Evidence Packet
Disrupting the Formation of Groups Willing to Employ Terror and Other Forms of Political Violence to Achieve their Aims

Disrupting the formation of groups that are willing to employ terror and other forms of political violence to achieve their aims is a topic widely covered by scholars, particularly since September 11, 2001. Most of the literature on this topic has focused on disruption through political, legal, financial, clandestine, and military means. However, there has been a recent upsurge in studies that examine the role of development in reducing political violence. To a large degree, this upsurge has been fueled by the allocation of vast amounts of development resources in Iraq and Afghanistan, two countries in which groups that employ political violence are active. This paper will present the major findings from this literature.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. The first section is intended as a brief overview of political violence as a theoretical construct. In this section we discuss what constitutes political violence and highlight major theories on the causes of political violence. The second section reviews theories of violent organizations, emphasizing how organizational decisions affect the structure of violence-producing groups. The third section discusses the role that development programs can play in undermining recruitment into and popular support for groups that employ political violence. The fourth section presents findings from studies on how the introduction of development resources into foreign states affects local conflict dynamics. While a vast amount of literature on the preceding topics exists, this paper focuses on evidence-based studies, particularly in sections three and four.

Political Violence

Violence is political when it is intended to influence some political outcome. It takes numerous forms, including international warfare, civil war, communal riots, state-sponsored massacres, coups d’état, and terrorism. Regardless of the form in which it is manifested, its use is tactical; it is a means to some political end. The form of a group’s violence, from whom it is used against to how and when it is employed, reflects the group’s political context.

Much of the theoretical literature on the causes of political violence views it as a rational response to a set of socially sub-optimal strategic incentives or institutions. That environment is considered sub-optimal in the sense that violence is a failure of bargaining; given that fighting destroys valuable resources and costs money (and lives), rational actors should always be able to strike a deal that is preferable to fighting if they can strike and enforce sufficiently refined bargains. In his seminal work on this topic, Fearon (1995) purports that bargaining failures result from commitment problems or problems resulting from “private information and incentives to misrepresent.” Although Fearon initially proposed this rationalist explanation of violence in the context of wars between states, scholars have subsequently applied the rationalist explanation to political violence between non-state actors when the state lacks the institutions to resolve disputes nonviolently. In their respective works on civil war and terrorism, Walter (1997) and Lake (2002) suggest that the rationalist approach advanced by Fearon and others explains these two forms political violence; both scholars contend that civil wars and terrorism directly result from bargaining failures between groups that make rational and strategic choices. This is relevant to development practitioners: if

1 For a detailed discussion, see Clausewitz (1976).
2 Blattman and Miguel (2010).
violence is a symptom of an institutional vacuum in dispute resolution, then resources injected into that vacuum may provide more rents to fight over.

While numerous studies suggest that groups which employ political violence are motivated by economic factors, the causal mechanism linking economic conditions to violence are not well specified. For example, in their review of the literature on civil war, Blattman and Miguel (2010) note a high correlation between low per capita income and stagnant economic growth on the one hand, and a propensity for intrastate violence on the other. However, the interpretation of this correlation varies, and scholars have been unable to establish a causal relationship that holds up when tested across multiple countries. Some scholars argue that poverty increases grievances and diminishes the opportunity cost of fighting, while others interpret that correlation as evidence for a Hobbesian mechanism: rich states can afford to suppress violence. Still others contend that poverty decreases the odds of fighting because there is less to fight over. A more recent model contends that political violence associated with civil wars and insurgencies occurs in states in which assets are immobile and unequally distributed. Another strand of literature that explores how economics may be related to political violence suggests that groups participate in conflict to access lootable resources. Theories of Violent Organizations

To understand the internal structures of violence-producing organizations, it is important to consider the organizational model that groups adopt, as well as how they structure themselves once a model has emerged. Theories of group organization, which deal largely with the organizational decisions of groups, address both of these topics. Generally, there are two approaches within the group-organization literature. The first and most developed treats organizational choices as the dependent variable, meaning that how a group organizes itself is a product of other factors. This strand of the literature looks at how environmental features, incentives for individual defection, heterogeneity within the ranks, and economic factors shape an organization’s operations. The second approach analyzes the structures that groups can adopt and how structural choices affect a group’s operations. A recent strand of literature on this topic examines the effect organizational structure has on the organization’s capacity for violence on the one hand, and for political settlement on the other. Both approaches will be explored herein, beginning with the various models that violence-producing groups adopt to achieve their goals.

Organizing Principles

Recent works by Berman (2009) and Berman and Laitin (2008) suggest that the Club Model describes how many radical religious organizations organize. This model suggests that religious organizations, both violent and non-violent, tend to provide their members with a variety of social services and to restrict or prohibit a range of activities, particularly those which induce compatibility with people outside the “club.” (This social service provision has an important policy implication: it implies that benign interventions can undermine support for clubs, as we shall see below.) Clubs require some form of extremely significant sacrifice as a prerequisite for membership. This arrangement of service and prohibition fosters extreme dependence upon the group, severely restricting the outside options of group members. This extreme dependence upon and commitment to the group means that, should a club decide to undertake a violent operation which might prompt outsiders to encourage defection, the club can count on a binding defection constraint that undermines incentives for members to defect. Club members and their families are completely dependent upon the group, and even with a sizable bribe, have limited outside options.

Organizations built on the club model are particularly effective when utilizing suicide attacks. Hamas, Hezbollah, the Taliban and Lashkar e Taibeh are examples. The more valuable a target is, the more lethal an attack is likely to be. Clubs have high defection constraints (i.e., they are able to attack larger targets without risking defection). Data indicate that these organizations are much more lethal than other rebel groups --their attacks tend to kill more people. Data indicates that club model terrorist organizations are approximately four times more lethal than other terrorist organizations.7

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4 For more information, see the following: Krueger and Malec’kova (2003)—find no link, but discuss the theory, Garfinkel and Skaperdas 2007, Grossman 1999, Krueger and Laitin (2003), Abadie (2004), Blattman and Miguel (2009), Berman, Shapiro and Felter (2008), and Dube and Vargas (2008). 5 Boix (2008)

6 For more information, see Collier and Hoeffler (2001), De Soysa (2000), and Humphreys (2005).

7 This model applies to sects and mafias as well. See Berman (2009).
organizations. Clubs can operate disperse networks at distances and employ high damage tactics unavailable to other organizations. Such tactics include hijacking, suicide attacks, and could potentially include attacks using biological or chemical weapons.

An alternative to the club model of organization is the “Hearts and Minds” model. This model contends that rebels compete with a government for the loyalty of some constituency of civilians. Civilians, even if they are highly disenfranchised, always have the choice of sharing tactically crucial intelligence with either the government or rebels, of which there may be several groups. If rebels control territory, they can extort residents into not sharing information. Control by rebels allows tactics such as command-detonated roadside bombs, kidnapping and complex ambushes, which would otherwise be vulnerable to intelligence leaks by noncombatant informants. One key insight is that these tactics necessarily share information with noncombatants. Note that these tactics are distinct from suicide attacks, which are typical of clubs. Modern scholarship among practitioners has tended to take a “Hearts and Minds” approach to insurgencies, including those in contemporary Iraq and Afghanistan. In particular, development projects provided in the service of government are designed to strengthen the link of civilians in a village. One major problem for practitioners, however, is identifying to what extent a group operates like a club or adheres to the principle of organization. A competitive governance approach to counterinsurgency, such as the “hearts and minds” and club models, suggests that an important environmental factor is the quality of services provided by government, relative to the quality of services provided by rebels, tribes or clans. To the extent that the quality of services is undermined by corruption or weak capacity, an efficient use of development resources might be to uncorrupt, build capacity, and empower communities to create sustainable oversight over government structures.

In addition, these models also have significant implications for the target of development resources. Very simply, clubs are not affected like Hearts and Minds groups by development resources that are distributed in a non-discriminate manner, amongst, for instance, all civilians in a village. One major problem for practitioners, however, is identifying to what extent a group operates like a club or adheres to the principle of organization. A competitive governance approach to counterinsurgency, such as the “hearts and minds” and club models, suggests that an important environmental factor is the quality of services provided by government, relative to the quality of services provided by rebels, tribes or clans. To the extent that the quality of services is undermined by corruption or weak capacity, an efficient use of development resources might be to uncorrupt, build capacity, and empower communities to create sustainable oversight over government structures.

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8 Berman (2009).
9 For more information, see the following: Mao (1937), Popkin (1979), Petraeus and Amos (2006), Berman, Shapiro and Felter (2008), Akerlof and Yellen (1994), and Galula (1964).
11 For more information, see the following: Caselli and Coleman 2006; Fearon and Laitin 1996; Miguel and Gugerty 2005, Alesina and La Ferrara (2005), Bates (1986), and Esteban and Ray (2008).
12 See Fearon and Laitin 2003
13 For more information, see Weinstein (2007).
likely entirely one or the other. Instead, most probably engage in activities consistent with each approach.

Organizational Structure: Networks and Hierarchies

Analyses that explicitly examine the effect of a group’s structure on its activities frequently posit groups exist on some continuum of “structure,” whereby some take on a hierarchical structure, like that found in many firms, governments and militaries, while others adopt a flat structure. Hierarchically structured groups are characterized by an identifiable leadership or control structure, whereas flat groups are characterized by multiple autonomous units, often in multiple locations, with very little direction from a central command. Networks are a unique organizational structure because they can contain both hierarchical and flat components. Although most groups fall somewhere between the hierarchical and flat extremes or adopt a hybrid structure, a good starting point is to understand the characteristics of hierarchical and flat organizations and how these structures affect organizational behavior. We begin with hierarchies before turning to networks.

Hierarchical organizations are the most vertically-organized. These groups are characterized by centralized decision-making and functional differentiation within the organization. The latter characteristic implies that the hierarchy should generate a variety of goods in addition to the production of violence.14 Within the language of the firm, these groups can be thought of as “vertically-integrated,” where multiple stages of the production process are internalized to be conducted in-house. Functionally-differentiated groups are able to specialize in a way that less hierarchical groups cannot. At a broad level, this means that hierarchical groups will tend to concentrate efforts into specialized sections, whereby sub-sections focus on the production of one sort of good, such as a political campaign or providing hospitals. But this also implies that at a more micro-level, within certain wings of an organization, individuals execute very specific goals. In violence-producing wings, some individuals may focus on bomb-making, while others specialize in assassinations.

The theoretical counterpart to a vertical organization is the flat, or network-like, organization. The crucial distinctions of these flat organizations are that they lack the functional differentiation and specialization that characterizes vertical organizations, and do not employ centralized decision-making. Flatter organizations are more likely to use cell-like structures with varying degrees of connectedness. In the aggregate, cells comprise complete organizations that, do not add up to one unitary actor, but rather to a collection of different interests that replicate similar actions. Though they are more “organization-like” than an anarchic group, flatter organizations tend to demonstrate a lesser degree of coordination because there are multiple decision-makers that do not necessarily have a unified interest. Cells may collaborate on shorter-term, rather than longer-term bases. Sageman (2008) finds, for instance, that al-Qaeda in the post-9/11 world is linked via the loose strands of the Internet as its central upper and middle-level leadership has been taken apart through capture or death. Though groups claiming al-Qaeda ties or global Islamist terrorism abound, the movement has become a “leaderless jihad,” connected only by a general anti-Western sentiment; each group adopts ad hoc strategies and aims to survive state counter-terror measures.

Networks are a unique structural form because, while generally flat, they may contain components, more commonly referred to as cells or nodes, which are structured quite differently.15 Podolny and Page (1998) define networks as “any collection of actors (N>2) that pursue repeated, enduring exchange relations with one another and, at the same time, lack a legitimate organizational authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes that may arise during the exchange.”16 In their writings on terrorist networks, Arquilla and Ronfeldt identify three types of networks adopted by terrorists: “leaderless jihad,” connected only by a general anti-Western sentiment; each group adopts ad hoc strategies and aims to survive state counter-terror measures.

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15 For more information on the behavior and organization of networks, see Castells (1996), Thompson (2003), Watts (2004), and Newman et al. (2006).


17 Jackson (2006).

undertake action quickly. In their comparison of hierarchically structured terrorist organizations and flat terrorist networks, Enders and Jindapon (2010) find that the former produce greater output, respond more assertively to counterrorism measures, and respond less ambiguously to changing circumstances than the latter.

A new strand of literature has emerged suggesting that how an organization structures itself has implications for how it conducts violence. In a 2009 study, Heger, Jung, and Wong review over 14,000 attacks by non-state organizations to determine whether the degree to which these organizations were structured shaped the violence they undertook. The authors find that groups that are more hierarchical in structure are more likely to commit attacks that kill and injure higher numbers of individuals than groups that are structured flatly. Furthermore, the authors find that vertical groups are more likely to execute longer, more frequent campaigns of violence than groups that are structured flatly. As the authors note, these findings are significant because they suggest that structure plays a significant role in determining the lethality, frequency, and duration of violence. These findings also imply that development is more likely to be called on as an instrument of stabilization when hierarchies are the opponent.

Another strand of literature proposes that a violent organization’s structure will affect its ability to commit to peace processes. Controlling operations is a fundamental challenge for all violent organizations. This creates numerous problems in negotiations that inevitably entail giving up some goals that a group has previously demanded. There are two corollaries. First, peace is more difficult to achieve when groups have multiple factions or interests (veto players). Spoilers ruin the chances for settlement and make peaceful conflict termination nearly impossible. Second, governments face a tradeoff between cracking down hard enough that rebels come to the table without damaging the organization so much that rebel leaders lose their ability to enforce the bargains they agree to. That dilemma might be lessened if rebels are confronted by strengthening governance rather than by kinetic means.

Heretofore, scholars have not thoroughly investigated whether the structure of a violence-producing organization may influence how it will be affected by development efforts to undermine it. However, based on the aforementioned literature on the characteristics of networks, one can deduce that development efforts are likely to be more effective against hierarchical organization than flat networks. As noted above, hierarchical networks have central planners and a clear chain of command. If development resources are targeted in the locations in which these central planners exist, these planners’ bases of support and ability to recruit may be weakened. How to accomplish this goal is a topic that we turn to in section three.

Disruption through Development

To understand how development resources are utilized to disrupt groups that employ political violence, one must consider issues discussed above including groups’ structure, ability to recruit individuals into their ranks and hold them there, and how to undermine an organization’s base of civilian support. Groups that employ political violence in pursuit of a political agenda invest great amounts of time and resources identifying and screening recruits because once they become members, these individuals can significantly advance the group’s agenda or do great harm to the group should they defect. Furthermore, groups that employ political violence, particularly insurgent and guerrilla groups, must maintain the support of the communities in which they live and operate, or risk significant backlash. There are roles for development resources in undermining recruitment into and popular support for violence-producing groups, but risks exist as well. Both topics will be addressed herein.

To undermine a group’s ability to fill its ranks with committed members, Berman (2009) recommends enhancing outside options for members and potential members. Specifically, these options include the basic prerequisites for good jobs in the legitimate economy: thriving markets and quality educational opportunities. Given that in Berman’s view, all members of violence-producing groups are potential defectors, anything that enhances the labor-market opportunities of potential defectors tightens the defection constraint that violent organizations face in their activities, making it easier for the government to bribe conspirators into deflection. The more receptive operatives are to bribes (and to a subsequent transition to legitimate employment), the safer high-value targets are: that is because when outside options improve, attacks on high-value targets become so liable

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19 For more information, see the following: Cunningham (2006), Stedman (1997), Doyle and Sambanis (2000), and Shapiro (2007).

20 Although this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, see Berman (2009) and Bueno de Mesquita (2005) for additional information.
employ political violence often compete with local governments by providing public goods and services to local communities. Berman (2009) notes that the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, the Taliban, Hezbollah, and al-Sadr militia all follow a model in which they combine political radical Islam and social service provision.24 In many cases, violent groups have a monopoly on service provision, often because the state is incapable or unwilling to provide even a low level of basic services to vast segments of the population. In southern Afghanistan, for example, the Taliban continue to be the local population’s most reliable source for fair dispute adjudication, despite the existence of a federal government for more than seven years.25

Recent studies find that terrorist groups strategically provide public services to the local communities in which they operate to gain these communities’ outright support of, or acquiescence to, the groups’ activities. In her two studies on the provision of services by terrorist groups, Flanigan (2006, 2008) describes that a “continuum of community acceptance” exists in societies in which terrorist and insurgent groups operate. The goal of these groups is to move the populace to a point in which the populace will actively participate in the groups’ activities.26 Flanigan finds that terrorist groups that provide public goods and services are particularly effective at gaining local support in areas where community members are deprived and where the state’s capacity to provide services is low.

Losing civilian supporters is problematic for violent organizations that draw heavily from community-level alliances for operational success and political leverage. Hence, breaking the link between communities and violent groups may go a long way toward dismantling violent organizations. One theory suggests that this link may be severed, or at least weakened, if states compete directly with these groups in social service provision. As Flanigan notes, “If it can be ensured that states and other nonprofit organizations are able to provide quality services, clients will be able to choose between service providers and will not be beholden to the single, perhaps terrorist-supported, charity that offers them education, food, and health care.”27 If governments can provide services in a nondiscriminatory manner, their actions communicate to members of all ethnic or religious groups, minority or majority, that they have an outside option to sectarian and rebel organizations.

An expected result of states outcompeting insurgent and terrorist groups in social service provision is a reduction in communities’ tolerance for these groups’ violent activities. In her work on violence against civilians perpetrated by non-state actors, Heger (2010) finds that buying off community support by providing goods and services means that violent groups can attack civilians without risking significant losses in community supporters.

By providing benefits to civilians in neighborhoods, terrorist organizations increase the opportunity costs for individuals considering withdrawing their support or undermining the organization by leaking information to authorities. Consequently, when groups provide goods and services, they have the leeway to target...
civilians and, thus, impose higher costs on their support base.

All of this is to say that development resources in the form of goods and services to communities in conflict areas have a number of very positive outcomes. They can be used to deter possible recruits from joining by increasing the opportunity cost of doing so. They can be used to encourage defection and increase information sharing with governments. When used to dismantle the link between groups and their base of civilians, it is more costly for violent organizations to operate and carry out terrorist attacks.

In addition to goods and services, alternative theories suggest that breaking the link between communities and violent groups entails providing a means of non-violent political expression for the segments of the populace from which these groups draw popular support. In their study of support for Islamic militancy in Pakistan, Shapiro and Fair (2009) find that Pakistanis support Pakistani-based militant groups based on political, as opposed to economic or religious, grounds. Based on a national survey of urban Pakistanis, the authors find that the Pakistanis surveyed supported violence-producing organizations if those organizations employ violence to advance political goals that the individuals cared about. Based on their study, Shapiro and Fair suggest that remedies often thought of as minimizing support for militancy, to include economic development and democratization initiatives, are unlikely to have their intended effect. In terms of policy prescriptions, the authors suggest that “it is likely that any effective policy will have to both address the core political concerns of supporters of specific militant groups and diminish the perceived value of militant violence as a tool to achieve political goals.”

In many developing countries such as Pakistan, violence-producing religious groups have a monopoly on political representation by default because governments suppress political activity outside of mosques and other places of worship. Breaking the religious monopoly on opposition politics, by allowing a secular opposition to function, weakens radical religious groups by providing an alternative form of political expression to members. Providing that alternative requires protecting competing elements of civil society from being intimidated by either government or religious radicals, who have an advantage at organized violence and therefore at intimidation.

From Strategy to Action

The preceding arguments imply that development resources can play a role in undermining recruitment into and popular support for groups that employ political violence. Development resources specifically can be used to bolster the capabilities of local governments or non-violent third parties for providing goods and services, creating markets and educational opportunities, and building civil societies. However, as three of the studies reviewed in the following section reveal, introducing development resources into environments contested by groups employing political violence can also have a number of adverse consequences.

Introducing development resources into environments in which the state’s rule of law authority is weak may increase violence because competing groups will compete to control rents. (Recall that if institutions were strong enough to adjudicate disputes, violence would have been precluded anyway, as discussed in the initial section.) Development aid is a good like any other in the sense that it has a value. Tangible development resources, such as humanitarian aid, and non-tangible resources, such as contracts awarded to local nationals, are a source of rents that violence-producing groups will seek to capture. Competition to capture these rents can spark violence between the state and non-state actors, as well as among non-state actors vying for control. A possible solution to this problem is ensuring that development resources cannot be bought and sold on the local market. Another solution, put forth in the Crost and Johnston study reviewed in the following section, is to minimize ambiguity regarding the timing and allocation of aid provision.

A related adverse consequence of introducing development resources into environments in which non-state actors are vying for influence and control occurs when non-state groups capture the resources and use them to their advantage. In her 2008 study of service provision by Hezbollah and the Tamil Tigers in Lebanon and Sri Lanka, Flanigan describes how the Tamil Tigers utilized their control over territory to funnel resources provided by local and international NGOs to its supporters and potential supporters. In Gaza, the United Nations allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to deliver aid, which bolstered the Brotherhood’s ties to the community. To overcome this problem, Berman (2009) recommends that before introducing development resources

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28 Shapiro and Fair (2009), 117.
29 For information on the role of foreign aid in fostering civil society, see Hadenius and Uggla (1996), Fukuyama (2003).
30 The Crost and Johnston study from the Philippines reviewed in the following section provides an example of this.
31 Flanigan (2008)
into contested environments, providers should evaluate whether the local governments are capable of providing services that will not be captured, providing competing services, and protecting the service providers.

Another way in which introducing development resources can have adverse consequences is if the resources are provided to governments that are prone to extortion and corruption. Corrupt government officials may utilize development resources to enhance their personal wealth, eliminate rivals, or extort local nationals. Furthermore, corrupt government commonly are viewed as predatory by the citizens that they are supposed to serve, a fact that can motivate these citizens to support non-state groups. It is not surprising that violent groups that provide social and other services have emerged in states characterized by highly corrupt governments: the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hizballah in Lebanon, Hamas in the West Bank, and the Taliban in Afghanistan, for example. Avoiding this problem may require creating parallel temporary structures of program delivery (such as the National Solidarity Program in Afghanistan) that bypass corrupt or ineffective governance, while simultaneously creating reforming permanent structures.

Conclusion

This paper investigated the role of development in reducing political violence, starting from the theory behind the causes of political violence and ending with evidence-based studies. A few key observations stand out which warrant repeating. First, groups that undertake political violence, regardless of the form, are rational actors motivated by political, and perhaps economic, factors. Second, organizations can follow a number of models and adopt various structures, from hierarchical on one end of the spectrum to flat networks on the other. The type of model that organizations follow and the structure that they adopt determines their operational choices, lethality, and prospects for peace. Third, utilizing development to reduce political violence entails first understanding how organizations attract recruits, hold members, and gain popular support. To a large degree, organizations accomplish this by providing services, which usually are inadequately provided by the state, and being an outlet for political expression. Reducing recruitment into and popular support for violent organizations entails out-competing them in the areas of service provision and political expression. Defeating violence-producing groups that are effective service providers is particularly difficult. Lastly, the empirical studies reviewed in this paper suggest that understanding the conflict dynamics in the environments into which development resources are to be introduced prior to introducing them is imperative. While more empirical work is needed to fully understand these issues, much has already been revealed regarding the potential role of development in reducing political violence.

32 For information on the effect of development resources on conflict dynamics in Afghanistan, see the work of Andrew Wilder.

Methodology: Regression analysis using a dataset, drawn from four sources, of lethal attacks conducted globally by 400 terrorist organizations between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 2005.

Asal and Rethemeyer develop an econometric model to test which organizational characteristics determine the lethality of terrorist organizations. The authors’ unit of analysis is terrorist organizations and their dependent variable is the number of fatalities attributed to each organization during the aforementioned timeframe. Based on regression output from their model, the authors find that organizational size, ideology, territorial control, and connectedness are important predictors of lethality, whereas state sponsorship, organizational age, and host country characteristics are not. Specifically, the authors find terrorist organizations to be more lethal if they are large, adhere to religious and/or ethno-religious ideologies that are “supernatural,” build alliances with peers, and control geographical territory. The authors’ findings also refute theory from existing literature suggesting that new organizations are less capable in carrying out lethal attacks than older organizations. The authors contend that their analysis breaks new ground in three ways. First, their study takes a step forward from focusing solely on the structure of terrorist organization to how that structure determines lethality. Second, their study includes both international and domestic terrorism. Lastly, the authors contend that theirs is the first study to incorporate data on how organizational linkages and alliances determine lethality. In their conclusion, Asal and Rethemeyer suggest that efforts to combat lethal terrorist organizations should focus on ones that are large and well organized.


Methodology: Regression analysis using a dataset on civil conflict and violence from the Armed Forces of the Philippines covering 21,000 violent incidents in the Philippines from 2001 through 2008.

Crost and Johnston examine how large development projects undertaken in the Philippines between 2003 and 2009 impacted that country’s civil conflict. In their study, the authors focus on the KALAHI-CIDSS program, which follows the community-drive development (CDD) framework. The KALAHI-CIDSS program sought to improve governance on the local level and improve political participation, two goals which the authors acknowledge should have conflict-reducing effects. The program was implemented by the Philippine government’s Department of Social Welfare and Development and funded by World Bank loans. The authors find that KALAHI-CIDSS significantly increased the intensity of civil conflict in areas that were eligible to receive the program, particularly during the period after the roll-out of the program was announced but prior to implementation. Given that violence in eligible areas eventually fell to pre-program levels, Crost and Johnston theorize that the spike in violence resulted from bargaining failures between the state and rebel groups. In their conclusion, the authors recommend that when CDD-related aid is introduced into areas in which various groups are vying for power and influence, violence could be reduced by minimizing the ambiguity regarding the provision of aid resources.


Methodology: Modeling of terrorist organizations utilizing a production function.

In Radical, Religious, and Violent, Eli Berman approaches the question of how radical religious sects run such deadly terrorist organizations using the economics of organizations. Below is a summary of his primary arguments.

Defection Constraints
Rebel groups are more vulnerable to defection than attrition. Losing one member does not significantly impact the group, but having a member defect may result in the failure of operations or the arrest or death of many members. As the operations of a rebel group become more lucrative or more significant to other organizations and governments, the value of a defection goes up, and the incentive for members to defect rises, as the potential rewards for doing so increases.

The greater a group’s resistance to defection, the more substantial its operations can become. Without resistance to defection, there is an upper limit to how significant the activities undertaken by the rebel group can be, beyond which the incentive for members to take bribes from enemies of the group in return for information becomes greater than their incentive to
stay with the group. We call this limitation the
defection constraint. The higher a rebel group’s
defection constraint is, the more successful it can be at
carrying out a variety of operations.

An example often cited in the book is the rise of the
Taliban through the control of trade routes in
Afghanistan. Trade routes were controlled by a series
of checkpoints at which guards were stationed. As the
value of the cargo passing through the trade routes
increases, the incentive for the guards at any given
checkpoint to abandon the group and hijack the cargo
rises. The Taliban fared much better at controlling
trade routes in Afghanistan than other rebel groups or
local warlords because they had the comparative
advantage of a higher defection constraint. Their trade
routes could support more valuable cargo and remain
safe, and more valuable cargo meant better payouts.
The Taliban’s high defection constraint made the group
very successful and very wealthy.

Prohibitions, Sacrifice and Dependence in
Radical Religious Groups
Radical religious groups, both violent and non-violent,
tend to provide their members with a variety of social
services and to restrict or prohibit a range of activities,
particularly those which bring members into contact
with people outside of the group. Many such groups
will require some form of extremely significant
sacrifice as a prerequisite for membership. This
arrangement of service and prohibition fosters
extreme dependence upon the group, and severely
restricts the outside options of group members. An
individual who has foregone formal education and
instead spent a lifetime in religious study will not have
many employment opportunities outside of the group.
If he leaves the group, he will also lose access to the
social services he depends upon. The combination of
services and sacrifice makes members of radical
religious groups very unlikely to find a comparably
comfortable life outside of the group. Their retention
rate is very high because it’s extremely difficult for
members to leave.

The requirement of sacrifice does more than limit the
options of individual group members; it’s also a very
strong signal of commitment. Foregoing formal
education for religious education is one example
common to radical religious organizations, but similar
arrangements can be found for nearly all clubs and
organizations, though the level of sacrifice may vary
dramatically in scale. Anything from hazing fraternity
pledges to requiring gang members to get tattoos
could be considered a sacrifice required for group
membership. Groups use this as a signaling mechanism
to weed out potentially uncommitted members.

This extreme dependence upon and commitment to
the group means that, should the group ever decide to
undertaken any operation which might prompt
outsiders to encourage defection in the group, the
group can count on having a healthy defection
constraint. Group members and their families are
completely dependent upon the group, and even with a
sizable bribe, have limited outside options. We call this
organizational arrangement the Club Model, and it is
common to radically religious groups, violent and non-
violent, all over the world. Ultra-Orthodox Jews,
Mennonites, the traditionally nonviolent Islamic
Brotherhood, and modern Hamas are all examples of
the club model.

While the evidence does not suggest that religiosity is
correlated with terrorism, it does suggest that, due to
the high defection constraints of radical religious
groups, religious extremists can build far more robust
terrorist organizations if and when they do turn to
terrorism. Radical religious organizations may not be
prone to terrorism, but due to their naturally high
defection constraints, they’re very good at terrorism.

Suicide Attacks and Lethality
One of the commons myths about religious terrorists
is that they embrace suicide attacks purely out of any
of various hopes for religious reward. What the data
actually suggests is that suicide attacks are very rare,
and the use of suicide attacks correlates very highly
with attacks on hardened targets. Rebel groups use
suicide attacks not because they are inclined to do so
by ideology or religion, but because suicide attacks are
effective where conventional attacks are not.

Data from the Second Intifada show that, while the
majority of terrorist attacks occurred in Gaza and the
West Bank, nearly all of the suicide attacks occurred
inside Israel. Targets in Gaza and the West Bank are
easy to attack using conventional warfare. Targets
inside Israel are hardened, and require more extreme
methods to attack.

Organizations built on the club model are particularly
effective when utilizing suicide attacks. The more
valuable a target is, the more lethal an attack is likely
to be. Club model organizations, possessing higher
defection constraints, are better equipped to conduct
attacks on very valuable targets, and the data indicate
that these organizations are much more lethal than
other rebel groups; their attacks tend to kill more
people. One data set indicates that club model
terrorist organizations are approximately four times more lethal than other terrorist organizations.

Counterterrorism

Terrorist organizations not built on the club model are relatively easy to dismantle by encouraging defection. Constructive counterterrorism should focus on dismantling terrorist organizations which have high defection constraints and are resistant to standard methods. One of the most effective efforts at dismantling such a group was undertaken by the parent organization of the group itself. When Yasser Arafat found it necessary to shut down Black September, he did so by providing them with money and property, and encouraging them to take wives and have children (for which they were given financial incentives). The effect was to reduce their dependence upon the group and dramatically increase their outside options. They not only gave up violence, some of them refused to travel on peaceful PLO business for fear of being separated from their new wives and children.

Because the most effective way to cripple a terrorist organization is to encourage defection, the most effective way to cripple a terrorist organization which is resistant to defection is to attack that resistance. This can be done by improving the outside options for rebels and potential rebels. Building a social services network which is available to everyone not only makes it easier for rebels to defect, it also makes it more difficult for club model organizations to foster the group dependence that they require.


Methodology: Modeling of the three-way interaction between a government, a terrorist organization, and potential terrorist volunteers.

In this study, Bueno de Mesquita presents a model of the recruitment of terrorists that accounts for two contradictory findings: first, that terrorism seems more likely with a lack of economic activity and a recessionary economy, and second that terrorists are actually not “poor or lacking in education”. Terrorist organizations essentially screen volunteers for the most capable. Willingness does not imply actualization. The model presents three actors: the government, a terrorist organization and a group of potential terrorists (sympathizers). The first move is that the government chooses a level of “crack-down” to prevent terrorist activity. However, cracking down, while decreasing the effectiveness of terrorists, increases sympathizers anti-government affections. Sympathizers then decide whether to engage in the economic activity of the state or to search out a terrorist group to join. Then the terrorist organization chooses which volunteers to accept. The average terrorist accepted into the organization will be of greater education that the average volunteer. Additionally, crack-downs lead to increased mobilization and the government must choose a crack-down level such that it balances this increased mobilization with heightened security.


Methodology: Modeling of terrorist organizations utilizing a production function

In this study, Enders and Jindapon examine the differences between terrorist networks that are structured hierarchically and terrorist networks which have a flat structure. The authors develop a model to show that terrorist groups that adopt a hierarchical structure better coordinate their activities and benefit from network externalities as compared to flatly structured terrorist networks. The authors make three underlying assumptions in their model: 1) unlike members of criminal networks who make profit-maximizing decisions, members of terrorist organizations, particularly the leadership, make decisions based on political and/or religious goals; 2) as opposed to social networks that benefit from openness and transparency, terrorist networks must make a trade-off between connectivity and security; and 3) terrorist networks face externalities, which arise from their efforts to operate clandestinely while still maintaining enough coordination to conduct operations.

Enders and Jindapon contend that because hierarchical terrorist networks have centralized planning and decision-making, planners can simultaneously set the level of effort of all members of the terrorist network and determine the overall structure of the network. However, in flat terrorist networks, planners cannot dictate the structure of the network nor can they set the level of effort of each of the networks nodes; hence, planners can only select a level of connectivity based on the network structure. The authors conclude that hierarchical terrorist networks produce greater output, respond more assertively to counterterrorism measures, and respond less ambiguously to changing circumstances than flat...
networks. The authors suggest that different counterterrorism policies should be adopted depending on the structure of the terrorist network.


Methodology: Regression analysis using a dataset of over 14,000 attacks conducted by terrorist groups around the world from 1968 to 2006.

Heger, Jung and Wong investigate the effects of a group’s structure on its violent activities. The authors argue that the structure of an organization plays a crucial role in determining the lethality and frequency the terrorist attacks undertaken by the organization.

The authors find that groups that are more hierarchical in structure are more likely to commit attacks that kill and injure higher numbers of individuals than groups that are structured flatly. The authors contend that hierarchically-structured groups possess functional differentiation, which allows them to have specialized units, each charged with producing some service or good. Furthermore, the authors find that vertical groups are more likely to execute longer, more frequent campaigns of violence than groups that are structured flatly.

The authors note that their findings are significant because they suggest that structure plays a significant role in determining the lethality, frequency, and duration of violence. Heger, Jung, and Wong contend that their findings contribute to the existing literature on three accounts:

1. They find that structure, not ideology, drives lethality, frequency, and duration;
2. Their finding suggest that factions, splintering, and alternations in leadership likely play a large role in the type of violence the group is able to carry out;
3. Their analysis could be easily adapted for those studying other non-violent political actors like transnational organizations or grass-roots movements.
References


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