

“The Transnational Element During the ‘War on Terrorism,’ 1920-2011”

John A. Tures, Associate Professor of Political Science, LaGrange College

Abstract

While the number of studies concerning terrorism have dramatically increased since 9/11, it is not clear that our analyses have matched our goals for curtailing terrorism. To date, we have seen religious and psychological studies, public opinion surveys, group observation, and hypothesis tests of events and countries attacked using statistics. Despite these valiant efforts, it seems we have come up short in what we’ve learned about terrorism in general, or specifically how groups have targeted a particular country.

Religion studies have shown how the role of such belief systems might be overstated. The psychological profiles have demonstrated that there is no profile. The study of group dynamics shows that the old models have changed, and continue to do so in response to the situation at hand. Terror motives seem murkier still. The statistical tests have yielded some fruit, but many of them suffer from employing data collected from sources where there may be a reporting bias. Additionally, many of them are conducted in a way that does not incorporate the transnational character of terrorism.

This paper may not address all of the shortcomings of terrorism studies, but it illuminates some findings and perhaps provides a path for future research on transnational terrorism in general, and how it impacts the United States in particular. It compares the domestic with the transnational examples of terrorism. It examines an area recently isolated by scholars as significant: the suicide terrorism strategy and whether it is deadlier than other forms of terrorism, without selecting on the dependent variable. It also provides some input on areas previously overlooked by most terrorism researchers: the location and timing of the terror strike. And while it only covers terrorism in the United States and American assets abroad, it offers a blueprint for future analyses tracking the transnational cases of terrorism.

Introduction

Four days before this paper was presented at the Oxford Round Table on Terrorism, a blast from a bomb in a terrorist’s oversized backup killed five Israeli tourists, the Bulgarian bus driver, and the suicide terrorist. Another 33 were wounded in the attack at the Burgas Airport in Bulgaria on July 19, 2012 (Solomon, 2012). American Intelligence officials, working with the Israelis, fingered Hezbollah in Lebanon as the culprit, acting on behalf of Iran, who allegedly retaliated for attacks upon their nuclear scientists by agents working for the Israelis (Kulish and Schmitt, 2012). Curiously, the bomber had a fake Michigan Driver’s License.

So Lebanese working for Iran killed Israelis in Bulgaria while Americans pursued the perpetrators. This case illustrates yet another case of transnational terrorism. Yet while such attacks persist, many of our models are designed to focus on the individual or what is happening in a single country. This paper suggests a different method of analysis: using a transnational

database to analyze transnational terrorism. Using the United States as an example, the data tracks who is attacked and where, not confined to the traditional studies of people or places, which either do not fit a consistent pattern or often capture no more than the domestically-oriented cases. Such a theory about how to track transnational theory is then applied to evaluating three modern myths of terrorism offered by government officials.

Literature Review

Since Kenneth Waltz's book *Man, the State, and War* (1969) was published, political scientists studying international politics have thought about their subject from three levels of analysis: individual, state and system. This seems like a good way to break down some of the existing literature on terrorism, as well as distinguish this study from others.

Individual Level of Analysis

When 9/11 occurred, the immediate reaction to the suicidal nature of the attack was that it was the work of madmen (Pape, 2003). Who else would kill themselves, and so many innocents, when we weren't at war with the countries of the hijackers? The field of psychology is therefore employed to study these terrorists in an attempt to understand what makes them tick. An example is Victoroff (2005: 4-5), who combines a series of factors (environment, goals, strategy, means, organization and participation) to paint a portrait of the mind of a terrorist. His overview covers everything from the psychoanalytic to the sociological theories (oppression, relative deprivation, national culture, and social learning). The profile of the young well-educated single male is even conjured up, as well as the counter-example of the impoverished suicide bomber (Victoroff, 2005: 7). In the end, he concludes "Terrorists are psychologically extremely heterogeneous. Whatever his stated goals and group of identity, every terrorist, like every person, is motivated by his own complex of psychosocial experiences and traits (Victoroff, 2005: 35)."

Allison Smith (2008) has another study that employs psychological and sociological theories. Her work zeroes in on group comparison with non-groups, employing theories from Freud to Social Identity Theory, and examining affiliation motive imagery and power motive imagery. Terrorist groups seem more effective at linking with their fellow members, and expressing more hostility to outside members than non-terrorist groups are able to (Smith, 2008: 59-60), and also see themselves as having more control over others (Smith, 2008: 70).

A group study that instead tried to emphasize the dynamics of the organization is Cronin's (2006) study about how the terror group al-Qaeda would end. This promising work critiques the psychological approach (Cronin, 2006: 11) and traditional organization theory (Cronin, 2006: 12). She also points out that most studies are descriptive in nature, and zero in almost exclusively on leaders or root causes (Cronin, 2006: 8).

The belief systems of terrorists also stray into the discussion, with a focus on the religion of such groups. Huntington's oft-cited "Clash of Civilizations" (2002) has been applied to

terrorism. In particular, differences between religions become one more reason for cross-civilization conflict, especially between Islam and other countries sharing a border with Islamic countries. Another terror study with a religious element is Rosenberger's article in the *Journal of Religion and Health* (2003). He focuses on the role of vengeance, and how material reprisals are not enough to sate the appetite of the terrorist. Instead, the victimizer must be killed by the terrorist.

The individual level of analysis is also manifested in public opinion surveys. Instead of administering them to the terrorists, these are given to evaluate the response of the target audience to the attack(s). Friedland and Merari (1985) find that while terrorist strikes do generate fear, they also produce anger. This results in a hardening of attitudes which make it harder for leaders to offer concessions to terrorists (Friedland and Merari, 1985). Such samples focused on the Israeli population.

Kuzma (2000) offers another example of survey analysis of terror targets. This time, it is the Americans who were polled. Though the questions were asked before 9/11, there were plenty of terror attacks in the 1990s in the United States (the Oklahoma City bombing, the Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta, and against the Americans abroad, such as the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. But despite these high profile attacks, and the political, psychological and economic toll they take (according to the State Department), the public seemed relatively unconcerned with the presence of terrorism (Kuzma, 2000).

State Level of Analysis

Though most studies of terrorism have been at the individual level of analysis, there have also been cross-national studies of terrorism, mostly dealing with the question about whether or not democracies are more vulnerable to terrorism. Cronin (2006) contends that the American policy of democratization takes a long time to implement, and does not work as well as a short-term solution. In fact, she believes that it may actually increase the chances for terrorism, as weak regimes fall prey to Islamic regimes (Cronin, 2006: 43).

In his cross-national analysis of democracy and terrorism, Eyerman (1998) finds that while established democracies have less terrorism, new democracies have more terrorism, echoing Cronin's contentions. Li (2005), on the other hand, concludes that democracies that increase participation reduce terrorism, while those with many civil liberties are more likely to experience terrorism. Additionally, democracies facing political deadlock are more likely to face terrorism (Li, 2005).

Pape (2003) also found that democracies are more likely to experience a certain type of terror attack: suicide terrorism. He claims that suicide attackers target democracies because of the perception that such governments are weaker, even if there is no evidence to support this (Pape, 2003: 349).

Weaknesses of Individual-Level and State-Level Analyses

But despite the lure of both individual and state-level approaches to terrorism, both have their drawbacks. As Victoroff (2005) and Smith (2008) imply, the true profile of terrorism is that there is no profile (Pape, 2003: 344; Cronin, 2006: 11). Studies leaning heavily on religion often overstate the connection between Islam and suicide terrorism. For example, the group responsible for the most suicide bombings has been the Tamil Tigers of the LTTE, a non-Muslim group motivated more by ideology than religion (Pape, 2003: 343).

Neumayer and Plumper (2009) also find little support for Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* argument. While they did find more attacks upon the West, these were not inter-civilizational conflicts. Nor does Islam war with other civilizations, despite media reports to the contrary.

Cronin's (2006: 8) critique of prior group analysis exposes the limit of such analysis, both in reliance on descriptive analysis and leadership or root causes, instead of how such groups operate and terminate. While public opinion studies of targeted peoples are interesting, some public opinion surveys have been shown to be misinterpreted. Research into the 2003 suicide attacks on Spanish trains and the 2004 election Bin-Laden video were both improperly interpreted by the media and analysts (Tures, 2009), leading to completely erroneous conclusions about the role of terrorists in these two elections.

In the case of Spain, people incorrectly thought that the bombs blew up the ruling party's political chances. Instead, it produced a brief rally effect that turned to a political disaster when the Popular Party knowingly pinned false blame for the attack on Basque separatists, knowing this group tended to support the Spanish socialists, the rival party (Tures, 2009). In the case of the U.S. 2004 election, pundits incorrectly cited a poll showing a boost for President Bush, which was actually largely administered before the bin-Laden video was ever made public. A more extensive array of surveys showed the video helped Kerry close the gap opened up by Bush after the debates, though not enough to win (Tures, 2009).

As for the state level of analysis studies that focus on democracy, Drakos and Gofas (2006) write about the weaknesses of such research. Many find democracy more vulnerable to terrorism not because it is, but because democracies are more likely to actually report such events. Authoritarians, with a better ability to engage in censorship, have strong incentives to deny terrorists the attention they seek (Drakos and Gofas, 2006: 715-716). Such underreporting biases undermine many studies, though a few (Eyerman, 1998; Li, 2005) do better than others at attempting to overcome such problems.

Not all studies at the state level of analysis even find that democracies are likelier to be terror targets, even of suicide terrorism, as Pape (2003: 350) claims. Wade and Reiter (2007: 329) find that regime type is unrelated to suicide terrorism. Furthermore, many other factors touted by other state-level analyses (country size, economic development, regime durability) were not found to be significant, though a measure of religious minorities from the Minorities At Risk project was found to influence the presence of suicide terrorism (Wade and Reiter, 2007: 330).

There is another element to consider in the democracy angle. Most of these studies have a model geared toward domestic terrorism. They don't fully address the transnational angle. For example, al-Qaeda did not attack the United States because of its political representation or press freedoms. As bin-Laden said in his previously mentioned video that if they had wanted to attack a country because of its democracy, they would have targeted Sweden (Tures, 2009). Typically, transnational terrorism has aggressors from country A targeting people from country B over its foreign policy or possible support of country C rather than internal reasons. And the attack may well occur in country D, neutral to the original dispute.

Our Study: System Level of Analysis

The systemic level of analysis conjures up images of Kenneth Waltz-like studies where global events under one system are compared to another, with systems are defined by the numbers of great powers which exist at a given time. But this is not a study about unipolar vs. bipolar vs. multipolar systems.

A system is simply the interaction of two or more states. It does not have to involve every state. Some have chosen to focus on a region, or compare the behavior of members of international organizations to those of other organizations (such as international alliances). Some system-level studies look at only the dyad of two states, yielding important insights. For example, important discoveries were made about the democratic peace that differed from monadic levels of analysis.

This study is made at the dyadic level of analysis. It examines all cases of terrorism against the United States, either at home or abroad. These terror attacks include cases of members of another country, as well as home-grown cases. Therefore, it provides not only the opportunity to study transnational terrorism, but also compare it to a country's domestic cases of terrorism.

This study also includes cases of suicide terrorism and non-suicide terrorism, to allow for a comparison between both types. In addition, the study also looks at several additional factors of interest to scholars: deaths from an attack (Americans and other targets), the timing of an event, and its location. In this way, we can find out where terrorists prefer to strike their targets, when such attacks occur (and if there are certain time periods more conducive to an attack, suicide or otherwise), and whether suicide cases are more likely to be deadlier than other types of terror attacks. Future analyses will look at the regime type of the target locations (comparing these to the United States) and breaking down the transnational cases from the domestic ones. Future analyses will also be extended to cover the rest of the 1900s, as well as the 1800s.

Theory: A Systemic Approach To Transnational Terrorism

The theory at the conceptual level is to therefore analyze terrorism attacks from the perspective of both attacker and target. Who is being targeted, and by whom? Where and when do these attacks occur? Is one such type of attack deadlier than another?

Prior studies have sought to profile the leaders of terror groups as well as profiling who carries out the attacks. Sometimes it involves psychology, or the sociological influences of external influences. Perhaps religion is injected in the argument. These all focus on the “X” in the terrorism relationship, but not the “Y.”

The other studies, which employ surveys or large-n studies of countries, focus more on the opinions of those attacked or the regime type of the country experiencing the attack. But these focus only on the target, and have little to say about the attacker. A study should combine both, hence the systemic (or dyadic) element: both sides involved in the terrorist event.

Hypotheses

From this theory that a transnational approach to terrorism can be applied, where questions are asked about the nature of the target, how its citizens can be attacked at home or abroad, by actors from another country, possibly acting in concert with locals. In particular, it would be beneficial to employ to answer three questions that have been front and center in the recent debate over terrorism.

First, are suicide bombings “the ultimate smart bomb,” something that deserves a greater level of concern, or are these events generally overstated by the media? Second, are we “fighting them over there so we don’t have to fight them here?” In other words, are terrorists likely to attack Americans in other countries, or hit them where they live? Finally, has “everything changed since 9/11” for the United States and terrorism, as so many have alleged, or has the behavior of terrorists toward Americans differed little since over the last several decades?

“Suicide Smart Bomb” Hypothesis

It has become part of popular culture to think of suicide bombers as similar to our most destructive weapons employed in conventional warfare: the smart bomb. Rather than a series of instruments to guide an otherwise “dumb” explosive to its intended target, an attacker can strap such an item close, perhaps pass cursory inspection, and get as close to the intended target as the mind can plot.

As noted terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman writes in *The Atlantic* in June of 2003 “The fundamental characteristics of suicide bombing, and its strong attraction for the terrorist organizations behind it, are universal: Suicide bombings are inexpensive and effective. They are less complicated and compromising than other kinds of terrorist operations. They guarantee media coverage. The suicide terrorist is the ultimate smart bomb. Perhaps most important, coldly efficient bombings tear at the fabric of trust that holds societies together (Hoffman, 2003).”

Hoffman (2003) points out that in earlier times, such bombers were easy to catch in Israel, a land often targeted by such attacks. The attackers fit a profile and carried large bulky packs. But today’s suicide terrorist doesn’t fit the profile or look the part. They can be of either gender, or nearly any age. They dress like Israeli teens, Israeli Defense Forces soldiers, or Hasidic Jews. They were belts that are harder to spot. And though they each claim to be poor, desperate working class heroes, their members are more likely to be middle class, even members

of the upper class. Even smart bombs don't disguise themselves so effectively, nor can approach their target so closely. A website (elderofZiyon.blogspot.com) even alleged that Hamas labeled their Al-Qassam Martyrs Brigades as "smart bombs."

"The terrorists are lethally flexible and inventive," writes Hoffman (2003). "A person wearing a bomb is far more dangerous and far more difficult to defend against than a timed device left to explode in a marketplace. This human weapons system can effect last-minute changes based on the ease of approach, the paucity or density of people, and the security measures in evidence."

Pape (2003) also produces evidence that support the efficacy of suicide terror attacks. In his study of 188 cases from 1980-2001 across nearly a dozen campaigns, he finds that it "works" for achieving modest goals. Furthermore, they tend to be far deadlier affairs than other types of terror attacks (Pape, 2003: 346-347).

Hoffman (2003) notes how Vice-President Dick Cheney, Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge, and the NY Metro Transit Authority Security Chief concluded that America would face suicide bombs after a visit to Israel in 2002. Hoffman even listed how Palestinians tried such an attack in a Brooklyn subway station four years before 9/11, but the group's plan was uncovered by an informant.

Yet, as Hoffman points out, if they are really so inexpensive and effective (or, as Pape (2003) claims, they can achieve their goals better than other forms of terrorism or conflict), then they should be the most dominant form of terrorist tactic. Is that really the case? Or are such suicide attacks overstated in their efficacy, the result of hype from a few spectacular (and lucky) attacks? After all, Wilson and Thomson (2005: 332) conclude that car crashes are significantly more likely to take lives than terror attacks, even for the United States in the deadly year of the 9/11 tragedy.

If, as the authors point out, these are primarily conducted with a media audience in mind, shouldn't these be seen as more effective at generating journalistic hysteria than anything (outside of a few cases)? And doesn't Pape (2003: 343) admit that employing the suicide attack frequently fails to achieve greater goals? So the first hypothesis is to test whether the suicide terrorist is actually the ultimate smart bomb. More specifically, do such suicide attacks generate more deaths than other types of attacks?

"Fight Them There" Hypothesis

After 9/11, the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush concluded that the best way to combat terrorism was to take the fight to the Middle East and Central Asia, to avoid the repeated specter of terrorism in the United States. A year into the mission in Afghanistan, the Bush Administration wrote "The best way to keep America safe from terrorism is to go after terrorists where they plan and hide," on in the document "Winning the War on Terrorism" posted on the website of the Office of Management and Budget. In the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, the Bush Administration wrote "The strategy focuses on taking the fight against

terrorists directly to them, isolating the terrorists from each other and potential allies, and disrupting plots before attacks occur,” on February 14, 2003 (Bush, 2003).

On the campaign trail, Bush told a Colorado audience “We are fighting these terrorists with our military in Afghanistan and Iraq and beyond so we do not have to face them in the streets of our own cities.” No less than four times from early June to July 4, 2005, Bush repeated the mantra of fighting terrorists abroad, to avoid having to fight them at home.

But three days after July 4, 2005, when terrorists struck the London transit system, columnist Arianna Huffington (2005) questioned the wisdom of the strategy on the Huffington Post website. “The attacks in London proved how absurd this either/or logic is when fighting this kind of hydra-headed enemy. Not only was this flypaper theory empirically disproved by the London carnage, it directly contradicts the president’s other most often used justification for the war—that we invaded to liberate the Iraqi people. So let me get this straight: we invaded them to liberate them... *and* to use them as bait to attract terrorists who we could fight on the streets of Baghdad rather than the streets of London and New York? ...The presence of American forces in Iraq didn’t keep the enemies of western culture from attacking Madrid. And it didn’t keep them from planting explosives in London’s tubes. And it won’t, in and of itself, keep them from striking here. Indeed, it’s helping terrorists recruit new followers -- and hone their deadly skills.”

The arguments about where to combat terrorism continued through 2007. In a *PBS* debate moderated by Ray Suarez, Danielle Pletka, the president of foreign and defense policy studies with the American Enterprise Institute stated “I think we have to fight terrorism everywhere. And certainly, if you listen to al-Qaida and you listen to the pronouncements of bin Laden or al-Zawahiri, you hear that they think the principal front line for the battle is, in fact, in Iraq... I think we have to fight them there, and I think we need to be a lot tougher there. But I also think that we have to fight them and defeat them in Iraq or they will, as the president said, make themselves a headquarters in Iraq, as they did in Afghanistan, and follow us here (*PBS*, 2007).”

Rand Beers, who formally served in counterterrorism posts with the National Security Council and the State Department, rebutted her charges. “What they are doing in Iraq today is basically drawing us into a struggle where they can kill us, and demonize us, and where they can have other people do most of their dirty work. We’re not going to defeat them there, and we should recognize that, and concentrate, if we’re concentrating on terrorism, on other areas of the world.... I just don’t find it plausible that the United States is directly threatened by what’s happening in Iraq, directly threatened in the United States (*PBS*, 2007).”

Such contentions about whether sending one’s military abroad is the better counterterror strategy have also been present in the scholarly world. Pape (2003: 344) claims that homeland security is a better strategy for combatting suicide terrorism than offensive military action abroad. The argument of where attacks occur is not supported by Neumayer and Plumper (2009). And Drakos and Gofas (2006: 715) contend that underreporting biases from press

censorship have confounded our studies of where attacks occur. So while one set of arguments battles between those who prefer to defend the homeland or fight the enemy abroad, a second fight is emerging between those who say the region for attacks matters in opposition to those who feel tracking terror attack locations using traditional methods is futile.

In this argument, we seek to test whether region is a variable that has an impact on attacks against the United States citizens. In particular, we will first evaluate the argument that America's post-9/11 strategy played a role in reducing terrorism attacks against the United States at home, or not, or whether earlier events led to this greater vigilance. Second, we will see if America's policies in prior eras have increased the likelihood of Americans becoming a target abroad.

“Everything Has Now Changed” Hypothesis

“Thousands of dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by outlaw regimes, are now spread throughout the world like ticking time bombs, set to go off without warning...In a single instant, we realized that this will be a decisive decade.” With those words in his 2002 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush (2002) sought to define the world as having been changed by 9/11.

President Bush is hardly alone in this assessment. It seems that hardly an anniversary of 9/11 goes by without an individual or group providing the view that everything changed on that date in 2001. For example, on the fifth anniversary of the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, the BBC interviewed everyone from Richard Haass of the Council on Foreign Relations to Kenneth Roth of Human Rights Watch, to Muslim scholars, a sociologist, and even a cartoonist (BBC, 2006) for their thoughts on how different the world had become since 9/11. Ten years after those four planes were hijacked, Stanford University published a similar assessment from a variety of scholars across the spectrum for how different things had become (Haven, 2011).

Long before these pronouncements were made by politicians and articles in the popular media, scholars were already thinking about the relationship between time and terrorism. Rapoport (2001) wrote about how terrorism had a generational duration, while Weinberg and Richardson (2004) considered the concept of the terrorism life cycle. Pape (2003: 343) went beyond the 2001 hype to focus on how the bombing of the U.S. Marine Barracks in Beirut in 1983 may have been a real game changer for suicide terrorism against the Americans. Meanwhile, Neumayer and Plumper (2009) find no difference between Cold War and post-Cold War terrorism.

The best analysis of terrorism over time, or whether or not 9/11 changed anything, comes from Enders and Sandler (2005: 260). They find that while 9/11 was abnormally deadly (no terror event prior to those September 11 attacks ever resulted in more than 500 casualties), it was a different story when employing linear time series models and quarterly terrorism data. The authors found that though the United States beefed up its homeland security significantly, and had conducted two major military operations abroad to chase al-Qaeda and its Taliban allies in

Afghanistan, as well as deal with a tangential terrorist connection in Iraq, not much had really changed since 9/11.

More specifically, Enders and Sandler (2005: 275) discover “surprisingly little has changed to the series of all transnational terrorist incidents or its major component of all bombing incidents. Moreover, the DEATHS and CASUALTIES series have not changed following 9/11. The main influence of 9/11 has been on the composition of the ALL series. In particular, hostage-taking incidents have fallen after 9/11 as terrorists, bent on carnage have substituted into deadly bombings. As a consequence, the proportion of deadly incidents due to bombings has increased as the proportion of hostage-taking and assassination attacks has decreased.” So terrorist events, deaths and casualties have not declined so much as the method of attack and targets (soft, rather than hard) have.

Of course, Enders and Sandler (2005: 275) contend that their data only go through the second quarter of 2003. So it would be of some utility to extend the study further, possibly to the tenth anniversary of 9/11, to see if timing should play a role. And while Enders and Sandler (2005) contribute some data-driven cut points, it would not be a bad idea to use some high profile terror events related to break down separate time periods. Events like 9/11 and the USMC bombing in Lebanon seem more naturally separate eras than events like the fall of the Berlin Wall or other international events like the Iran-Iraq War that, while interesting, have little direct tie-in to terrorism.

Therefore, we will analyze whether or not terror events have changed across three time periods: before the USMC bombing in 1983, between this event and 9/11, and after September 11, 2001, to see if there are changes in deaths, suicide attacks, and region of terrorist events.

Analysis

Spatial-Temporal Domain.

The cases in our study come from 1920 through the end of 2011. These were obtained from an earlier study in published in the *Homeland Security Review* (Tures, 2008), which used the Encyclopedia of Terrorism from November 4, 1979 through the end of 2011. Several LaGrange College undergraduates and I used cases from the *New York Times*, using the search terms for terrorism, as well as other terms from other eras, when terrorism was a term less frequently used. These include anarchist/anarchism, sabotage/saboteur, etc. From this, we were able to obtain a list of nearly 1,000 cases over nearly 100 years.

This methodology should overcome Drakos and Gofas’ (2006) critique of cross-national studies of terrorism as well. Press censorship could explain why, for example, Sudan undercounts their terror attacks relative to a more democratic regime like Senegal. But America’s media is not constrained by such press censorship; attacks upon Americans at home or abroad will be noted. Granted, it does not help us understand why Sudan or Senegal would experience a terror attack, but this new transnational focused model is beginning with a single case. Additionally, the authors have some suggestions for future directions for overcoming the press censorship problem.

Descriptive Statistics

From this dataset, we find that there were 115 cases of suicide attacks against America, as opposed to the 867 remaining cases where a strategy other than suicide terrorism was employed. Of the 982 terror events in our study, there were 555 that resulted in no deaths, 157 that produced at least one death, and 270 generating multiple deaths. As for cases directly resulting in American deaths, there were 269 of the 982 that did so. The rest of the 713 cases did not produce any American deaths.

In the 91 years of our analysis, there were 220 anti-American attacks before 1984. After January 1, 1984, the number of terror cases targeting Americans jumped to 379 in the 18 years before and including 9/11. From 2002 to last year, there were 383 cases of terrorism against Americans at home and abroad.

As to where these attacks occurred, nearly half (45.6) took place in North America, almost exclusively in the United States. Among the remaining cases, 34.5 percent were in the Middle East and Central Asia. The next greatest number of attacks occurred in Central and South America (60) followed closely by South and East Asia (56), Europe (51) and Africa (27).

Findings

“Suicide Smart Bomb” Hypothesis

The results of the “Suicide Smart Bomb” Hypothesis seem to indicate that such attacks are, indeed, more deadly. As we found with our research for the *Homeland Security Review* in 2008, suicide attacks are associated with a greater number of casualties (see Table 1). The 115 suicide attacks resulted in 5,122 overall deaths, of which 3,473 were Americans. This generated an average of 44.54 deaths per suicide attack, or 30.2 U.S. deaths per suicide attack. While the overwhelming majority (88.2%) of terror cases against the United States did not use suicide attacks, those suicide attacks resulted in fewer deaths. These 867 cases led to 2,979 deaths, or 980 American deaths. This is only 3.44 deaths per non-suicide attack, or 1.13 Americans per non-suicide attack.

Critics have claimed that the numbers of deaths from suicide attacks are inflated by one single successful attack: 9/11. What if it had been foiled? Treating it like an outlier, I ran an additional test, removing these deaths from the study, and recalculated the averages (see Table 1). Even taking 9/11 out of the picture, the average suicide attack leads to 18.6 deaths per suicide attacks, or 4.14 American deaths per suicide attack. Though the numbers are closer without 9/11, suicide attacks are 5.4 times deadlier, or 3.66 times deadlier for Americans, than cases of methods employed other than suicide terrorism.

It’s not just the sheer number of deaths or their average that Americans and others have to be concerned about. It’s also the number of cases with at least a death or more that are worrisome (see Table 2). Results show that there are 86 cases of suicide terrorism with two or more deaths. Given the number of suicide attacks and cases of death from any terror attack, only

31.6 were expected from a random model. The number of multiple death cases 184 is less than the 238.4 generated from the expected model.

It should be noted that there are 15 cases of no deaths from a suicide attack, while 65 were expected. The number of case with one death (14) is about what is expected from the random model. In many of these cases, the suicide attacker's weapon may have failed to detonate, or the attacker was detained before the weapon could be employed.

It's a similar story for U.S. deaths (see Table 2). While 31.5 cases were expected from the random model, we observed 49 suicide terror cases. Meanwhile, there were fewer cases of one or more American deaths from the non-suicide terrorism case. And all chi-square tests involving the variables for suicide, deaths and U.S. are significant at the .001 level.

“Fight Them There” Hypothesis

Are attacks occurring more on U.S. soil, or located in other countries? Already, we discovered that more attacks occurred in North America than any other place when targeting Americans, though less than half of the overall total number of cases.

Most of these attacks in North America occurred before 9/11 (see Table 3). In fact, 170 occurred before 1984 and 190 happened between 1984 and 2001. Fewer attacks occurred after 2001 (87). Of course, there were more years of analysis before 1984, and from 1984 to 2001 than 2002 to 2011. So we ran a chi-square analysis. From 1920 through 1983, there were 100.4 cases expected by a random model, much fewer than observed (170). The observations were pretty comparable to the expected model for 1984-2001, but there were less than half as many observations (87) as cases in the expected model (173.5) for the last time period: 2002-2011.

It's a different story for the Middle East and Central Asia. Such attacks were less likely to occur in this region before 1984, and the 1984-2001 time frame (a third as many as expected for the first time frame, and half as many as expected from the 1980s through the early 2000s). But all that changed in 2002, where there were almost twice as many cases as expected in the Middle East and Central Asia.

All other regions except Africa and East Asia experienced the same pattern of terror attacks against U.S. citizens: higher than expected attacks declining to less than expected attacks after 9/11. Africa experienced only an increase in more terrorism than expected in the 1984-2011 era, while in East Asia, attacks have occurred more often than expected since 1984, though the overall numbers for both regions are still pretty low.

The likelihood of a suicide attack generally follows the same pattern for the timing of the attack (see Table 3). Fewer suicide attacks than expected can be found in North and South America, as well as Europe. These events are slightly more likely to be present in Africa and East Asia, but more than twice as likely to occur on average in the Middle East and Central Asia as is expected by a randomly generated model.

The results for terrorist attack deaths are similar to other cross-regional findings: less likely to occur in North and South America and Europe, while more likely to occur in the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as Africa and East Asia to a lesser extent (see Table 3). But it is a

different story for terror attacks against the USA where an American was killed (see Table 3). Once again, the Middle East and Central Asia are deadlier places, on average, for Americans. But Africa and East Asia's region lead to only slightly higher observations than expectations. Fewer deaths take place in North America than expected, by less than half as many cases. Europe and South America, on average, have slightly higher than expected death tolls for Americans from attacks directed against them in these places. As with suicide cases, all chi-square statistics are statistically significant at the .001 level.

“Everything Has Now Changed” Hypothesis

The last hypothesis concerns the timing of terror attacks against Americans either at home or abroad. We've already seen the relationship between this variable and regional factor. The next factors to examine are the relationship between when an attack occurs, and the suicide strategy. Additionally, we will look to see if deaths are more likely to occur during a particular time in history.

Suicide attacks are a relatively new phenomenon, according to the data (see Table 4). Only four cases occurred in 1983 or before, much less than the 25.8 expected. Even after the successes in Lebanon, there were still fewer suicide terror attacks (25) than expected (44.4) over the next 15+ years. But after 9/11, we saw twice as many suicide attacks (86) as expected (44.9). The differences between observations and expectations are significant at the .001 level.

The results for cases of all deaths (Americans or those of other countries) follow the same findings for suicide attacks (see Table 4): more likely on average after 9/11 than before it, even after the killings of American embassy workers and U.S. Marines. It's the same story for just cases of U.S. deaths in attacks against the U.S. (at home or abroad). Though the disparity is less pronounced, the results are still statistically significant at the .005 level (see Table 4).

It is interesting to note that from 1920 to 1983, there was an average of 2.88 deaths per terrorist event (see Table 5). That number spiked to 13.23 deaths per terrorist attack between 1984 and 2001, falling to 6.4 deaths per terror event after 2001 (see Table 5). But if we were to remove the 9/11 outlier, terror deaths still averaged an increase over the 1920-83 time frame; there were still 5.33 per terror attack in the 1984-2001 time frame if 9/11 is excluded.

For U.S. deaths, there were 2.32 per terror attack before 1984 (see Table 5). After 1984, that average jumps to 9.44 U.S. deaths per attack, falling to 0.96 per terror attack after 9/11 (see Table 5). Again, excluding 9/11 from the second time frame still generates only 1.52 deaths per terror attack. This would actually show a fall in American deaths per terror attack, had 9/11 hijackers been captured before carrying out their deadly mission.

Conclusion

Lessons Learned

In this study, we conducted three analyses of common myths about terrorism concerning the United States, especially in the wake of 9/11. The first sought to test whether suicide attacks were “the ultimate smart bomb.” The second asked whether or not we should fight terrorism

abroad to prevent such attacks from occurring at home. The third questioned whether 9/11 “changed everything.”

Our initial findings confirmed that, indeed, suicide attacks were far deadlier, both in total deaths and American deaths at home and abroad. This finding held even when taking 9/11 out of the picture. Additionally, the chances of a suicide attack resulting in any number of deaths (or at least more than one) were indeed twice as likely to occur than other deadly methods of attacks, with guns, bomb detonated by timer or remote control, and other non-suicide attacks where the perpetrator expects to get away.

It is a mixed set of findings when looking at the question of whether Americans should “fight them there” so they don’t “attack us here.” On one hand, attacks in North America (especially the U.S.A.) have dropped after 9/11 on average. But they have also dropped in other locations (more than expected) such as South America and Europe. And they have increased against Americans (more than expected) in not only the Middle East and Central Asia, but also East Asia. Africa presents some mixed results, with more attacks in the time period preceding 9/11, but falling in recent years.

In terms of the argument that “everything has changed” now that 9/11 has occurred, we also find a set of unexpected results. As expected, the use of suicide attacks has exploded. Even with the successful attacks in the early 1980s, their numbers leading up to 9/11 were still half as many as expected. Suicide attacks did not spike in usage until after 9/11.

When it comes to all deaths, they are on the increase, especially when controlling for the 9/11 event. What is fascinating is how U.S. deaths are dropping, when controlling for the 9/11 case, during the same time frame. While there are more likely to be cases of deaths and U.S. deaths, the actual body counts per attack are declining for Americans. At the same time, there is a surge in all deaths per attack (Americans and non-Americans). This is likely the result of terrorists seeking an increase in collateral damage in terms of local populations, to drive a wedge between the United States and the host country. What may well be happening is that a Yemeni suicide bomber blows up outside a well-protected American embassy in Sana’a. Few if any Americans die behind the barriers and additional post-9/11 security measures. But that’s not the case for the Yemenis gathered outside, or in nearby shops, or merely walking or driving by when the blast hits. In that way, the attackers recognize that few U.S. citizens will be killed. But the real target audience is Yemen, and the message is that this is what happens to locals who support the Americans. We don’t need these Americans around, or to support their attempts to clear the area of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

This, in fact, happened on September 17, 2008. No Americans were killed but ten guards and curious onlookers perished in the Sanaa attack. “‘The attack on the U.S. Embassy was retaliation by al-Qaeda for the measures taken by the government to fight the terrorists,’ said Yemeni Foreign Minister Abou Bakr al-Qurbi (Knickmeyer, 2008).

Future Directions

The goal of this study has been to provide a unique analysis of terrorism, differing from the individual level analysis which focuses on psychological profiles and public opinion. It also varies from the state-level analysis, with its emphasis on domestic terrorism and attacks within its borders. After all, many terrorists do not launch attacks from abroad based upon the internal features of that country's politics, economics, or social factors. Hezbollah is not attacking Israel at home and in foreign lands because Israel is a democracy any more than the United Kingdom citizens were attacked in Greece because of the former's economic system.

By focusing on an example of a country, the United States, and attacks against its citizens at home and abroad, we are able to provide a different level of analysis for studying terror attack. It is therefore more systemic in nature (as attacks could occur anywhere in the world), but still different from the systemic level analyses of the Kenneth Waltz era. Like the Democratic Peace studies that changed the way systemic level analyses were done with their focus on dyads, this terrorism model follows the target, wherever its people go.

In fact, this enables us to analyze where Americans are likely to be attacked (their regime type, their level of wealth, proximity to the United States, and whether or not the location of an attack is an ally of the United States (a variation on the entangling alliance theory).

Future analyses will also consider the strategies of the different terrorism groups in their attacks upon Americans. How might Islamic Jihad differ or be similar in its strategic attacks from al-Qaeda, and how both could be compared to terror groups from Europe and South America which sought to make a statement against the United States. Additional studies will also go back in time to cover cases during the tumultuous 1910s (labor violence and terror attacks taking place around World War I).

Once such a model has been finalized, the next step is to look at other case studies. It would be interesting to see what we could learn from studies that compare results of attacks against Americans at home and abroad with other democracies (like France and the United Kingdom) or even autocracies (terrorism against Russians at home and in other countries) or countries which have experienced both systems (like Turkey at home and elsewhere). But the important lesson is to establish a model that tracks the target, wherever its members may go, just as international terrorists seem to do.

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Research Assistants:

Victor H. Choi, Loishirl W. Hall, Matthew P. Hall, Jeremy R. Ikner, Matthew D. James, William K. Johnson, Hudson K. Keener, Sean M. McNamee, Charlton B. Morris, Arnold S. Powell and Douglas J. Scherer, LaGrange College

These students collected the data and gathered the articles for the literature review.

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APPENDIX

Tables

“Suicide Smart Bomb” Hypothesis

Table 1. Comparing suicide and non-suicide terror attacks targeting Americans at home and abroad, including and excluding the 9/11 outlier.

| Suicide Terror Attacks (Counting 9/11) Against Americans At Home & Abroad | | |
|---|--------|-------------|
| Casualty Type | Deaths | U.S. Deaths |
| Cases | 115 | 115 |
| Mean | 44.54 | 30.20 |
| Sum | 5122 | 3473 |
| Suicide Terror Attacks (Not Counting 9/11) Against Americans At Home & Abroad | | |
| Casualty Type | Deaths | U.S. Deaths |
| Cases | 114 | 114 |
| Mean | 18.6 | 4.14 |
| Sum | 2122 | 473 |
| Non-Suicide Statistics Against Americans At Home & Abroad | | |
| Casualty Type | Deaths | U.S. Deaths |
| Cases | 867 | 867 |
| Mean | 3.44 | 1.13 |
| Sum | 2979 | 980 |

Table 2. Comparing suicide and non-suicide terror attacks targeting Americans at home and abroad, chi-square analysis

| | | Deaths | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| Variable: | | No Deaths | 1 Death | 2+ Deaths | Total |
| Type of Attack | Non-Suicide Cases Observed | 540 | 143 | 184 | 867 |
| | Expected | 490 | 138.6 | 238.4 | |
| | Suicide Cases Observed | 15 | 14 | 86 | 115 |
| | Expected | 65 | 18.4 | 31.6 | |
| | Total | 555 | 157 | 270 | 982 |
| | χ^2 | 150.676 | | | Asymp. Sig.(2.sided) p < .001 |
| | | | | | |
| | | U.S. Deaths | | | |
| Variable: | | No U.S. Deaths | 1+ U.S. Deaths | Total | |
| Type of Attack | Non-Suicide Cases Observed | 647 | 220 | 867 | |
| | Expected | 629.5 | 237.5 | | |
| | Suicide Cases Observed | 66 | 49 | 115 | |

| | | | | |
|--|----------|--------|------|---------------------------------|
| | Expected | 83.5 | 31.5 | |
| | Total | 713 | 269 | 982 |
| | χ^2 | 15.162 | | Asymp. Sig.(2.sided) $p < .001$ |

“Fight Them There” Hypothesis

Table 3. Results of chi-square analyses for regions of attacks upon Americans and the timing of the attacks, type of attack (suicide or not) and deaths (U.S. and other deaths)

| Independent Variable: Region | Dependent Variable | Result |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| North America | Timing | More than expected 1920-2001; Less than expected after 2001 |
| | Suicide Attacks | Much fewer suicide attacks than expected |
| | Deaths | Much fewer deaths than expected |
| | U.S. Deaths | Much fewer U.S. deaths than expected |
| South America | Timing | More than expected, 1984-2001; Less than expected after 2001 |
| | Suicide Attacks | No suicide attacks |
| | Deaths | Slightly more likely to have a death than expected |
| | U.S. Deaths | Slightly more likely to have a U.S. death or more than expected |
| Europe | Timing | More than expected, 1984-2001; Less than expected after 2001 |
| | Suicide Attacks | Fewer suicide attacks than expected |
| | Deaths | More likely to have a single death than expected. |
| | U.S. Deaths | More likely to have one or more U.S. deaths than expected. |
| Africa | Timing | More than expected, 1920-1983; Less than expected after 1983 |
| | Suicide Attacks | Slightly more suicide attacks than expected |
| | Deaths | More likely to have a single death than expected. |
| | U.S. Deaths | More likely to have one or more U.S. deaths than expected. |

| | | |
|---|-----------------|---|
| Middle East & Central Asia | Timing | Less than expected, 1920-2001, More than expected after 2001 |
| | Suicide Attacks | More than twice as many suicide attacks than expected. |
| | Deaths | Much more likely to have one or more deaths than expected |
| | U.S. Deaths | Much more likely to have one or more U.S. deaths than expected |
| East Asia | Timing | Less than expected, 1920-1983; More than expected after 1983 |
| | Suicide Attacks | Slightly more suicide attacks than expected |
| | Deaths | More likely to have two or more deaths than expected |
| | U.S. Deaths | Barely more likely to have one or more U.S. deaths than expected. |
| All Chi-Square Statistics Were Significant (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided were significant at .001 or less) | | |

“Everything Has Now Changed” Hypothesis

Table 4. Results of chi-square analyses for the timing of attacks upon Americans and the type of attack (suicide or not) and deaths (U.S. and other deaths)

| Independent Variable: Timing | Dependent Variable | Result |
|---|--------------------|--|
| 1920-1983 | Suicide Attacks | Much fewer suicide attacks than expected |
| | Deaths | Fewer cases of deaths than expected |
| | U.S. Deaths | Fewer U.S. deaths than expected |
| 1984-2001 | Suicide Attacks | Fewer suicide attacks than expected |
| | Deaths | Fewer cases of deaths than expected |
| | U.S. Deaths | Fewer U.S. deaths than expected |
| 2002-2011 | Suicide Attacks | Many more suicide attacks than expected |
| | Deaths | Many more cases of deaths than expected |
| | U.S. Deaths | More U.S. deaths than expected |
| All Chi-Square Statistics Were Significant (Asymp. Sig. 2-sided were significant at .005 or less) | | |

Table 5. Comparing time periods and terror attacks targeting Americans at home and abroad, including and excluding the 9/11 outlier.

| Terror Attacks Against Americans At Home And Abroad, 1920-1983 | | |
|---|--------|-------------|
| Casualty Type | Deaths | U.S. Deaths |
| Cases | 220 | 220 |
| Mean | 2.88 | 2.32 |
| Sum | 634 | 510 |
| Terror Attacks Against Americans At Home And Abroad, 1984-2001 (With 9/11) | | |
| Casualty Type | Deaths | U.S. Deaths |
| Cases | 379 | 379 |
| Mean | 13.23 | 9.44 |
| Sum | 5015 | 3577 |
| Terror Attacks Against Americans At Home And Abroad, 1984-2001 (Without 9/11) | | |
| Casualty Type | Deaths | U.S. Deaths |
| Cases | 378 | 378 |
| Mean | 13.23 | 9.44 |
| Sum | 2015 | 577 |
| Terror Attacks Against Americans At Home And Abroad, 2002-2011 | | |
| Casualty Type | Deaths | U.S. Deaths |
| Cases | 383 | 383 |
| Mean | 6.4 | 0.96 |
| Sum | 2979 | 980 |