 Chad-FARF 1998 Congo/Zaire-RCD 2001 Djibouti-FRUD 1994 El Salvador-FMLN 1991 Georgia-R. Abkhazia 1993 Guatemala-URNG 1995 India-NSCN 1997 Indonesia-Fretilin 1998 Indonesia-GAM 2003 Mali-MPA 1990 Moldova-Dniestr R. 1992 Mozambique-Renamo 1992 Nicaragua-FDN/Contras 1989 Papua New Guinea-BRA 1996 Russia-R. Chechnya 1996 Senegal-MFDC 2003 Sierra Leone-RUF 2000 Somalia-SRRC 2002 Sudan-SPLM 2003 Sudan-SPLM Faction1997 Somalia-USC Faction 1996 South Africa-ANC 1993 Tajikistan-UTO 1996 Yugoslavia-UCK 1999	Afghanistan-Hezb-i-Islami 1992 Afghanistan-Jamiat-i-Islami 1992 Afghanistan-Taliban 1996 Afghanistan-UIFSA 2001 Congo/Zaire-AFDL 1997 Congo-Brazzaville-FDU 1997 Ethiopia-EPDM 1991 Ethiopia-EPLF 1991 Ethiopia-EPRP 1991 Ethiopia-OLF 1991 Ethiopia-TPLF 1991 Guinea Bissau-Mil. Faction 1999 Rwanda-FPR 1994 Somalia-SNM 1991 Yugoslavia-R. Croatia 1991 Yugoslavia-Croatian irregs 1991
Terrorist	India-ULFA 1991 Philippines-MNLF (faction) 2002 Sri Lanka-LTTE 2003	Algeria-GIA 2003 Egypt-Gamaa al-Islamiyya 1998 Egypt-Jihad al-Islamiy 1998 Egypt-Tala i al-Fath 1998 India-Sikh 1993 Peru-Sendero Luminoso 1994 UK-Real IRA 1998	Afghanistan-Taliban Colombia-FARC India-Kashmir India-ULFA Faction Israel-Fatah Israel-Hamas Philippines-Abu Sayyaf Philippines-MILF Philippines-NPA Russia-R. Chechnya Turkey-PKK/Kadek	Israel-Fatah 1993 Nepal-CPN-M/UPF 2003 Philippines-MNLF 1993 U.K.-PIRA/IRA 1993	

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