Responses to Political Violence and the Growth of Anti-Americanism
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Background
The workshop Responses to Political Violence and the Growth of Anti-Americanism convened investigators from rapidly growing islands of research on varieties of political violence—terrorism, genocide, politicide, civil war and insurgencies, interstate war—in the interests of evaluating common research approaches and policy responses. Workshop organizers aimed to define the present state of the art and set a research agenda for future research on these policy-relevant questions. The workshop, co-sponsored by the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, was supported by a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, with additional funding from the Department of Homeland Security.

The workshop and its intellectual agenda extend IGCC’s work on terrorism, counterinsurgency, and civil wars. For related projects, see the 2007 IGCC conference Terrorist Organizations: Social Science Research on Terrorism, which drew together academics and practitioners to discuss current research relevant to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency, and IGCC work on the international dimensions of domestic conflict.

Policy Implications and Research Agenda

The meeting addressed four themes:

1. Political Violence as Political Strategy
Focusing on political violence directed against civilian populations, the first session examined how varieties of political violence—terrorism, insurgency, or interstate war—appear to share a common source in the pursuit of politics by other means. The first session considered how political violence differs or does not from other forms of collective violence, such as organized crime, and whether the same theoretical models might be used to explain the onset, timing, and probability of political violence.

2. Governance and Political Violence
Governance choices shape conflict behavior and encourage or inhibit the use of political violence, including terrorism and insurgency, against civilians. At the national level, poor governance in failed and fragile states has become a major interest of governments and researchers alike in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The interplay of strategic choices made at each level of governance (international, national, local) may reinforce or inhibit the effects of choices made at the other levels.

3. Controlling Political Violence
Three government strategies can be aimed at reducing political violence and terrorism against civilians: hard counter-insurgency, which aims to suppress violence through actual or threatened kinetic force; benign counter-insurgency, which undercuts insurgent support and increases the flow of actionable intelligence through economic development and better governance; and political reconciliation, which aims to bring conflicting parties into a political process of bargaining over grievances. Understanding how and when each strategy is most effective, and how different types of strategies (military versus political, for example) interact, could provide powerful tools for practitioners in conflict regions.

4. Anti-Americanism and Political Violence
The rise of anti-Americanism, particularly in the Muslim world, has been linked to American responses to political violence over the past decade. American tactics against new and unconventional security threats, especially those that lead to collateral damage against civilians or political instability and civilian unrest, have deepened disenchantment with the United States in the Muslim world and elsewhere. Understanding why the United States is the object of so much transnational violence in today’s world should provide insights into how (or whether) the United States might alter its policies in response.