Investigating What and Why: A Critical Review of the Literature on Terrorism

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Abstract — This article critically examines the literature on terrorism, identifying a distinction between the research methods that were common before and after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. We argue that pre-9/11 methods were more concerned with understanding individual and group motivations for participating in terrorism. This approach is still visible in the fields of political psychology and gender and sexuality studies on terrorism. In contrast, post-9/11 research methods are more concerned with identifying country-level variables associated with terrorism using regression analysis and econometrics. Post-9/11 research on terrorism has often been focused on two debates: the role of democracy in fostering or preventing

Résumé — Cet article offre une analyse critique des recherches universitaires sur le terrorisme. Nous discutons également d'une distinction constatée entre les méthodes de recherches courantes avant et après l'attentat du 11 Septembre 2001. Nous postulons que les méthodes utilisées avant l'attentat étaient davantage préoccupées avec les motivations des individus et des groupes participant à l'activité terroriste. Encore aujourd'hui, cette approche est présente dans les domaines de la psychologie politique et des études du genre et de la sexualité en ce qui concerne le terrorisme. Par contre, les méthodes de recherche utilisées après l'attentat du 11 Septembre sont davantage préoccupées avec les variables se

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terrorism, and the relationship between development and terrorism. This shift in methodology reflects a more positivist ontology, and is also undoubtedly intended to meet the needs of policy-makers pursuing the War on Terror. We argue that a well-informed approach to addressing the threat of terrorism must draw from both perspectives; otherwise, there is a strong risk of ignoring crucial variables at different levels of analysis.

Keywords: terrorism; development; democracy; political psychology.

rattachant à l'État. Ces méthodes font appel à l'analyse de régression et à l'économétrie. La recherche postérieure à l'attentat du 11 Septembre se concentre souvent sur deux débats académiques : le rôle de la démocratie (soit encourager ou prévenir le terrorisme) et les relations entre le développement et le terrorisme. Ce changement dans la méthodologie adoptée démontre une ontologie positiviste et aussi l'intention d'adresser les besoins des décideurs pendant la guerre contre le terrorisme. Nous soutenons l'étude éclairée du terrorisme requiert l'adoption d'une approche qui considère les deux perspectives; autrement, des variables importantes aux différents niveaux d'analyse risquent d'être négligées.

Mots-clés : terrorisme; développement; démocratie; psychologie politique.

Introduction

Few academics would dispute that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 had a significant impact on the study of terrorism. It is quite challenging to find any literature on terrorism published after 2001 which does not contain at least a cursory mention of 9/11. Crenshaw (2000) argues that the United States government became fixated on analyzing and developing counter-terrorism strategies throughout the 1990s, and a number of government offices became concerned with terrorism. Stern (2016) notes that after 9/11, the funding for terrorism studies increased substantially, and these new studies were supported by a number of large, sophisticated databases, like the University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database. This literature review takes its lead from Crenshaw's (2000) argument about the nature of terrorism studies. She argues that the study of terrorism is inherently event driven, looking at far-left nationalist terrorists in the 1970s into the 1980s, before moving to an increased focus on far-right nationalist terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s. Crenshaw (2000) pointed to the literature's preoccupation with "new terrorism" which, much like Kaldor's (2012) theory of "new wars" emphasizes the ultraviolent, apolitical, and decentralized nature of terrorism in the late 20th century. While the language of "old" and "new" is no longer evident in the academic literature, popular understandings of terrorism, especially Islamic terrorism, continue to emphasize its barbarity and its association with failed states (see, for example, Mallaby 2002).

Stern (2016) argues that the expansion of terrorism studies has seen a shift towards large cross-country regression studies, with very little attention being paid to the individual-level motivations for participating in terrorist violence. Indeed, a positivist ontology has been fundamental to terrorism studies post-9/11, with a focus on identifying which countries are predisposed to terror. There has also been an emphasis on identifying causes of international terror incidents, in spite of the fact that over 85% of terrorist incidents worldwide from 1970–2007 were domestic (Kis-Katos, Liebert, & Schulze,

2011). This is undoubtedly a result of the policy demands coming from the United States during its War on Terror. The event-driven nature of terrorism, largely driven by the demands of policy-makers, has detracted from the legitimacy of terrorism studies and undermined its ability to look at historical trends in context (Crenshaw, 2000). It has long been evident that "Instead of trying to explain terrorism it tries to explain the terrorists" (Sprinzak, 1991, 68).

This literature review will argue that terrorism studies post-9/11 have been fixated on the question of "what causes terrorism?" while those studies we regard as pre-9/11 have been more concerned with the question of "why does terrorism occur?" Arguably, this is merely a rephrasing of the exact same question, but we argue that the distinction between "what" and "why" is indicative of the positivist ontology that has pervaded post-9/11 terrorism studies, with a clear emphasis on state-level variables identified through large cross-country regressions. Pre-9/11 studies were not devoid of positivism, and indeed some psychological research demonstrates a fixation on portraying terrorism as being pathological (Crenshaw, 2000). However, pre-9/11 studies more typically look at individual or group level motivations to understand the social processes that lead to terrorism. While we identify 9/11 as the juncture point in terrorism studies, the division between the two is far from perfect. Indeed, "pre-9/11" methods have certainly persisted in the field of political psychology, and are also evident with the growing body of intersectional work that addresses the role of gender in terrorism. While the publication date may not be pre-9/11, their methods are more closely associated with a social constructionist ontology.

This literature review will then proceed to discuss the literature on terrorism based on our pre- and post-9/11 distinction. Within the category of pre-9/11 studies, we look at contributions from the realm of political psychology, as well as those looking at group dynamics and, more recently, gender studies. Within post-9/11 literature, we explore two important debates: the question of *how* democracy influences terrorism, and the relationship *between* development and terrorism. We conclude that the excessive focus on state-level variables in post-9/11 terrorism studies provides an incomplete understanding of the phenomenon, and a policy perspective that incorporates group and individual-level motivations as well will be far more effective in preventing terrorism.

Defining Terrorism

Twenty years ago, Laqueuer (1996) argued that "Current definitions of terrorism fail to capture the magnitude of the problem worldwide," (p. 24) and the case is still the same today. The challenge raised by most terrorist theorists is that there is no common definition with which to function, and this affects the ability to study factors and outcomes of terrorism (Fortna, 2015; Phillips, 2015). Research into "terrorism" has usually investigated transnational terrorism, obscuring the fact that most terrorist violence occurs domestically (Kis-Katos et al., 2011). This approach leaves a large sample of terrorist activity un-investigated, which impedes counter-terrorist activities. The most common thread in terrorist theories is the premeditated use or threat of violence (Blomberg 2011; Kis-Katos et al. 2011;) and its typically symbolic nature (Crenshaw, 1981). From there, motivations, political situations, size of terrorist cells, and many more factors affect the definition.

Pre-9/11 Terrorism Studies

Pre-9/11 terrorism studies were concerned with the question of "why does terrorism occur," at a more individual level than a macro-level. These studies constitute more psychological studies considering individual and group motivations for participating in terrorism, studies of group dynamics, and the impact of gender and sexuality on terrorism. Although the separation of pre- and post-9/11 studies is presented in a chronological fashion, it is rather a thematic separation, to differentiate between the two schools of thought. Earlier studies examining the motivations behind terrorism have looked at vengeance and even "abnormal" psychology. However, presenting terrorists as deviants simplifies complicated personal and group contexts for policy purposes. More modern psychological studies consider the impacts and factors of radicalization, as well as the impact of media. Research into group dynamics has shown that political frustrations can lead to terrorism as an outlet for grievances. Group politics can encourage individuals to act more aggressively than may have been typical for them, due to pressures and groupthink. Terrorism studies rarely focuses on an individual as a terrorist cell — we see this when an attack happens, the media immediately seeks to find who the attackers are connected to. This was evident after the club shooting in Orlando in 2016. Finally, economics can be a strong motivational factor for terrorist groups, to redistribute wealth and control, and connect supply chains.

Most of the research on gendered experiences of terrorism, or the "queering" of terrorism is more recent, but it speaks to motivations that are more personal for engaging in terrorism. Traditionally, violence and war is linked to the "masculine," therefore the traditional terrorist is a man. This patriarchal norm has entrenched a system of toxic masculinity, which is valuable in recruiting more male terrorists. However, it does not speak to the experiences of women who become terrorists for various reasons, including revenge or their own radical martyrdom. Another non-dominant discourse is that of "queering" terrorism. Theorists have begun to consider why terrorist groups are positioned as "perverse" sexually to demonize them, as well as the presence of institutionalized homophobia in security policies. Interestingly, there is no data on people who identify as LGBTQ+ (or queer) and if they engage in terrorism, or how it affects them. Of course, this self-identification would make them especially vulnerable considering the prevalence of homophobia in various settings.

Political Psychology

Psychology and political psychology have been prominent in the literature on terrorism, with Crenshaw's (1981) article on "The Causes of Terrorism" being widely cited. Crenshaw pointed to vengeance, guilt, and self-sacrifice as possible motivations for participating in terrorism. While her analysis primarily examines individual motivations, other elements like social pressures and group dynamics are certainly prominent. The focus on the individual psychology of terrorists has not been without problems. Silke (1998) points to an extensive body of literature that portrays terrorists as paranoid, narcissists, or psychopaths, putting a clear emphasis on the deviancy and abnormality of terrorists. While this line of reasoning is attractive, in reality terrorist groups will arguably avoid recruiting thrill seekers and deviants who would endanger the security of the group (Crenshaw, 1981). Arguably, this desire to reduce terrorism to a personality disorder is driven by the demands

of policy-makers seeking a "typical profile" for terrorists, one that can be easily identified and contained (Crenshaw, 2000).

Indeed, the evidence for terrorist abnormality is largely absent. Silke (1998) argues that much of the early research that supported this line of reasoning was fundamentally weak. Many such studies were based on secondary sources, like biographies of famous terrorists, and the limited primary research with terrorists was rife with methodological errors. Silke argues that there is a much more substantial and reputable body of literature that highlights the normality of terrorists, with mental illness being no more common amongst terrorist group members than the general population. While many foundational works were published in the pre-9/11 era, the political psychology of terrorism has continued to be an important area of study, especially given the rising concern of "homegrown terrorism" and radicalization. Stern (2016) argues that an individual's psychology or history can play a role in determining their participation in terrorist activities, along with group dynamics and prevailing social conditions. Similarly, Kruglanksi et al. (2014) argue that motivation, ideology, and social processes are the key ingredients to radicalization. These authors recognize that the choice to participate in terrorism is a product of individual, local group and societal factors, a nuanced approach with multiple levels of analysis.

There is no single pathway to terrorism, and indeed within a given group there can be a variety of motivations for joining (Crenshaw, 1981). For example, Cronin (2015) argues that the messaging used by ISIS recruiters is tailored to different groups, such as young men and women. Groups like ISIS can offer personal power, a sense of community, religious righteousness, and the opportunity to participate in violence (Cronin, 2015). Kruglanksi et al. (2014) argue that the fundamental motivating factor for terrorists, and indeed for people in general, is a quest for significance: the fundamental desire to matter, to be someone, and to have respect. Given this perspective, we can understand why Stern (2016) argues that ISIS appeals to disenfranchised Sunni Muslims, offering an escape from oppression and humiliation elsewhere in addition to material benefits like higher salaries and physical protection.

While there has been extensive research on why individuals choose to participate in terrorism, there has also been inquiry into the psychological impacts of terrorism and counterterrorism. For example, Rehman et al. (2017) use economic methods to assess the effectiveness of Pakistani counterterrorism, noting the "vengeance effect" whereby collateral damage from counterterrorism can increase the future number of terrorist attacks. Psychological considerations are important to terrorist groups, who seek to create a climate of fear and paralysis in order to coerce action or inaction from a given regime (Bjørgo, 2016). One of the main methods of creating this fear is through media attention. Fischer et al. (2011) found that one-sided media coverage of terrorism that does not engage with the motives of perpetrators ultimately leads to an increase in public fear. The importance of the media is further supported by Asal and Hoffman's (2016) study on the impact of press freedom and attention on terrorist attacks. They argue that terrorists are inherently media conscious, concluding that "there is an inverse relationship between international press attention [for a given country] and the probability of terrorist organizations engaging in foreign terrorism" (Asal & Hoffman, 2016, pg. 394). Psychology and political psychology

have been crucial in identifying the individual, social and societal variables that contribute to terrorism and individual radicalization. The emphasis has rather shifted to social processes that reflect the social constructionist mode of inquiry, in contrast to earlier studies that have tried to identify personality disorders and has become fundamental to this body of literature.

Group Dynamics

The research on political psychology and terrorism has also been complimented by a great deal of inquiry into the role of group dynamics in terrorism. These studies have examined how terrorist groups operate, and how social processes can drive individuals to participate in terrorism. Small groups are crucial for moving from grievances to terrorism. These groups rely on an atmosphere of mutual reassurance, solidarity, and comradeship (Crenshaw, 1981). While groups can provide a permissive atmosphere that encourages terrorist violence, they can also be coercive. Kruglanksi et al. (2014) argue that humiliation has been a motivating factor for groups ranging from Japanese kamikaze bombers to Palestinian and Chechen terrorists and even the Boston Marathon bombers. Real or anticipated humiliation can be a dangerous motivating factor within small groups, but even within larger social groupings, considering increasingly violent responses to Islamophobia in the Global North (Kruglanski et al., 2014).

Some of this work succumbs to the event-driven nature of terrorism studies. For example, Weinberg and Eubank (1990) argued that left-wing extremist political parties are frequently the source of terrorist groups, especially when they fail to gain political traction. Similarly, Sprinzak (1991) argued that most terrorist groups are splinters of earlier radical political movements, and that adopting terrorism was a gradual process. Sprinzak's (1991) arguments appear to be the more plausible of the two today; for example, Nigeria's Boko Haram started as a relatively peaceful political movement before state repression pushed them towards terrorism (Higazi, 2013). Weinberg and Eubank's (1990) work already appeared dated by the mid-1990s, when Laqueur (1996) argued that "most international and domestic terrorism these days, however, is neither left nor right, but ethnic-separatist in inspiration" (p. 25). It is interesting to note that terrorism is often viewed in terms of groups. Phillips (2015) believes that the rise of the internet and "lone wolf" terrorists has made it more challenging to define groups. However, McCauley and Moskalenko (2008) argue that individual radicalization by personal grievance is unlikely without identifying with a larger ideology, and indeed this is often the result of mental illness. They argue that, while radicalization can occur at the individual, group, or mass level, terrorism is made possible by bringing individuals into small groups (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008).

As previously mentioned, groups are composed of individuals with diverse motivations. Drawing from feminist scholarship, Sjoberg (2009) argues that terrorism is perceived and understood differently based on lived experience. This is evident in Stern's (2016) analysis of ISIS, where individual members may be driven by financial gain, personal prestige, or religious piety. Pilat (2009) also notes that the impacts of globalization, rapid modernization and socio-economic and cultural disruptions have all been linked with terrorism, but none provides a perfect explanation for the phenomenon. There is also diversity between groups: Blomberg et al. (2011) find that terrorist groups in

the Middle East and North Africa tend to remain active for longer periods compared to groups from elsewhere. While this may be indicative of the strength of those groups, we must also keep in mind McCauley and Moskalenko's (2008) arguments about the role of macro conditions in supporting terrorism.

While the study of groups has typically focused on their role in fostering terrorism, terrorist groups also provide an interesting study in resource management and economics. Romaniuk (2014) points to an increasing focus on studying terrorist financing in the post-9/11 era, with efforts being made to understand how these groups generate, manage, and consume resources. While terrorist groups may have grand political goals, they still need to provide material benefits to maintain their membership (Stern, 2016). At the time of writing, Lister (2014) noted that "ISIS has had the capacity to earn as much as $2 million per day through the sale of oil and agricultural produce, not to mention additional income derived from its still-extensive extortion networks, internal taxation systems, and activities on the regional black market" (p. 90). The sophisticated financing systems of some terrorist groups are certainly of interest to policy-makers in counterterrorism, and while this field of study diverges from our characterization of "pre-9/11" methods, the emphasis on groups as the engine of terrorist remains common throughout the literature.

Gender

When studying terrorism, the experiences associated with different genders and sexualities is an important variable to consider. Gender and sexuality fall into the pre-9/11 category because they answer, "why does terrorism occur" by looking at the intersection of violence, gender, and/or sexuality. It is often focused more on internal motivations within individuals or groups, as opposed to a macro-level approach. Sex is a biological category, usually presented in most cultures as a binary of "male" and "female." Gender is a cultural construct on a spectrum of masculinity and femininity, again often more rigidly defined as "man" or "woman." Sexuality is related to a person's sexual interests or activities. According to Auchter (2012), consistently linking terrorism to men further entrenches the "patriarchal system of violence" (p. 126) although this systematic understanding would be more of a post-9/11 understanding. Previously, the experiences of women and terrorism were not discussed, which meant that theorists and policy-makers were underestimating the complexity of the phenomenon (Sjoberg, 2009). Enloe (1990) was one of the first theorists to question, "Where are the women," within conflict, and promoted the benefits of a gendered analysis of conflict.

From this, theories in security were developed which demonstrated that women were the primary victims of terrorism and violence, which meant that aid work could be specifically targeted to women in conflict areas as well as situations more dominated by terrorism (Cook, 2005; Sajid Haider, Heredero, Ahmed, & Dustgeer, 2015). Recently, however, academics are noticing that women are becoming involved in conflicts as terrorists for a variety of reasons. Sjoberg (2009) writes that "'terrorism' discourse does not pay enough attention to women *as* terrorists," and that more research must be done from the bottom-up to understand their intentions (p. 70). One suggested reason that women would participate in terrorism is as a response to the death of men in their families. Auchter (2012) outlines the theory that people perceived women as seeking to avenge the

deaths of loved ones, but otherwise would refuse violence. Auchter (2012) disagrees with this, because it focuses on a narrow gender dichotomy, which presents violence as a male endeavour (Crenshaw, 2000). This theory also ignores women's agency as terrorists and being able to defend their political views (Ortbals & Poloni-Staudinger, 2014). Cook (2005) has also studied the radicalization of Muslim women, who are entering terrorist groups in order to participate in martyrdom, showing that they, too, believe in the radical messages. Women's rights to join men in Islamic terrorism shows a radicalization in Islam to include women, although theorists like Cook (2005) surmise that women are useful because they are unexpected terrorists. These practices play upon gender stereotypes.

Some scholars have found that gender equality has a negative impact on terrorism. Salman (2015) writes, "women's actual advancement and equality in higher education, jobs, and political representation are more effective in reducing terrorism than cultural attitudes supporting these rights" (p. 281). As mentioned previously, when theorists link terrorism and violence to men, it reinforces patriarchal structures which victimize women and overlook their perspectives (Auchter 2012; Sjoberg 2009). It is vital to discuss that men can also be victimized by terrorism (Sjoberg, 2015). This follows the discourse in development theory, where first people studied "where are the women," and the impact development projects had on them, but then noticed that not all men were affected in the same way, just like not all women were impacted in the same way. Adherence to the study of women only leaves out important perspectives on the causes and effects of terrorism. The theories outlined in the psychology section above are generally focused on men's experience of terrorism, which demonstrates why a gendered lens on terrorism is necessary. Men often participate in terrorism when they are disillusioned and desire to gain power (Haider, 2016). Recruitment of young men is often targeted within schools or at disenfranchised young men (Schneckener, 2004). Masculinity is also largely shaped by cultural norms that emphasize men as strong defenders, and apt to violence. Not only should more research be done into women and terrorism, but academics should continue to develop the narrative of terrorism and the toxicity of masculinity.

Sexuality

An important critique of mainstream terrorism studies is the lack of attention it gives to non-heteronormative actors, or the representation of them in conflict. Recently, some academics have begun to apply queer theory to the study of terrorism as well as global politics (Sjoberg, 2015), although there is not much research published. Sjoberg (2015) writes that the goal of terrorist theory is to understand the position of those who are queer within terrorism, as well as homoeroticisms within military organizations. As mentioned in the above section on abnormal psychology, homosexuality has been used to "other" the enemy, and de-masculinize.

Two interesting schools in terrorism study the homophobia present in anti-terrorist policies as well as terrorist groups. Haider and Puar (2016; 2006) write that anti-terrorist narratives often frame terrorist groups as queer, in order to position it as negative. Schotten writes that from a post-9/11 context, Arabs have been sexualized perversely, or "queered," in the figure of the "'terrorist,' a figure of monstrosity, excess, savagery, and perversion" (Schotten, 2015, p. 79). This paradigm of toxic masculinity presents homosexuality as an

"underlying ailment" which must be eradicated. The messages encouraging the queering of terrorists must be changed because of the adverse effects that harm individuals negatively. In contrast, Haider and Puar's (2016) article also examines toxic masculinity, which positioned the shooting at the Orlando club as homophobic terrorism. They say that by framing homophobia as the cause of the shooting, one can question the constructions of violence and hegemonic patriarchy. The interesting distinction between these articles is that the narratives they analyze both present gay men (or the idea of them) as deviant and weak. The narrative which Schotten uses is used to perpetuate homophobia in institutional policies and unite conservative members of a state (Mason, 2013).

Post 9/11 Terrorism Studies

As previously mentioned, terrorism studies garnered more attention in the post-9/11 period. Academic research was increasingly geared towards supporting the War on Terror, which changed the way terrorism studies was approached. Econometrics, which became more popular in conflict studies the early 2000s with the works of Collier and Hoeffler (see, for example, Collier & Hoeffler, 1998, 2002), became prominent in terrorism studies as well. These works examined state-level variables across countries, seeking a correlation between certain state characteristics and the incidence of terrorism. The policy implications of these findings are very clear, as Boutton and Carter (2014) found in their study that US foreign aid flows during the War on Terror were concentrated where transnational terrorist threats originated.

There are two debates that are prominent within this post-9/11 body of literature. The first pertains to the role of democracy in enabling or preventing terrorism. Piazza (2007) differentiates between the two bodies of literature through two schools of thought: the access school and the strategic school. Scholars associated with the access school claim that democracy provides multiple legal avenues for political expression, meaning that there is less incentive for resorting to terrorist violence. Put simply, for the access school, more democracy equals less terrorism. In contrast, the strategic school argues that more democracy equals more terrorism, since democracies are more respectful of civil liberties and less likely to dispose of terrorist groups with force. The second prominent debate in the post-9/11 terrorism literature focuses upon the role of weak or failed states in generating terrorism. Particularly given the War on Terror's focus on combatting transnational terrorist groups, the perception that failed states provide a safe haven for terrorists has remained prevalent. In contrast, an increasing number of scholars have argued that terrorism is more likely to originate from the developed world, echoing elements of the strategic school.

The Strategic School

The notion that democracy could enable terrorism was alluded to in Crenshaw (1981), where she argued that a government's inability or unwillingness to prevent terrorism could serve as a permissive factor. Weinberg and Eubank (1994) are far more explicit, stating that "it seems clear that terrorist organizations tend to appear in democratic settings" (p. 433). In a later work, Weinberg and Eubank (2001) find that terrorist events were more prevalent in democratic settings than autocratic ones in the 1980s, and that the victims and

perpetrators were more likely to be citizens of stable, democratic countries. Weinberg and Eubank (2001) proposed that the democracy-terrorism relationship could be a result of the ease of travel and communication in developed countries. Indeed, Richards (2015) proposes that the decentralization of ideas in democracies makes counterterrorism increasingly difficult. However, other scholars have focused more on state capacity and civil liberties as permissive factors. For example, Bakker et al. (2016) find that civil liberties, as well as political participation and contestation, are positively correlated with terror attacks. Looking at the Middle East, Piazza (2007) finds that more liberal states are more susceptible to terrorism than dictatorial regimes. Kis-Katos et al. (2011) echo these findings, arguing that "only the states that have no respect of human, civil and political rights can crush terrorism more effectively than other states through repressive means" (p. 525).

Of course, not all democracies are created equal and many authors have sought to qualify the conclusions of the strategic school. Kis-Katos et al. (2011) argue that while there is strong support for the strategic school, they concede that their results were dichotomous: only authoritarian states can truly prevent terrorism, and there is no spectrum where more democracy equals more terrorism. Ghatak and Prins (2016) find that homegrown terrorism is most common in democracies, but this finding is primarily driven by emerging or underdeveloped democratic states. This reveals the complex interplay between democracy and development and the implications for terrorism. Bueno De Mesquita and Dickson (2007) also allude to the role of state capacity and development, focusing on the role of negative externalities from indiscriminate counterterrorism. They argue that terrorist conflict is most likely where states are unable to pursue targeted counterterrorism policies without creating these negative externalities, creating a more permissive environment for terrorism. At face value, the conclusions of the strategic school seem to diminish the importance of political expression and participation. However, Fortna (2015) argues that, while terrorism may be more common in democracies, terrorist groups in democratic states are no more likely to see their objectives realized. Therefore, "terrorism may be less ineffective against democracies, but even in this context, terrorists do not win" (Fortna, 2015, p. 519). The conclusions of the strategic school must also be set alongside the debate surrounding weak states and terrorism, given the oft-debated relationship between democracy and development.

The Access School

The opposing school of thought from the strategic school is the access school. According to Piazza (2007), the access school says that democracies encourage peaceful political participation, and therefore have less terrorist activity. Because there are more legal channels to pursue political or cultural change, there are fewer chances at engaging in terrorism. Callaway and Harrelson-Stephens (2006) write that political rights ensure that citizens will participate in government, and pursue legitimate opposition of the government. Democracies are also more likely to accept opposing ideas. Kaldor (2005) has written that rebuilding political legitimacy is the key to ending "new wars," through popular democratization, although this argument ignores contexts where liberal democratization can be "too much, too soon," like in Afghanistan.

Along the lines of a democratic government, Gassebner and Luechinger (2011) theorize that law and order, and the absence of human rights abuses are associated with less terrorism. Their research shows that the lack of economic opportunity is a larger driver in terrorist activities than a lack of material resources. Therefore, countries that restrict economic freedom experience more terrorism (Gassebner and Luechinger, 2011). Countries that have stronger and more impartial judicial systems, as well as those who respect physical integrity rights, are associated with low levels of terrorism (Asal and Hoffman, 2016). On the other hand, government coercion stimulates terror attacks (Bakker et al., 2016). Callaway and Harrelson-Stephens (2006) write, “Systematic violations of these three rights [political, personal security, human needs] in tandem, are likely causes for terrorist activity, particularly if these violations are sustained over a long period of time” (p. 682). In other words, when there are legal channels to critique the state and challenge the status quo, terrorism is less likely to happen. Policy-wise, to limit terrorism from the perspective of the access school, states must promote liberal democracy. However, as mentioned previously, democratization is not the solution to stability in every situation. It is more important to address human rights issues which reflect contexts, and encourage locally based solutions, than to promote liberal democracy.

Do Developed States Generate Terrorism?

Contrary to the belief that liberal democracy is the solution for “fragile” or “failing” states, some theorists suggest that more “developed” states harbour terrorism. These academics suggest that democratic institutions actually extend the abilities and lifetimes of terrorist groups (S. B. Blomberg et al., 2011) and that higher human development actually increases the risk of terrorism (Coggins, 2015). A policy problem that Bjørgo (2016) suggests is that in many democratic societies, counter-terrorism is “almost exclusively about crime prevention,” which makes policy very narrow, and limits its effectiveness (p. 25). Within this line of reasoning, states that have large cities are at a higher risk, because terrorist organizations have more access to finances and goods in urban areas (Kis-Katos et al. 2011). Kis-Katos et al. (2011) write that terrorism is more likely to originate from “richer and more urbanized countries than from poorer countries,” which are more likely to participate in international, rather than national, terrorism (p. 524). Cities can also offer a great opportunity for recruiting (Crenshaw, 1981). Crenshaw (1981) also takes the opportunity to suggest that terrorism may be “a sign of a stable society rather than a symptom of fragility…” and that terrorism may happen when society’s elite wish to change the status quo, like in Western Europe (p. 384). This theory would need to be tested in a post-9/11 frame to see if elite terrorism is more or less common.

Even in more developed states, there are still groups which are excluded for various reasons. Ghatak and Prins (2016) write that “the risk of domestic terrorism is higher in stronger states when segments of minority populations suffer from political exclusion from the state power” (p. 23). Their evidence shows that it is stronger states who experience more domestic terrorism when there is more discrimination present in society. A certain amount of stability and education or political engagement is necessary for terrorist groups to function). Schneckener (2004) explains that when states are more developed, there is an improved infrastructure, and therefore an improved supply chain for the terrorists. This is also true in situations of rapid socioeconomic change, which can exacerbate turmoil (Gurr,

1986). An interesting idea presented by Brockhoff et al. (2015) is that education levels may facilitate mobilization by "amplifying feelings of frustration and disenfranchisement," although higher education in richer countries may reduce risk (p. 1207). Weinberg and Eubank (1994) also say that terrorist groups may emerge in states that have more political engagement, and have "attentive publics that are alert to important social and political developments" (p. 433). Therefore, states that are more developed may harbour terrorism because groups have more access to infrastructure, goods, and more educated and possibly frustrated citizens.

Do Weak States Generate Terrorism?

There is a common argument, exemplified by Mallaby (2002), that weak states are safe havens for transnational terrorist and criminal organizations. The most prominent targets in the War on Terror have been weak or failed states like Afghanistan and post-invasion Iraq, with Somalia, Mali and Nigeria also serving as high-profile producers of terrorist groups. A great deal of academic literature has also supported the relationship between weak states and terrorism. Some have focused on the criminality and lawlessness in weak states that permits terrorism, while others have focused on issues of underdevelopment, political weakness, and uneven territorial control.

The literature on terrorism and state fragility or weakness ranges from the sophisticated to the sensationalist. On the latter end of the spectrum, Pilat (2009) argues that "today, one of the greatest dangers we confront comes from failed states, and the sub-national and transnational terrorism that they breed and harbour" (p. 180). Authors like Piazza (2007) and Tikuisis (2009) have drawn empirical links between state weakness and failure and fatal terrorism. Ghatak and Prins (2015) found that weak and corrupt states experience a higher incidence of domestic terrorism than stronger states. Kis-Katos et al. (2011) also find that "Domestic conflicts and anarchy are hotbeds for domestic and international terror alike" (p. 529).

Linking weak or failed states, a categorization that is contested, to terrorism is not without its issues. Rotberg (2002) focuses on the economic (e.g., corruption, clientelism) and political (e.g., civil society curtailed, no independent judiciary) conditions that contribute to state failure. He argues that a loss of fundamental legitimacy and breakdown of the social contract contribute to the rising risk of terrorism. The importance of political legitimacy is also evident in Esfandiary and Tabatabai's (2015) analysis of Iran's strategic approach to terrorism, which notes that ethnic fractionalization and the pseudo-state capacity of ISIS pose fundamental risks to the stability of the Iranian state. The question of legitimacy, as well as political capacity, is evident in a thread of literature that emphasizes the risk of violence and terrorism during political transitions. Weinberg and Eubank (1990), focusing on the possibility of political parties radicalizing, argue that regime transformation obscures the rules of the political game and makes terrorism more likely to occur. These findings have been echoed in subsequent research. For example, while dismissing the correlation between state weakness and terrorism, Coggins (2015) argues that states suffering political collapse are more likely to experience terrorism. Akhmat et al. (2014) find that "the fragility of relatively young political systems and

nascent democracies has also generated a permissive environment for the use of political violence" in South Asia (p. 3066).

While general political collapse has been proposed as a cause of terrorism, the absence of state institutions in particular regions has also received attention. Schneckener (2004) argues that transnational terrorists are not likely to base themselves in weak states, but notes that areas where state authority is absent can be useful for conducting training or withdrawing from combat, citing specific regions of Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines as examples. Territory and the absence of the central state are important considerations in Lister's (2014) analysis of ISIS and other terrorist groups in the region, as he argues that "Iraq and especially Syria will continue to represent relative safehavens for jihadist militants for many years to come" (p. 107). According to Lister, the retreat of the state in these regions has been vital to the success of terrorist groups, as territorial rule is crucial for ISIS' military, financial and religious strategy. ISIS has expended considerable resources on providing public services to the people living in their territory, gaining a manner of legitimacy at the expense of the retreating state (Lister, 2014).

State weakness can certainly be expressed in terms of political control and capacity, but safeguarding human security is another essential function of the modern state (Coggins, 2015). Given the supposed correlation between human security and political legitimacy, a number of authors have drawn links between development failure and terrorism incidence. Drawing on the work of Urdal (2006), who found a link between youth bulges and conflict, Caruso and Gavrilova (2012) find a significant positive relationship between male youth unemployment and terrorism in Palestine. Blomberg et al. (2011) point to the uneven economic growth associated with commodity export dependence as limiting the capacity of states like Nigeria to prevent the conditions for terrorism from arising. Clearly much has been written in support of the notion that weak states create terrorism, through either a lack of political capacity, a lack of territorial control, or a failure to foster adequate human development. Viewed alongside the conclusions of the strategic school, these authors would seem to argue that building state capacity is essential for preventing terrorism.

Conclusion

Like conflict, state failure and fragility, terrorism is not an easily explained phenomenon, nor is it clearly defined. The proposed causes include individual grievances, group marginalization, regime type, and economic development, amongst a host of others. Previously understudied variables, like the social construction of masculinity, are now being acknowledged as part of the diverse set of factors that would motivate individuals to participate in terrorism. This literature review is not intended to "explain terrorism," or indeed to advocate for one methodology or the other, but rather to demonstrate the ways in which evolving academic research has approached the subject. The events of September 11th, 2001, and the subsequent war on terror, have had a significant impact on the study of terrorism. Academic research has shifted towards the use of regression analysis with a specific focus on country level variables as means to identify which countries are prone to terrorism. This approach has arguably been motivated by the attention and funding made available during the United States' War on Terror. The result has been a focus on answering

the "what" by identifying state-level variables correlated with terrorism, rather than engaging with the question of "why" individuals choose to engage in terrorism.

Methods that we classify as pre-9/11 have persisted, most notably in the fields of political psychology and increasingly in gender studies. This research has focused more on individual and group motivations for engaging in terrorism. While primary research with terrorists or those who have experienced radicalization remains limited, these authors have provided useful insights into the phenomenon of terrorism.

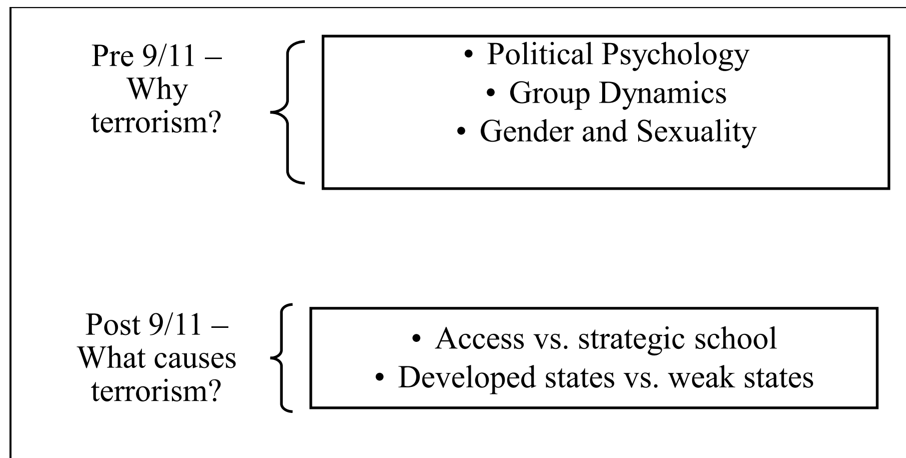

Figure 1. Approaches in the study of terrorism.

A more sophisticated approach is necessary for various reasons. If indeed the countries of the Global North, and specifically the United States, intend to fight a War on Terror, they must acknowledge the complexity of their target. Kaldor (2005) has suggested that the United States has approached the War on Terror as if it was an "Old War," pitting ideals of freedom against totalitarianism. She argues that the United States has attempted to fight an asymmetrical "New War" using "Old War" tactics, the result of which will be further state disintegration. In contrast, Cronin (2015) argues that the rise of a pseudo-state like ISIS that actually commands a conventional army will render existing counterterrorism strategies obsolete. There is also the question of whether the fight against terrorism has led to an overemphasis on security in the foreign policies of Global North countries. Beall et al. (2006) argue that the "failure to achieve significant long-term development can end up undermining security anyway" (p. 63). With ongoing debates over the role of economic development in terrorism, the question of how to improve human wellbeing, whether it is discussed in terms of security or development, remains unanswered.

It is evident that addressing terrorism and the threats it poses to human security in the Global South and Global North necessitates a multi-dimensional analysis at multiple levels. While econometric methods can identify country-level variables associated with terrorism, a sub-national level of analysis is equally important to identify the pathways to radicalization and the group dynamics that sustain political violence. This is more important when domestic terrorism in the Global North is attracting increasing attention from policymakers. Put as simply as possible, terrorism is a response to a problem: that problem may be social or economic marginalization, state fragility, or a host of other issues.

Academic research must strive to adopt multiple perspectives and approaches to understand that problem to inform effective and responsive counterterrorism policies.

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