

The evolution of terrorism

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***Abstract:** Terrorism has arguably been one of the defining factors of our age. It frequently makes headlines, threatening or attacking governments, private business and ordinary citizens. And in many parts of the world, it has been one of the most important threats to peace, security and stability. Though is a worldwide phenomenon, many people do not know how to define terrorism and to identify its characteristics and roots and this is mainly because there is no generally accepted definition of terrorism. In the following, we will have a closer look at the evolution of terrorism and we will identify the most important core components in a definition of terrorism.*

***Keywords:** terrorism; national security; international terrorism.*

Introduction

The term „terrorism” means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.

The term „international terrorism” means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country.

Terrorism is a contested concept, and political, legal, social signs and popular notions are often diverging. There is not one definition of terrorism but there is general agreement that the phenomenon of terrorism has many different elements. That terrorism is an instrument or a tactic of certain groups, be they non state actors or state actors, to achieve certain goals. Use of force is important, an important part of this instrument or tactic but it's not its goal. Fear finally, is one of the key components and spreading fear is more important than spreading death.

So it's not primarily about causing casualties. The goal is not many dead, but many afraid. And terrorists sometimes manage to do that with very limited means. Especially in countries that are not that often confronted with terrorism.

The essence of terrorism is not only that it's not mainly about killing. Another important element is that the direct targets are not or only rarely the main targets. We take for instance the attacks on 9/11. 3000 people were killed, but they were in many ways the indirect targets. The terrorist didn't want to kill those people, they wanted to attract a lot of attention. The main targets were you and I who were watching these horrible pictures of people being killed in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. So, the direct targets are not or only rarely the main targets of terrorism. So the violence is not aimed at those who die but those who continue to live. The main target is us.

Also, another reason why it's so difficult to define terrorism is the fact that the word has undergone changes in meaning in the more than 200 years of its existence. The term terrorism has changed its semantic focus several times. It was originally used to describe the reign of terror by the authorities after the French Revolution and the term Terrorist was not used in anti-government sense before the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century.

Terrorism is the unofficial and unauthorized use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims.

Terrorism is international. The command and control of terrorist groups, the recruitment, training, active operations and the target audience can all be located in different countries and so counter-terrorist measures will not be effective unless all nations cooperate in agreeing to the characteristics of terrorist groups and their activities. Agreement on a common definition would be a step towards universal cooperation in the prevention of terrorism. In many countries, terrorism is considered the biggest, or one of the biggest, threats influencing relationships between countries and between communities.

Terrorism is a worldwide phenomenon. But there are enormous regional differences. Large organizations like the UN and NATO and other regional organizations have been focusing on terrorism a lot, especially since 911.

Following research, I've found twelve core components that the definition of terrorism should include:

- it should say something about a doctrine and/or practice of violent action;
- it should mention that terrorism instills fear, dread, panic or mere anxiety;
- it should mention that terrorism is predominantly political;
- it should refer to the context in which terrorism is employed as a tactic;
- it should say something about the direct victims;
- it should refer to the intent of acts of terrorism;
- it should contain the concept of physical violence or threat thereof;
- it should point at the fact that the direct victims are not the ultimate target;
- it should contain the motivations to engage in terrorism;
- it should say something about threat-based communication processes;
- it should say something about the perpetrators;
- it should mention that terrorist acts form part of a campaign of violence [1].

1. The history of terrorism

Non state actors using terrorism is not really new, even in pre-modern days, there were groups and individuals that used political violence against the authorities and elite.

Most descriptions of modern day terrorism starts with the anarchists that are associated with the propaganda of the deed from the French propaganda. A group or network or movement that was active since the 1870s, 1880s.

So even more than a century ago there were many different groups using different tactics, slogans and with different political backgrounds, ranging from the extreme left to nationalist separatists. And some killed heads of states and others attacked ordinary citizens. Some acted only in their home town or home region, while others had an international agenda and operated across borders. So again, terrorism of today is nothing new.

In specialty literature was identified four waves in terrorism, each with its own ingredients, different audiences, sympathizers and supporters, or modus operandi, meaning the way these groups operate [2]. Each of these periods or waves last about a few decades, three or four decades after which they gradually fade out.

The four waves are as follows: in the 1880s, an initial „The Anarchists Wave” appeared which continued for some 40 years, its successor, the „Anti-Colonial Wave” began in the 1920s, and by the 1960s had largely disappeared. The late 1960s witnessed the birth of the „New Left Wave”, which dissipated largely in the 90s leaving a few groups still active in Sri Lanka, Spain, France, Peru, and Columbia. The fourth or „Religious Wave” began in 1979, and, if it follows the pattern of its predecessors, it still has twenty to twenty-five years to run.

Revolution was the overriding aim in every wave, but revolution was understood differently in each. Most terrorist organizations have understood revolution as secession or national self-determination. This principle, that a people should govern itself, was bequeathed by the American and French Revolutions.

The first three waves lasted approximately 40 to 45 years, but the "New Left Wave" was somewhat abbreviated. The pattern suggests a human life cycle pattern, where dreams that inspire fathers lose their attractiveness for the sons. Clearly, the life cycle of the waves does not correspond to that of organizations. Organizations normally dissipate before the wave does, though sometimes an organization survives its associated wave. The IRA, for example, is the oldest terrorist organization of the modern world; it began the anti-colonial wave in the 20's and is still here. By way of comparison, the average life of organizations in the third or "New Left" wave is two years.

The II of rebel terror is very ancient, going back at least to the first century. Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam produced the Thugs, Zealots, and Assassins respectively--names still used to designate terrorists [3]. Religion determined every purpose and tactic of this ancient form.

Significant examples of secular rebel terror appeared before the "Anarchist Wave" began. The United States, for example, experienced two major successful ones. The Sons of Liberty, provoked by the Stamp Act, organized mobs to tar and feather colonists still loyal to the king [4], forcing many to flee the country and settle in Canada. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) forced the federal government to end

Reconstruction. But the two American examples were time and country specific. They had no contemporary parallels and no emulators, because they did their dirty work in secret.

In contrast, the Russian experience in the 1880s spread rapidly to other parts of Europe, the Americas, and Asia before reaching its peak and receding. Despite this extraordinary spread of activities, unlike the American examples, no first wave group achieved its goal. The three subsequent waves show similar, though not identical, patterns. Each begins in a different locale and the participating rebel groups often share purposes and tactics that distinguish them from participants in other waves.

Terror was extra-normal violence or violence beyond the moral conventions regulating violence. Most specifically, the conventions violated were the rules of war designed to distinguish combatants from non-combatants. Invariably, most onlookers would label the acts atrocities or outrages. That was a time when dynamite was invented. That was a time when the rotary press was invented. When the two came together suddenly the violence part increased through the bombs, but the communication part of terrorism and terrorism's the combination of violence and propaganda, increased tremendously.

The rebels described themselves as terrorists, not guerrillas, tracing their lineage back to the French Revolution, and sometimes to the Order of Assassins in medieval Islam. They sought political targets with the potentiality to shake up public attitudes. Terrorism was a strategy, not an end. Judging a context so often in flux was both an art and a science.

The Versailles Peace Treaty concluding World War I sparked the hope for the second or "Anti-Colonial Wave." The empires of the defeated states (which were mostly in Europe) were broken up by applying the principle of self-determination. Where independence was not immediately feasible, territories were understood to be "mandates" ultimately destined for independence. But the victors could not articulate the principle without also raising questions about the legitimacy of their own empires.

Second wave tactics differed in some respects from those of first. Bank robberies were less common, partly because diaspora sources this time contributed more money. Most conspicuous was the lesson learned that assassinating prominent political figures was often counterproductive, and few attacks on the prominent occurred. One organization continued the old practice, Lehi (a Zionist revisionist group the British labeled the "Stern Gang") and it proved much less effective than competitors in the struggle for independence. The new strategy was first to eliminate via systematic assassinations the police, a government's eyes and ears.

In the third wave, radicalism was often combined with nationalism, as in the Basque Nation and Liberty (ETA), the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), the Corsican National Liberation Front (FNLC), and the IRA. The pattern reminds us of the first wave, where Anarchists sometimes linked themselves to nationalist aspirations, notably in Indian, Armenian, and Macedonian groups. Although every early effort failed, the linkage was renewed for the obvious reason that self-determination always appeals to a larger constituency than radical aspiration. Nonetheless, most failed quickly. The survivors did not make much headway, because the countries concerned (Turkey, Spain, and France) did not understand themselves to be colonial powers nor did they display the ambivalence necessary for the separatists to succeed.

The term "international terrorism" (commonly used during the "Anarchist Wave") was revived to describe "New Left Wave" activities. The revolutionary ethos created significant bonds between separate national groups. Kidnappings occurred in at least seventy-three countries and were especially important in Italy, Spain, and Latin America. In the fourteen years after 1968, there were numerous international incidents, 409 kidnappings, and 951 hostages taken [5]. Initially, hostages were taken to gain political leverage. But it was soon apparent that hostages (especially company executives) could provide much cash. Companies insured their executives, and the unintended consequence was that it made kidnapping more lucrative and easier to consummate on the kidnapers' terms. Informed observers estimate that some \$350 million were gained from the practice in the period.

The "religious wave" began in the same decade as the third one. In the three earlier waves, religious identity was always important; religious and ethnic identities often overlap, as the Armenian, Macedonian, Irish, Cypriot, Israeli, and Palestinian struggles illustrate. But the aim earlier was to create secular sovereign states, in principle no different from those present in the international world. Religion has a vastly different significance in the fourth wave, supplying justifications and organizing principles for the New World to be established.

Islam is the most important religion in this wave but we should remember that other religious communities produced terrorists too. Sikhs sought a religious state in the Punjab. Jewish terrorists attempted to blow up Islam's most sacred shrine in Jerusalem and waged an assassination campaign against Palestinian mayors. One religious settler murdered 29 worshippers in Abraham's tomb (Hebron, 1994) and a

fundamentalist assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Rabin (1995). 1995 was also the year in which Aum Shinrikyo, a group that combined Buddhist, Christian, and Hindu religious themes, released nerve gas on the Tokyo subway, killing 12 and injuring 3000.

Assassinations and hostage taking, common features of the third wave, persisted, but "suicide bombing" was the most striking and deadly tactical innovation. It reasserted the martyrdom theme of the first wave, neglected by its two successors.

Fourth wave groups, much more than their counterparts in the third wave, have made massive attacks against military and government installations. Americans, in particular, became frequent targets. An ambush in Somalia forced American troops, who had evacuated Lebanon, to abandon another mission. Suicide bomb attacks on military posts in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and an American destroyer went unanswered. Similarly, embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were struck, occasioning heavy casualties in the local populations. In 1993, the first successful attack by foreign terrorists on American soil occurred, the first World Trade Center bombing. It was followed by unsuccessful efforts to coordinate new attacks in America on the eve of the new millennium. Finally, the massive assaults on September 11 occurred, and the "war" against terror was launched.

The fourth wave produced an organization with a purpose and recruitment pattern unique in the history of terrorism; namely, Al Qaeda, led and financed by the Saudi Osama Bin Laden. It seeks to create a single state for all Muslims, a state that once existed, and one that would be governed by the Sharia, Islamic law. The aspiration resonates in the Sunni populations throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. In the past, every terrorist organization recruited from a single national base. Al Qaeda seeks members from all parts of the vast Sunni world, including those who have gone to live in the West, though Arabs, especially from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, supply most recruits. Its unity is enhanced by common experience in Afghanistan, where virtually all recruits had trained [6]. The first step in achieving its goal would be to strengthen rebel Islamic groups in various states of the Sunni world. Eliminating American influence in these states is a precondition of reunification. Forcing the Americans to withdraw troops from Islam's holiest shrines is the first step, and the second is to exploit a general anger over American influence in the Palestinian and Iraqi questions. Since Al Qaeda achieved none of its objectives and the early attacks produced virtually no response, the September 11 attacks could be understood as a desperate attempt to rejuvenate a failing cause by triggering indiscriminate American reactions [7].

2. Models of terrorist attacks

The GTD also shows that the patterns of terrorist attacks and fatal attacks since 1970 are more complex than is commonly recognized. According to Figure 1, terrorist attacks reached their twentieth century zenith in 1992 (with over 5,100 attacks worldwide), but had substantially declined in the years leading up to the 9/11 attacks. In fact, total attacks in 2000 (1,351) were at about the same level as total attacks in 1977 (1,307). Looking more broadly at overall trends, Figure 1 shows that worldwide terrorist attacks through the mid-1970s were relatively infrequent, with fewer than 1,000 incidents each year.

But from 1976 to 1979 the frequency of events nearly tripled. The number of terrorist attacks continued to increase until the 1992 peak, with smaller peaks in 1984, at almost 3,500 incidents, and 1989, with over 4,300 events. After the first major peak in 1992, the number of terrorist attacks declined until the end of the twentieth century, before rising steeply to a 10-year high of nearly 3,300 in 2007 – four years after the start of the Iraq war. Still, total attacks in 2007 were 36% lower than total attacks for the 1992 peak [8].

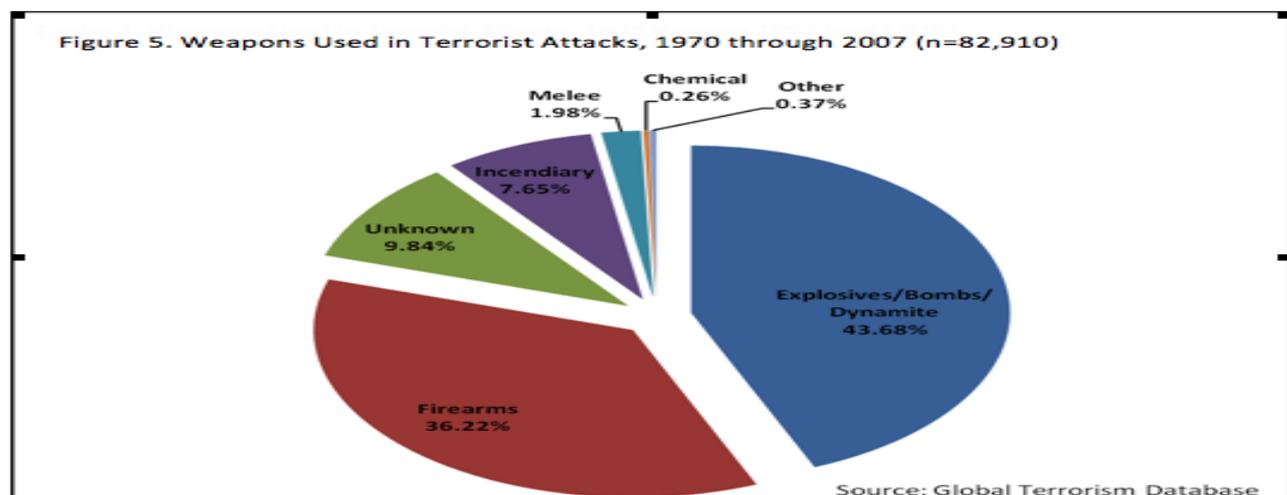


Fatal attacks also declined in the years prior to the 9/11 attacks. In fact, fatal attacks in 2000 (580) were considerably lower than they had been more than two decades earlier, in 1979 (832). In general, the number of fatal attacks clearly followed the pattern of total attacks ($r = .93$), but at a substantially lower magnitude (averaging 947 fatal attacks per year compared to 2294 total attacks per year worldwide). Fatal attacks rose above 1,000 per year for the first time in 1980. Like total attacks, fatal attacks declined somewhat after 1992, bottoming out in 1998 with 426 attacks and then rising again to a global peak of more than 2,100 fatal attacks in 2007.

In short, in the four years prior to 9/11 worldwide terrorist attacks and fatal attacks were at their lowest level in 20 years. However, both total and fatal attacks have increased considerably since then so that in 2007 total attacks were back to levels they had been at in the mid-1990s and fatal attacks were approaching the peak year of 1992 [9].

3. The weapon used in terrorist attacks

Contrary to the view of terrorism that we commonly get from the media, the vast majority of terrorist attacks rely on readily accessible weapons. According to figure below, the most common weapons in the GTD database were explosives and firearms. These two categories account for nearly 80 per cent of all attacks. For the most part, the explosives used were readily available, especially dynamite, grenades, mortars and improvised devices placed inside vehicles ("car bombs"). Similarly, the most common firearms were also widely available, especially automatic weapons, shot guns, and pistols. After explosives and firearms, incendiaries (fire or firebombs) account for nearly eight per cent of the incidents. Melee attacks, which include assaults with weapons such as blunt objects, knives, and ropes, account for fewer than two per cent of all attacks.



Weapons included in the "other" category were diverse, including items such as sabotage equipment, vehicles (not vehicle-borne explosives), biological, radiological, and fake weapons. Among the more sophisticated weapon types were 523 attacks using remote-detonated devices, 213 attacks using chemical agents, 26 attacks involving biological agents, and 15 attacks involving radiological materials.

Note that chemical agents were responsible for about one-quarter of one per cent of all incidents and biological and radiological agents were each present in less than three-one hundredths of one per cent of all attacks. The remote-detonated explosive devices were usually left on the roadside or attached to vehicles. Chemical agents range from letters containing rat poison to tainted water supplies. Ten of the 26 biological weapons cases were the US anthrax attacks of 2001 in which seven people died. Likewise, 10 of the 15 cases involving radiological materials were related to attacks in which an individual sent envelopes containing monazite to Japanese government officials, causing no injuries [10].

Terrorism is the tool of the politically weak. It is used precisely because the groups involved do not have a lot of sophisticated weaponry. If they did, they would probably use it in more conventional military ways. Typical terrorist attacks use readily available weapons. In contrast to high profile media reports, sophisticated weapons, including chemical, biological or radiological materials, are the rare exception [11].

Conclusions

The terrorist strategy is to kill one or a few and to frighten millions. They want us to overreact, and unfortunately that is quite often the case. Maybe we should try harder not to be afraid, not to overreact.

In the past, the influence of terrorism on the population was smaller due to the fact that the press and media were not so widespread, however, currently, the impact on the population is very large, a single act of terrorism, no matter how small, can produce even a single victim can be seen by billions of people through the Internet, the media or print media, such terror can spread rapidly with few means.

I also believe that it absolutely requires a generally accepted definition of terrorism to be easier to identify it and avoid the victimization of protesters and radicals who have no intention to use violence.

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