Terrorism and Democracy

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Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci. 2013. 16:355–78

The *Annual Review of Political Science* is online at http://polisci.annualreviews.org

This article's doi: 10.1146/annurev-polisci-032211-221825

Keywords

political violence, conflict, regime type, civil liberties, civil war

Abstract

From 1968 to 1997, wealthy, advanced democracies generally did not suffer from high levels of chronic terrorism, with two exceptions: (*a*) advanced democracies that interfered in other countries' affairs through military intervention or occupations were frequent targets of transnational terrorism, and (*b*) poor democracies with territorial conflicts often experienced related domestic terrorist attacks. Intermediately wealthy and transitioning democracies with internally inconsistent institutions were more likely to experience domestic terrorism than advanced democracies and authoritarian regimes. There is very little agreement about why these trends persist. I identify the competing explanations that have emerged within the literature as well as remaining controversies. I also present preliminary evidence suggesting that since 9/11, terrorism persists in the usual pattern but may be increasingly prevalent in nondemocratic countries. I offer five speculative explanations for this and four suggestions for how the field should proceed.

INTRODUCTION: THE DEMOCRACY-TERRORISM LINK

According to most scholars, terrorism is the deliberate use or threat of force against noncombatants by a nonstate actor in pursuit of a political goal. Terrorism is thought to be different from other forms of violence because of its attempt to convey a political message beyond the immediate targets themselves (see Hoffman 2006, ch. 1)—a qualification that adds a clean conceptual dimension to terrorism that is rarely easy to observe in reality. And terrorism is commonly thought to be a tactic that groups use when they perceive no other way to express their grievances.

Following this logic, American policy makers have consistently argued that terrorism emerges out of authoritarian regimes, and that promoting more open and economically prosperous systems of governance will eradicate the use of terrorism. The George W. Bush administration was the fiercest advocate of this position, making democracy promotion a core tenet of the so-called Global War on Terror (Dalacoura 2011). In 2005, during his second inaugural address, President Bush made clear his view that "the best antidote to radicalism and terror is the tolerance kindled in free societies" (VandeHei 2005, p. A16). President Bush explicitly used this logic to justify regime changes in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as to pressure authoritarian regimes to reform to more democratic institutions and practices (Dalacoura 2011).

Barack Obama's administration has perpetuated this policy. The administration's National Strategy for Counterterrorism, issued in 2011, states that "promoting representative and accountable governance is a core tenet of U.S foreign policy and directly contributes to our counterterrorism goals" (White House 2011, pp. 4–5). At the 2012 Global Counterterrorism Forum, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton remarked, "Experience tells us that democracies are better equipped than autocracies to stand up against terrorism. They offer constructive outlets for political grievances, they create opportunities for mobility and prosperity that provide alternatives to violent extremism, and they tend to have more effective institutions" (Clinton 2012). And in 2011, following uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, pundits and policy makers alike speculated that popular, prodemocracy movements had made terrorism go out of style in those countries. Juan Zarate, a former Bush administration counterterrorism official, has argued, "If the street protests lead to a peaceful, pluralistic transition, that does huge damage to the al-Qaida narrative" (Cooper et al. 2011, p. A1). Although others are more skeptical (Gauss 2005), many optimists view the global spread of democracy as the end of global terrorism.

Contrary to the views of many pundits and policy makers, however, academic studies have shown that such optimism may be misplaced. The historical record reveals that toward the end of the twentieth century, terrorism actually occurred more in democratic countries than in authoritarian regimes. This finding is puzzling for those who have viewed democracy as an "antidote" to terrorism and has troubled scholars for several decades.

In this article, I review the core scholarly explanations for this association, as well as the empirical and theoretical controversies that remain. Importantly, domestic terrorism, which is the far more common type, has influenced most of the theoretical thinking regarding this link and is the primary focus of this article as well. From the current literature, some degree of consensus has emerged that at least during the period 1968–1997, relatively poor and transitioning democracies with internally inconsistent institutions were more likely to experience domestic terrorism than advanced democracies and authoritarian regimes. Democracies with low levels of legitimacy, poor human rights practices, intermediate levels of political and economic development, and unresolved conflict among ethnic or political groups experienced the most terrorism. Wealthy, advanced democracies generally did not suffer from high levels of chronic terrorism unless they interfered in other countries' affairs through military intervention or occupations, in which case such countries were frequent targets of transnational terrorism. Such transnational attacks often emerged out of

authoritarian regimes and targeted democratic states. Poor democracies with territorial conflicts often experienced related domestic terrorist attacks.

However, this typical pattern is not uniform across time and space. I present preliminary evidence suggesting that since 9/11, terrorism may be shifting from democracies to nondemocracies—particularly to partial autocracies and countries under military occupation. I offer five speculative explanations for this shift, although I leave it to other researchers to test them. I conclude by offering some general observations about the field of terrorism studies and suggesting some synergies that may help us to move forward in examining these troubling questions.

WHAT DO WE KNOW? THERE MAY BE MORE IN THE MIDDLE

Among those who see a robust empirical association between democracy and terrorism, there is disagreement as to whether democracy has a positive or curvilinear effect on terrorism.

Positive Effect

Until recently, scholars tended to ask one core question: Is terrorism more common in democracies or authoritarian regimes (Eubank & Weinberg 1994, Li 2005)? Research found the puzzling result that democracies were the more common targets of terrorism (Eubank & Weinberg 1994, 1998, 2001; Eyerman 1998; Li 2005; Enders & Sandler 2006; Piazza 2008a; Chenoweth 2010a; Findley & Young 2011; Young & Dugan 2011), although there was, at this point, little attempt to differentiate among levels or kinds of democracies or different types of terrorism. The clear implication of this research was simple: the more democratic a country is, the more terrorism it should experience.

When identifying the association between democracy and terrorism, many scholars have therefore dichotomized regime type by relying on the Polity dataset, which generates an overall index value for the level of democracy in every country from 1800 through 2011 (Marshall et al. 2012). Although the Polity dataset uses a 21-point scale ranging from −10 (absolute monarchies and totalitarian regimes) to +10 (advanced democracies), with "anocracies" in the middle (−5 to 5), most studies compared democracies (typically defined as above a +6 on the Polity scale) against nondemocracies (often defined as regimes classified as +5 or lower on the Polity scale). Thus, it was unclear whether the association between terrorism and democracy was linear or nonlinear.

Curvilinear Effect

Other research suggests that mid-range democracies—countries undergoing transition to democracy, or what Goldstone et al. (2010) call "partial democracies"—tend to experience the most terrorism (Eyerman 1998, Abadie 2006, Kurrild-Klitgaard et al. 2006, Chenoweth 2010b, de la Calle & Sánchez-Cuenca 2012, Piazza 2012).

To illustrate this core pattern, I therefore disaggregate regime type well beyond the typical democracy-autocracy dichotomy. Vreeland (2008) also encourages researchers to "unpack" anocracy, and to examine the particular types of regimes that fall in the −5 to 5 range on the Polity scale. For the purposes of this article, I expand Goldstone et al.'s (2010) classification of regime type to identify eight categories.

Democracy: a system that combines free and fair elections with routine and transparent political participation. Examples include OECD countries, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Mongolia (Goldstone et al. 2010, p. 195).

Partial democracy (PD): a system in which citizens choose the chief executive among competitive candidates, but the elections are not totally free and fair or political participation is not routine

or transparent. Examples include Albania or Venezuela in recent years (Goldstone et al. 2010, p. 195).

Factionalized democracy (FD): a partial democracy that includes extremely polarized and uncompromising competition between blocs pursuing local interests at the national level. This category would include Venezuela in the early 2000s or Thailand prior to its 2006 military coup (Goldstone et al. 2010, p. 195).

Partial autocracy (PA): a state that represses political participation yet purports to hold competitive elections for national office (apartheid-era South Africa is an example). PAs may also include countries that allow competitive elections for Parliament but do not hold competitive elections for the chief executive (Jordan is an example). PAs may include factionalism (Goldstone et al. 2010, p. 195).

Autocracy: a state that does not have effective competition for the chief executive, nor does it allow free political participation. Examples include North Korea, China, Saudi Arabia, and Libya under Qaddafi (Goldstone et al. 2010, p. 195).

Failed state: a state that does not have any functional sovereign political or governance institutions because prior institutions have collapsed (e.g., Somalia in 1992).

Under occupation: a state that does not have any functional sovereign political or governance institutions because an external state has removed them (e.g., Iraq in 2004).

Transitioning: a state that cannot be categorized as any of the above regime types because its institutional structure is currently in flux.

I constructed each of these categories according to the coding rules suggested by Goldstone et al. (2010), and I then counted the total number of domestic and transnational terrorist attacks in each regime category from 1970 to 2010 (excluding 1993 because of missing data) according to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) (LaFree & Dugan 2007).

Figure 1 contains the global distribution of terrorist attacks in the different regime types. These absolute counts illustrate fairly clearly that partial democracies—with and without factionalism—tend to possess the highest concentration of terrorist attacks until the mid-2000s, when countries under foreign occupation (Iraq and Afghanistan) emerge as flashpoints as well.

I return to shifts in this association over time at the end of this article. In the meantime, I consider the rates of attacks in each of these regime types (**Figure 2**) rather than just absolute counts by adjusting the annual number of terrorist attacks by the annual number of countries in each category.

As **Figure 2** illustrates, partial democracies with factionalism experienced the highest attack rate, experiencing well over 100 attacks per country from about 1983 through 1998, with another spike in 2007–2010. Partial democracies with no factionalism had the second highest rate of attacks per country, with >50 attacks per year in the late 1970s and again from the late 1980s through 1994. Advanced democracies experienced a relatively low rate of attacks, peaking at ~25 attacks per country from the late 1970s through about 1998. Autocracies also experienced very few terrorist attacks—no more than 40 per country among partial autocracies and <15 per country among full autocracies—throughout the series.[1]

[1]I only included regime types that reach at least 10% of the global distribution of regime types, which includes democracies (16–22%), autocracies (8–54%), partial autocracies (13–26%), partial democracies (7–30%), and partial democracies with factionalism (3–19%). Transitioning states (0–6%), failed states (0–4%), and states under occupation (0–3%) are excluded from **Figure 2** because, even combined, they make up <8% of the countries in the world in an average year. Moreover, in years where these combined categories do account for a large proportion of global terrorist attacks (1979–1984, 2004–2010), only a handful of countries (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Lebanon, Iraq, Somalia, and Afghanistan) exclusively account for these trends and are not representative of typical countries within those regime types.

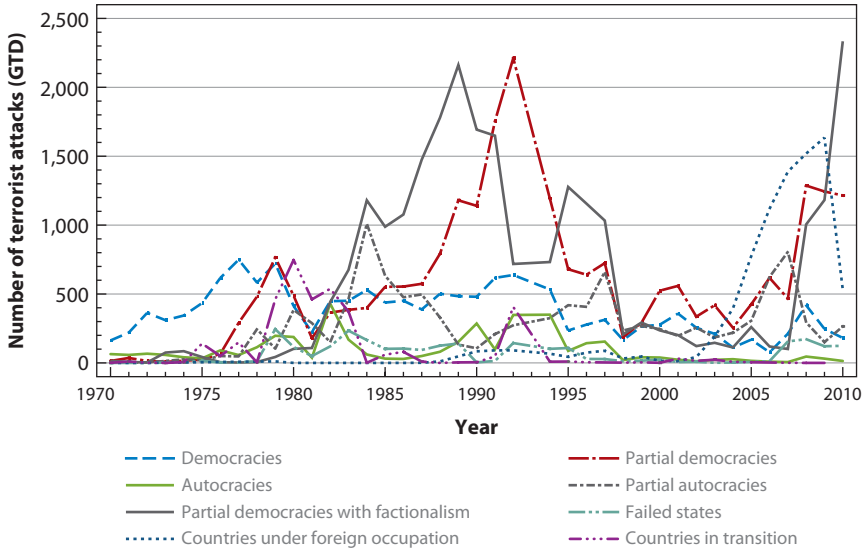

Figure 1

Regime type and terrorist attacks, 1970–2010, according to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).

These summary data do not account for some important qualifications, such as the differing trends of domestic and transnational attacks, mass-casualty attacks, symbolically important attacks, or other measures of terrorist violence (e.g., new group formation). Nevertheless, the insight that so-called partial democracies or factionalized democracies have been the kinds of regimes most likely to experience terrorism is a useful advance in our understanding of terrorism's traditional

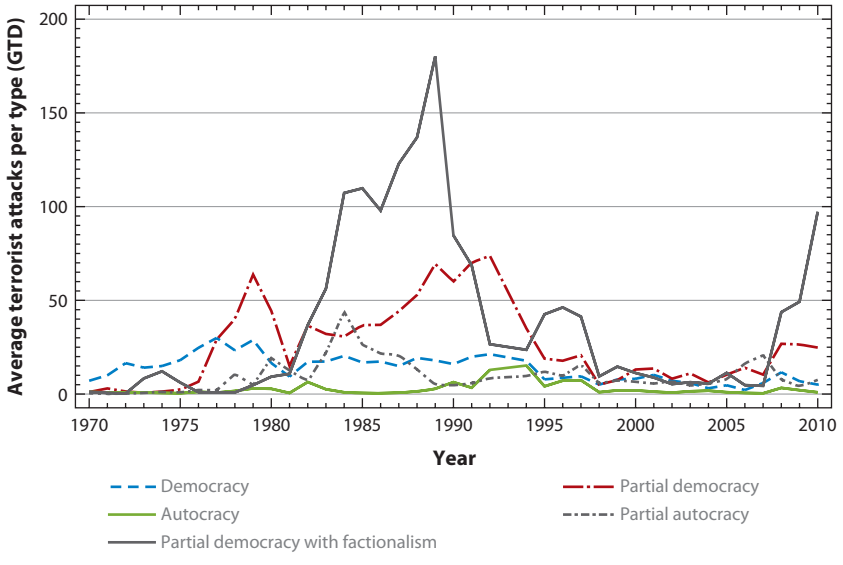

Figure 2

Regime type and average annual terrorist attacks, 1970–2010, according to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). Annual number of terrorist attacks adjusted for the number of countries per category.

Table 1 Summary of competing explanations for the association between democracy and terrorism

Causal explanations	Main proponents	Critics, if applicable
Structural approach		
Civil liberties	Li 2005, Schmid 1992, Eubank & Weinberg 1994	Abadie 2006, Kurrild-Klitgaard et al. 2006, Chenoweth 2010a, Choi 2010
Publicity	Hoffman 2006, Li 2005	Drakos & Gofas 2006, 2007
Underreporting bias	Sandler 1995; Drakos & Gofas 2006, 2007	
Domestic institutions (various)	Li 2005, Young & Dugan 2011, Aksoy 2012, Foster et al. 2012	
Strategic approach	Pape 2003	Abrahms 2006, Reiter & Wade 2007, Chenoweth & Stephan 2011
Organizational approach	Tarrow 1989, Sánchez-Cuenca & Aguilar 2009, Bloom 2004, Chenoweth 2010a, Moore et al. 2011	Findley & Young 2012
Political approach		
Illiberal domestic policies (various)	Burgoon 2006; Koch & Cranmer 2007; Piazza 2009, 2011; Piazza & Walsh 2010a, 2010b; Danzell 2011	
Aggressive foreign policies	Savun & Phillips 2009, Braithwaite & Sobek 2005, Findley et al. 2012, Chenoweth 2012	

risk factors. The next task is to identify the strengths and weaknesses among existing explanations for why these countries have been such routine targets of terrorism.

COMPETING EXPLANATIONS FOR THE DEMOCRACY-TERRORISM LINK

Four groups of explanations dominate the literature: (*a*) structural approaches, which focus on the institutional environments of different states; (*b*) strategic approaches, which focus on the coercive potential of terrorist tactics; (*c*) organizational approaches, which deal with the competitive organizational environments in which terrorist groups might emerge; and (*d*) political approaches, which focus on patterns of specific grievances that people and groups have toward the states that govern them. **Table 1** contains a summary of each of these approaches, which I consider below.

STRUCTURAL APPROACHES

I consider four different structural approaches: the civil liberties explanation, the publicity explanation, the underreporting explanation, and the institutional design explanation. All four share an emphasis on the institutional make-up of states, which may provide the opportunity and motivation to use (or measure) terrorist violence.

The Civil Liberties Explanation

Why are democracies appealing targets for terrorists? The explanation with the widest appeal is that democracies are uniquely committed to observing human rights and civil rights and are therefore more hospitable for would-be terrorists. In this "civil liberties explanation," specific

rights—such as freedoms of movement, association, and expression—are thought to provide opportunities for groups to form, operate, recruit, and coordinate terrorist activities in liberal societies without fear of intrusion from the governments they oppose. Such conditions lower the costs of conducting terrorist activities.

Moreover, the theory suggests that terrorists apprehended in democracies can expect much more lenient treatment than those caught in authoritarian regimes. A democracy's own self-restraining laws and legislative practices render it both unwilling and unable to repress those who might target it using terrorism. Not only are the costs of perpetrating terrorism low in democracies, but the risks are lower too.

The civil liberties argument is certainly intuitive, which is perhaps the main reason why so many scholars have turned to it in their explanations (Crenshaw 1981, Schmid 1992, Eubank & Weinberg 1994). Scholars are not alone in this view. Policy makers have also expressed frustration regarding the ways that civil liberties might constrain their policy choices in fighting terrorism. Recall US Attorney General John Ashcroft's statement that defending civil liberties during a time of terror is a "tactic that aids terrorists. . .erodes our national unity. . .diminishes our resolve [and] gives ammunition to America's enemies" (quoted in Crank & Gregor 2005, p. 158).

Despite the appeal of the civil liberties explanation, I have strong doubts as to its soundness. First, the notion that terrorists target liberal democracies because of their civil liberties lacks empirical support. The strongest empirical evidence for the argument comes from Li's work (2005), which uses the executive-constraints variable from the Polity IV dataset (Marshall & Jaggers 2012) as a proxy measure for civil liberties and finds that this indicator is positively associated with annual counts of transnational terrorist attacks (as measured in the ITERATE database). In other words, the more institutions constrain the chief executive through separation of powers, the more transnational terrorist attacks occur in the country. Young & Findley (2011a) find further support for this association using data for both transnational and domestic attacks.

But institutional constraints do not always constrain executives, nor are they reliable proxies for actual civil liberties practices. Static, annual indicators fail to account for variation in the frequency of terrorist attacks within countries that observe similar civil liberties practices over time. Consider the United Kingdom, whose chief executive is among the most constrained in the world according to the Polity dataset. Despite their supposed institutional constraints, British Prime Ministers have historically adopted extremely repressive counterterrorist tactics when under threat. Indeed, the European Human Rights Commission has even censured the United Kingdom for its inhumane treatment of prisoners during the Northern Ireland conflict (Donohue 2001, 2009). In another example, from 1973 through 2011, the United States possessed the highest score (a 1 out of 7) on Freedom House's "Freedom in the World" survey. If civil liberties were the most important factor predicting terrorism, then the United States would have experienced a stable pattern of extremely frequent terrorist activity during this entire period. Yet the pattern of terrorist attacks in the United States during this period varied widely, suggesting a less obvious relationship between civil liberties and terrorism. In her cross-national dataset on counterterrorism legislation, Epifanio (2011) finds considerable variation in the frequency and degree of civil liberties restrictions in the post-9/11 period among Western democracies. Yet almost all of these restrictions were passed in countries that have considerable institutional constraints on their chief executives.

The civil liberties hypothesis is a linear one. If it is correct, we should expect the most free and liberal countries to be the main targets of terrorism. But **Figures 1** and **2** tell a nonlinear story: partial democracies typically experience terrorism at higher rates per year than advanced democracies with more reliable civil liberties records. In fact, when the link between civil liberties and terrorism is tested more directly, the association is consistently negative. Choi (2010) and Kurrild-Klitgaard et al. (2006) examine more precise measures of civil liberties practices—such as

maintaining the rule of law and Freedom House's "Freedom in the World" index of civil rights and political freedom—and find that regardless of institutional constraints, the countries with the freeest practices are, in fact, less likely to experience terrorism.

It is unclear what we should make of these contradictory findings. Part of the problem is a tendency to rely on annual measures in general, which tend to be quite static and insensitive to important changes. Part of the problem may also be related to different data sources for the dependent variable (the number of terrorist attacks). Li (2005) relies on the ITERATE data, which examines transnational terrorist attacks only. Young & Findley (2011a) use the GTD, which counts domestic and transnational attacks, whereas Choi (2010) and Kurrild-Klitgaard et al. (2006) rely on counts of transnational attacks only.

Besides measurement issues even if executives are constrained by separate branches of government, case-based evidence shows that those branches may be fairly permissive of exceptions to civil liberties when democracies face terrorist threats (Finn 2010). This is because democratic publics typically support extremely hawkish policies against terrorists and their constituencies (Donohue 2001; Davis & Silver 2004; Berrebi & Klor 2006, 2008; Gadarian 2010; Merolla & Zechmeister 2009; Kibris 2011), and therefore even legislative and judicial branches of government may be more inclined to grant the executive expanded powers with little oversight. Indeed, many democratic electorates swiftly grant chief executives extra powers in responding to terrorism—or even deliberately elect politicians who promise hawkish retaliation for terrorist acts. The Israeli electorate tends to move to the right very quickly in response to terrorist attacks, and these views are reflected at the polls (Berrebi & Klor 2006, 2008). The United Kingdom has adopted multiple Emergency Powers Acts since the 1920s—often with a great deal of expediency and with almost no resistance or oversight from the legislative and judiciary branches. Contrary to the implications of the civil liberties argument, democratic governments have historically circumvented or suppressed civil liberties during times when terrorists have targeted them, and neither the separate branches of the governments nor the public put up a fight against such measures (Donohue 2001, Epifanio 2011).

Even if civil liberties did lower the costs and risks of engaging in terrorism, we still do not know why people would want to use terrorism in such countries. The civil liberties explanation essentially assumes that people are equally likely to aspire to terrorism everywhere in the world but that the only place they can survive is in democracies, as totalitarian and authoritarian regimes crush would-be terrorist groups in their infancy. This view suggests that terrorists need no reason or justification—just opportunity. However, why would terrorist groups (especially domestic groups) use violence to disrupt conventional politics rather than use legal channels to pursue their interests? The opportunity structure alone may be insufficient to explain terrorism in democracies.

The Publicity Explanation

The publicity explanation suggests that freedom of the press—a core feature of liberal democracies—creates incentives for terrorists to target such states. This is because market-driven media companies are expected to be the most enthusiastic in reporting about violent events, thus providing free publicity to terrorist groups and exacerbating the fear these groups intend to create (Hoffman 2006, Gadarian 2010). Therefore, countries with high degrees of press freedom should be the favored targets of those seeking greater publicity.

The publicity argument suffers from several core weaknesses. First, although terrorists undoubtedly thrive on media coverage when they can get it—particularly with regard to spreading fear in populations larger than the immediate targets—many countries with media freedom are not targets of terrorist violence. Instead, among democracies with free presses, some countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, India, etc.) are disproportionately attacked relative to others

(the Nordic countries, Eastern and Central Europe, Canada, Australia). Moreover, many countries without completely free media (Turkey, Pakistan, etc.) suffer among the highest numbers of terrorist attacks. Deviant cases do not necessarily disprove statistical generalizations, but these cases call into question whether press freedom is truly the mechanism through which democratic countries affect terrorist target selection. If press freedom were the main causal driver, then we would expect the countries with the highest degrees of media openness to be the most frequent targets of terrorism.

Second, the publicity argument fails to account for variation of terrorist targeting within countries that possess a uniformly free press. Similar to problems with the civil liberties argument, if publicity alone drives terrorist target selection, then we would expect to see exponentially increasing terrorism in countries that maintain a free and open press. Instead, we see peaks and valleys within such countries. In fact, Scott (2001) finds that the "media congestion" caused by terrorist violence is actually correlated with a reduction in terrorist attacks. The more newspaper print space is devoted to terrorism, the fewer attacks subsequently occur. Scott's insight suggests a saturation effect, which complicates the linearity of the publicity argument.

The publicity argument is also unpersuasive because of the diffusion of information technologies, internationalized media coverage, and global travel in the post–Cold War era. These trends mean that targeting a democratic country to obtain publicity may no longer be cost effective. Thanks to technological changes, a terrorist group can attack symbols, institutions, and citizens of the target country without leaving its own country of origin. Nicholas Berg, an American contractor, was kidnapped and beheaded in Iraq in 2004. The attack was filmed and broadcast on the Internet, with a message aimed at terrorizing American civilians. Yet this attack occurred in a nondemocracy under military occupation with an ambiguous degree of press freedom. The increasing use of publicity-raising tools on the Internet—even in failed states and authoritarian regimes—means that terrorist groups no longer need to concentrate their attacks on countries with a free press, even if they used to do so.

The Underreporting Explanation

A small literature has developed arguing that the observed association between democracy and terrorism is largely driven by the tendency of authoritarian regimes to deliberately underreport terrorist attacks (Sandler 1995; Drakos & Gofas 2006, 2007). In their underreporting bias explanation, Drakos & Gofas are particularly skeptical of any causal links between democracy and terrorism, arguing that the link is incidental to the reporting practices of democracies and authoritarian regimes.

Their argument is persuasive for several reasons. First, most scholars engaged in the quantitative study of terrorism use data compiled from open sources—particularly news reports—which are certainly subject to underreporting problems. The GTD is a partial exception because large segments of the data were collected by a private investigation agency with greater access to information than the typical news report (LaFree & Dugan 2007, LaFree 2010).

Second, Drakos & Gofas employed two different empirical tests to assess the likelihood that terrorism data are biased by underreporting. The first (Drakos & Gofas 2006) examined counts of transnational terrorist events according to the level of press freedom and found significant underreporting in countries with lower press freedom scores—even when those countries might be considered "middling" regimes on the Polity scale. Their second study (Drakos & Gofas 2007) used transitioning countries as a further test, demonstrating that countries with a decline in press freedom scores had noticeably lower counts of terrorist attacks than were otherwise expected in those cases if their press freedom scores had remained stable. They also found that in countries

where press freedom scores increased, terrorist attacks also increased above the average scores for those countries (2007). If Drakos & Gofas are right, then press freedom does not have a causal effect on terrorism. Instead, countries with lower press freedom scores are suppressing information about terrorist attacks so that they do not appear in our datasets.

Although this evidence could indicate that terrorist attacks are unobserved in authoritarian regimes, underreporting is not the sole inference we could draw from Drakos & Gofas' findings. In fact, their findings could also be interpreted as further support for the direct causal effect of publicity on attracting more terrorist attacks. Indeed, what they demonstrate is a statistical association between shifts in press freedom and subsequent linear shifts in terrorist attacks, which is far from disproving the publicity effect. Shifts in press freedom are often correlated with shifts in the overall regime type—either toward or away from democracy. Those conditions, rather than changes in press freedom per se, may be driving patterns of terrorism.

Indeed, no scholars have proffered conclusive evidence that systematic underreporting has occurred. Conflict scholars often uncover evidence of violent events occurring in the past, either through eyewitness testimony or archives that become available after the country has achieved sufficient liberalization (Chenoweth 2012). But no one has yet uncovered systematic proof that violent attacks have been overlooked by the relevant databases. In other words, we think that some data are missing, but we do not yet know.

Moreover, the most comprehensive database on terrorist incidents, the GTD, was compiled using a combination of private sources and public sources. Yet analysis of the GTD confirms the positive association between democracy and terrorism (Chenoweth 2012), even though the database contains far more observations of terrorism in authoritarian regimes than the ITERATE database, which previously dominated terrorism studies (Mickolus et al. 2003). Therefore, although the speculative argument that press freedom leads to a spurious relationship between democracy and terrorism has some empirical support (Drakos & Gofas 2006, 2007), the argument is far from conclusive.

Finally, although underreporting bias may be present in the various databases currently under use, this observation has not yet made a profound impact on the tendency to rely on these databases to conduct quantitative analyses of terrorist behavior. The simple reason is that no one has yet offered an alternative that resolves the issues Drakos & Gofas raise. A number of projects in progress do attempt to provide corrections to the current databases, such as by inflating the number of domestic or transnational events reported (Enders et al. 2011) or by collecting micro-level data in particular conflict theaters (Shapiro et al. 2012), but as yet, no cross-national time-series dataset has emerged that improves upon the practices of ITERATE or the GTD.

Institutional Design Explanations

The explanations discussed above suffer from a similar problem: using overaggregated measures of democracy or press freedom does not allow researchers to understand why incidences of terrorism vary across democracies. Therefore, some scholars have looked to the institutional design within the state, examining such features as party systems, judicial practices, electoral rules, and deadlock, to explain the motivation to resort to terrorist violence in some democracies but not others.

One set of circumstances that may undermine confidence in government may be chronic deadlock, which leads a government from one crisis to another without delivering solutions to ongoing political conflicts. Italy during the 1970s and 1980s might be an example of one such democracy. Deadlock reduces government responsiveness to public concerns and creates frustration and vulnerability among minority groups. These conditions may lead to terrorism as such groups seek to move deadlocked government institutions toward decisiveness. Young & Dugan (2011) argue

that the presence of multiple institutional veto players is the most important source of deadlock in government, and they find empirical support for the notion that an increased number of veto players increases the incidence of domestic terrorism (see also Li 2005).

Aksoy (2012) finds that electoral rules can help us understand the timing of terrorist attacks in some democracies. In particular, she finds countries that maintain proportional representation electoral formulas and low electoral thresholds (or "electorally permissive" regimes) to better maintain political order and experience fewer ethnic conflicts, riots, or protests (Aksoy 2012, p. 6). Using data from Engene's dataset on terrorism in Western Europe (2004), Aksoy finds that countries that are not electorally permissive (e.g., those with majoritarian electoral formulas and high electoral thresholds) are more likely to experience terrorist attacks prior to their elections, as groups attempt to exert disproportionate influence where they perceive themselves to be disenfranchised. This argument is similar to Brooks' (2009) claim that militant activity is generally associated with a lack of political access rather than with nondemocracy per se. Li (2005) similarly finds that proportional representation is associated with fewer transnational terrorist attacks than majoritarian or mixed systems.

The generalizability of these findings, however, is questionable. In his study of 27 Indian states from 1998 to 2006, Piazza (2010) finds, for instance, that those states that are more electorally permissive (possessing multiparty electoral competition, legislative seat distribution among parties, and minority party governments) experience more terrorist attacks than Indian states with two-party, majoritarian systems. In their study of all democracies from 1975 to 2007, Foster et al. (2012) find that proportional representation rules actually exacerbate domestic terrorist violence when large degrees of ethnic fractionalization (and therefore the potential for higher numbers of small groups) dominate the political environment. In a cross-national study from 1975 to 1997, Chenoweth (2010a, p. 25) also finds that proportional representation systems are more likely to experience domestic terrorism, largely because of the density of the mobilization environment that characterizes such systems.

Another kind of institutional design thought to influence the motivation to use terrorism is the degree of judiciary independence in a country. Findley & Young (2011) argue that judicial independence is an important prerequisite for a state to guarantee that it will use restraint in its response to aggrieved populations in the future. Testing these assertions on cross-national data, they argue that regimes with independent judiciaries are more credible in their commitments to human rights practices and self-restraint than countries without independent judiciaries, which may be more likely to renege on human rights obligations and use repression toward political opponents. In general, however, this argument is related to the degree of legitimacy the government enjoys, and the degree of trust the public has in the government's commitment to engage in fair play vis-à-vis political opponents. Other aspects of institutional design worth exploring include the levels of decentralization (Frey & Luechinger 2004), federal versus unitary forms of government, presidential versus parliamentary systems, and others.

The appeal of such approaches is their ability to identify which democracies experience more terrorism than others, while providing a fairly intuitive and compelling explanation as to why—that although these governments are democratic on paper, they have not sorted out problems of legitimate representation or are ineffective in delivering public goods to a sufficient segment of the population to maintain legitimacy and confidence in their institutions.

There are three primary problems with these approaches, however. The first is the empirical disagreement evident in the literature related to proportional representation and majoritarian electoral systems. Contradictory findings about the relationship of different electoral systems to terrorist violence may be driven by the reliance on different data sources of the dependent variable [e.g., TWEED for Aksoy (2012); ITERATE for Li (2005);

domestic group-level data for Chenoweth (2010a); subnational data for Piazza (2009); and Enders et al.'s (2011) corrections to the GTD in the Foster et al. (2012) study] or differences in the specifications of the models. It is clear that sensitivity analyses are required to sort out these relationships.

The second problem with such arguments is that institutional design—including judicial independence, electoral rules, and the number of institutional veto players in a state—is, once again, generally static, whereas the number of terrorist attacks often fluctuates dramatically. Therefore, we are able to capture cross-national variation in terrorist violence but not temporal variation within states.

Third, when one delves more deeply into specific cases, one confronts the possibility that institutional structures, such as veto players, often play very little role in determining the actual reasons why groups resort to terror. Consider postwar Italy. Through the early 1990s, Italy possessed a high number of institutional veto players [by Young & Dugan's (2011) definition] owing to its multi-party, parliamentary system. And, as their theory suggests, through the 1970s and 1980s, the Italian government was characterized by chronic deadlock. In fact, the government routinely dissolved itself and attempted to form new coalitions, proceeding from one crisis to another. During this period, a number of different protest cycles emerged (Tarrow 1989), followed by several waves of terrorism (della Porta 1995). Importantly, however, neither the protests nor the terrorism was caused by government inaction per se. Instead, protestors and radicals mobilized because they opposed the capitalist system in which the center-right coalitions participated. Institutional arguments suggest that people are frustrated with inaction, but in reality, many people are more motivated by policies or systemic features that they see as undermining their own values and interests.

Institutional arguments also tend to overpredict the incidence of terrorism. Such arguments assume that many people will be naturally drawn to terrorism as a way to express their dissatisfaction with government performance, immediately escalating beyond other forms of mobilization such as protests, civic action, and elections. Yet we know that very few people actually use terrorism, which is a weapon used by a very small proportion of any population. In summary, the causal link between different institutional structures and terrorist violence is far from established.

THE STRATEGIC APPROACH

Another set of arguments follows from rationalist approaches to international relations, arguing that terrorists target democracies because democracies are more likely to make concessions to terrorists. The strategic approach hinges on the assumption that democracies are more vulnerable to violent coercion than authoritarian states are. Its main proponents argue that democracies are more manipulable because democratic publics are more sensitive to civilian casualties and therefore more likely to see terrorists as fiercely committed when they resort to particularly shocking methods such as suicide bombing (Pape 2003). Having ascertained that the terrorists will not back down, the argument goes, civilians will demand that their governments make concessions to resolve the conflict. Pape relies on this assumption of democratic susceptibility to manipulation to explain why terrorist groups resort to suicide bombing when they face democratic occupations—particularly when there are religious differences between the occupiers and the occupied.

The strategic explanation is problematic for two reasons. First, empirical support for the notion that terrorism is coercively effective is lacking. Reiter & Wade (2007) subject Pape's theory to a wider range of data and find that democracies are not significantly more likely to experience suicide terrorism than nondemocracies. Moreover, if it is true, Pape's argument should apply to terrorism in general, not just suicide terrorism. Yet terrorism has an extremely poor record as a coercive method, almost always failing to produce the political results sought by terrorist actors; its rate of

success is 7%, according to Abrahms (2006). Large-scale insurgency has a superior track record (25%), and nonviolent civil resistance has the most favorable record (52% of mature campaigns succeed according to Chenoweth & Stephan 2011). Thus, the empirical record needed to support the coercive-effectiveness mechanism of terrorism against democracies simply does not exist.

Second, the argument's fundamental assumption about civilian response to terrorism is flawed. Rather than making democratic publics more likely to support concessions toward terrorist groups, terrorism tends to move democratic publics to the right, supporting far more hawkish and far less conciliatory attitudes toward terrorists and the populations that support them (Davis & Silver 2004; Viscusi & Zeckhauser 2003; Berrebi & Klor 2006, 2008; Abrahms 2007; Gadarian 2010; Kibris 2011; Merolla & Zechmeister 2011). Terrorists often succeed in terrorizing civilian populations, but that rarely makes civilians more amenable to conceding to terrorists' demands.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH

The organizational explanation posits that democracies are vulnerable to a variety of forms of mobilization (Robertson & Teitelbaum 2011) and that terrorist violence occurs on the margins of popular protest and other repertoires of contention (Brooks 2009; Sánchez-Cuenca & Aguilar 2009; Chenoweth 2010a, 2012; Moore et al. 2011). According to this view, groups and individuals resort to terrorism as a way to "magnify their voices in a seemingly uneven playing field of powerful competitors" (Chenoweth 2012, p. 90). For example, Chenoweth (2010a) finds that countries with denser interest group sectors experience higher numbers of terrorist groups, and Moore et al. (2011) find that higher levels of dissident protest activity are associated with higher numbers of terrorist attacks.

This argument follows in the tradition of social movement organization approaches, which highlight the incentives for groups to create tactical innovations (such as terrorism) to increase their chances of achieving their goals and to enhance their uniqueness or attractiveness to potential recruits. Some scholars have even identified particular terrorist tactics, such as suicide bombing, as tactical innovations aimed at obtaining support from the constituencies the groups purport to represent (Bloom 2004). According to the organizational approach, terrorist violence is less related to opportunities to use terrorism, and more related to the density and intensity of the organizational environment in which different social movements operate.

The organizational perspective has considerable promise, but data limitations (especially regarding cross-national time-series data on protest and other kinds of mobilization) have hindered progress in extending important findings to other cases. The approach has two core strengths. First, it helps to explain some of the variation of terrorist violence across democracies. Sánchez-Cuenca (2009), among others, has found widespread variation in terrorist violence among developed countries. Some democracies, including France, the United Kingdom, and Spain, are routine targets of terrorist violence, whereas others—such as the Nordic countries and Japan—have been relatively immune from terrorism. Yet Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Japan also have relatively low levels of mobilization in general, with far fewer protests and strikes than France, the United Kingdom, and Spain. The second major strength of the organizational approach is its potential ability to identify the timing of different waves of terrorism. As opposed to static measures employed in structural models of democracy, organizational models emphasize more dynamic shifts in the year-to-year organizational environment. For example, one important implication of prior social movement research is that tactical innovations—such as the escalation to terrorist violence—should occur at the end of a protest cycle (Tarrow 1989). Preliminary evidence from Spain corroborates this finding (Sánchez-Cuenca & Aguilar 2009) with regard to ETA terrorism, suggesting that groups adopt terrorism as a way to outbid one another for influence among a dwindling pool of potential

recruits. This finding should be tested in a wider variety of cases. If it holds elsewhere, it could provide policy makers with useful insight into when terrorism is most likely to occur.

Yet the organizational approach also has four major shortcomings. First, scholars who have tested the occurrence of outbidding or competitive dynamics among terrorist groups have found mixed support for this phenomenon. Chenoweth (2007, 2010b) finds higher numbers of terrorist attacks and new terrorist groups emerging in countries with preexisting terrorist group sectors that are ideologically diverse, particularly in emerging or intermediate-level democracies. Findley & Young (2012), on the other hand, find no support for outbidding dynamics when they examine cross-national patterns of terrorist attacks from 1970 to 2004. These two studies, however, only examine competition among terrorist groups, not taking into account how terrorist groups might be responding to organizational and political pressure from nonviolent and conventional political actors. Studies that do incorporate other dissident behavior are supportive of competitive organizational dynamics (Moore et al. 2011). Empirical support for competitive organizational dynamics is not yet fully established, and further testing is necessary to identify the conditions under which they operate.

Second, mobilization and competition are not limited to democracies. Many authoritarian regimes, including hybrid regimes, experience high levels of mobilization but very little terrorism (Levitsky & Way 2011). Third, the organizational argument overpredicts how much terrorism should occur. For one thing, terrorism does not emerge everywhere mobilization occurs. For example, many Central and Eastern European countries experience a considerable amount of protest activity that does not provoke cycles of terrorist violence (Mares 2011). Moreover, once terrorism does emerge as a tactical innovation, the logic of escalation suggests that we should observe patterns of ever-increasing terrorist violence. Instead, we see ebbs and flows, indicating that at least some groups tend to exercise at least some restraint even while they compete with other groups for power.

Finally, the presence of mobilization within some democracies begs an important question: Why are people mobilizing? Could we explain both mobilization and terrorism by examining some unobserved factor? Until recently, few scholars have attempted to identify the specific policies that might lead to terrorist behavior, but in recent years, interest in political explanations of terrorism has grown.

THE POLITICAL APPROACH

To explain variation in terrorist activity across democracies, some analysts have turned to the particular policies that the governments select. Domestic policy preferences have become the subject of study, although once again, the empirical evidence within the literature provides no consistent answers. Some studies have found that left-wing governments are more vulnerable to transnational terrorist attacks (Koch & Cranmer 2007). Koch & Cranmer could detect no clear causal pattern in their statistical tests to explain why transnational terrorists most often target left-wing governments, but one potential reason may be the tendency for challengers to view left-wing regimes as more dovish than their right-wing counterparts.

Contrarily, others have found that more political parties turn to terrorism within regimes where right-wing governments are in power (Danzell 2011), although this study is seemingly based on a relatively small number of cases. Burgoon (2006) likewise finds that governments that spend more money on social welfare policies—a policy preference typically associated with left-wing parties—are less likely to experience terrorism. Thus, left-wing regimes may be less likely to experience domestic terrorism than right-wing regimes, but left-wing regimes may be more likely to experience transnational terrorism.

Leaving aside the party politics question, Piazza (2009, 2011) examines the underlying grievances that may motivate populations to use terrorism, including underrepresentation in the government, economic discrimination, and ethnic discrimination. He finds that these practices increase domestic terrorist activity. Piazza & Walsh (2010a, 2010b) also find compelling evidence that countries with more robust human rights practices—particularly around physical integrity rights—experience fewer terrorist attacks. This focus on more justice-oriented concepts, such as adherence to human rights and to economic, political, and ethnic equality, provides an important step forward in understanding how democratic governments may create and maintain the legitimacy they need to avoid violence. Unresolved territorial conflicts (e.g., Northern Ireland, Tamil Ealam, Palestine) may also increase terrorist violence against democratic states, but probably not more so than the average authoritarian regime that refuses to depart from separatist territory (e.g., Russia in Chechnya).

Regarding transnational terrorism, some scholars have found that countries engaged in military operations abroad are more likely to become the targets of terrorist attacks (Savun & Phillips 2009). In fact, Savun & Phillips find that the countries most involved in the affairs of foreign countries tend to be democracies, and that the initiation of militarized interstate disputes suppresses the statistical effect of democracy. Given that democracies tend to go to war with authoritarian regimes, it is therefore unsurprising that transnational terrorism tends to originate in authoritarian regimes and target democracies (Blomberg & Rosendorff 2009). The implication is that those democracies that are frequent targets of transnational terrorism have also tended to pursue aggressive and provocative policies abroad. This may explain why countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom are targeted whereas the Nordic countries are not. Indeed, Braithwaite & Sobek (2005) associate the onset of transnational terrorism with the clear ascendance of the United States as the dominant hegemon in the international system, thereby becoming the subject of a number of military adventures as well as the object of resentment abroad. Findley et al. (2012) likewise find that durable international rivalries—such as that between the United States and Iran or between Pakistan and India—are the source of many exchanges of transnational terrorism. And the targets of many of these terrorist attacks are democratic antagonizers.

The appeal of the political approach is that there is often a clear solution to these problems: to change the offending policy. For instance, if provocative international engagements increase the chances of terrorism, then countries can simply reverse course. Or they can offset the negative effects such actions may have on their legitimacy by compensating through other more legitimate practices. For example, Young & Findley (2011b) find that countries can use foreign aid to obtain legitimacy (and reduce subsequent targeting by transnational terrorists) if the aid improves the daily living conditions of the populations they aim to help. Young & Findley particularly emphasize aid in sectors such as education, health, civil society, and conflict prevention, as opposed to direct military aid, for instance.

There are two crucial problems with political approaches. First, it is clear that many policies (such as military occupations) motivate a proportion of the population to attack the offending country. However, accommodating even "legitimate" demands of terrorist groups may produce even more resentment among different constituents. Most terrorist groups have rivals and opponents. For instance, toward the end of the First Intifada, Palestinian groups pressed for self-determination by targeting Israeli civilians. Yitzhak Rabin's government made sincere inroads toward Israeli-Palestinian peace, but this progress was cut short when a Jewish fundamentalist assassinated Rabin in 1995. In this case, by responding to the grievances of Palestinian groups, the Israeli government generated new grievances among Israeli religious fundamentalists.

A similar dynamic applies with ideological terrorism. For example, recent findings suggest that left-wing governments may be less susceptible to domestic terrorism (Burgoon 2006, Danzell

2011). But do leftist governments produce uniformly less resentment than right-wing governments do? Or do they produce less resentment only among domestic leftists? Rather than indicating that left-wing policies are more acceptable to a wider portion of the population, Burgoon's finding may indicate that when scorned, leftists are more likely to resort to violence to try to oppose right-wing governments (Danzell 2011). Moreover, sometimes leftist groups actually target left-wing governments, seeing them as "selling out" to centrist interests (Tarrow 1989). Thus, identifying which policies offend fewer people is not straightforward. There is considerable variation within and across countries as to whether right- or left-wing policies satisfy restive publics.

The second major problem is endogeneity. It is not clear whether democracies initiate conflict with authoritarian regimes because they have been targeted by transnational terrorism or anticipate that they will be. In such cases, we should not be surprised to find that the initiation of conflict is followed by terrorism, since anticipation of terrorism was the pretext for the conflict itself. This was certainly the case in the United States' experiences with Afghanistan (from which the United States was attacked) and Iraq (from which the United States rightly or wrongly feared a future attack), which have accounted for a great deal of observed transnational terrorist activity following 2003.

SQUARING THE CIRCLE: COMPETING APPROACHES AND THE EMPIRICAL RECORD

Based on prior literature and empirics, we can say with some confidence that since 1968, advanced democracies have generally not suffered from high levels of chronic terrorism unless they were interfering in other countries' affairs through military intervention or occupations, or unless they had ongoing and unresolved territorial conflicts. This suggests that the majority of terrorism occurring in democracies has occurred in poor and (perhaps) transitioning democracies with internally inconsistent institutions. Democracies with illiberal practices (such as routine human rights violations, discrimination, and nonresponsiveness to public demands) are more likely to experience domestic terrorist violence, whereas democracies with liberal practices (such as strict adherence to civil liberties and human rights, establishment of the rule of law, minority protections, and responsiveness to public demands) are far less likely to experience domestic terrorism. Democracies that possess provocative international force postures and that have a high number of nondemocratic rivals are likely targets of transnational terrorism, whereas providing foreign development aid may reduce resentment toward these democracies.

These observations are somewhat intuitive. Governments with domestic and international legitimacy generally do not suffer from terrorism. But advanced democracies with robust institutional structures, a commitment to rule of law, wealth, and high levels of domestic and international legitimacy are not created overnight; they emerge after long and often arduous processes of transition, and they often backslide into illiberal practices. New or emerging democracies undergoing a process of transition may find it particularly difficult to establish and maintain legitimacy.

Such countries are often associated with mid-range economic development but have not yet emerged as economic powerhouses with equally distributed economic gains. Piazza (2012) finds that new democracies are more susceptible to terrorism than older, more stable democracies. And Kurrild-Klitgaard et al. (2006), Abadie (2006), Chenoweth (2010b), and de la Calle & Sánchez-Cuenca (2012) all find curvilinear associations between level of democracy, level of wealth, and domestic and transnational terrorist violence. Chenoweth (2010b) suggests that these mid-range countries are often those undergoing transition to or away from democracy—heightening opportunity, unleashing long-standing grievances, and triggering competitive mobilization dynamics all at once.

The process of promoting democracy itself may create more terrorism than it suppresses (Dalacoura 2011). It may also unleash larger forces of instability, resulting in wider-scale civil conflict (Hegre et al. 2001) even where democratic consolidation is the final endpoint. And democratic transitions that occur in the context of disunited and disorganized opposition movements are thought to be at much higher risk of subsequent civil conflict than those with more unified and organized opposition movements (Daxecker 2009). Although it has not yet been empirically tested, an important question is whether democratization processes that occur "organically"—that is, without international interventions or foreign-imposed regime changes—are less likely to experience terrorism.

These findings emphasize change and complexity over stasis and simplicity, encouraging researchers to take into account changes that create a convergence of the conditions typically associated with terrorist violence. Dynamic approaches are much more true to reality, in the sense that we know that change is always under way and that full explanations of political behaviors are seldom monocausal.

Yet dynamic approaches are complex, are exceedingly difficult to model, and cannot always be effectively demonstrated using traditional empirical tests. In fact, in each of the studies mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, the authors do not actually study change per se. They study curvilinear effects of different variables, identify that the middle range of wealth and political freedom is the most important range, and then speculate that these middle ranges are indicative of transition. The assumption is that few countries remain in the middle for long—they are either sliding backward or moving forward until they achieve more internally consistent and self-reinforcing institutions (Gates et al. 2006).

In the spirit of understanding change over time, I now return to how extant patterns in regime type and terrorism may be shifting in the twenty-first century.

LONG-TERM TRENDS AND CONTEMPORARY PUZZLES

All four theoretical approaches have one thing in common: they all expect terrorism to continue to plague democracies (or a subset of democracies, depending on the explanation) for the foreseeable future. Few of these theories are sensitive to global changes, such as waves of democratization (Huntington 1993) or waves of terrorism (Rasler & Thompson 2009, Rapoport 1984). Yet we know from current research that hybrid regimes are common in the international political domain (Levitsky & Way 2011), and because of contemporary concern about terrorism emanating from authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world, there is good reason to question the democracy-terrorism link in recent years.

One reason why current quantitative studies are insensitive to such shifts is that data availability is extremely limited relative to datasets on democracy or war. For example, whereas the Correlates of War dataset covers contemporary conflicts dating back to the early nineteenth century, there are no data on terrorism before 1950. Engene's (2004) TWEED dataset provides coverage of domestic terrorism incidents from 1950 to 2004, but these are only for Western Europe. Transnational terrorism data are available after 1968 but are proprietary (Mickolus et al. 2013). The GTD contains transnational and domestic terrorism data from 1970 to 2010, with one missing year (1993). Thus, researchers cannot identify historical trends outside of the waves of terrorism occurring between 1950 and 2010.

Within the 40-year time frame of 1970–2010, though, we can detect whether such patterns have held. Five noticeable temporal trends emerge from **Figure 1**. First, regardless of regime type, there were two periods wherein global counts of terrorism were at low points: from 1970 to 1975 and from 1998 to 2004. Terrorism was most common during the period 1975–1998 and

mainly occurred in democracies—particularly partial democracies—during a period that overlaps closely with the onset of Huntington's (1993) "third wave of democratization." Second, partial democracies (with and without factionalism) continue to experience the most terrorism after 2000, consistent with previous periods and extant literature, which suggests more continuity than change in this regard. Third, advanced democracies still experience several hundred attacks per year, but this figure is lower than in past decades, indicating that robust democracies are indeed becoming more immune to terrorism over time. Fourth, true autocracies continue to experience very little terrorism, although partial autocracies (autocratic regimes that allow some political competition but suppress real political participation) have experienced far more terrorism in the late 2000s than they have since the mid 1980s. Partial autocracies experienced high numbers of terrorist incidents in 1984, 1998, and 2007, and this trend appears to be short-lived. Fifth, perhaps the most striking change since 2000 is the large number of observed attacks in countries under military occupation (Iraq and Afghanistan). It is widely believed by policy makers that failed and transitioning states experience the most terrorism, but the trends in **Figure 1** show that states under occupation experience more (Windsor 2003, Piazza 2008b).

In recent years, therefore, only a very few advanced democracies (such as Israel) continue to experience high numbers of terrorist acts, whereas factionalized democracies (such as India), partial autocracies (such as Algeria and Pakistan), and occupied countries (e.g., Iraq and Afghanistan) have become the most frequent targets. This change provides one of the most interesting and important puzzles for scholars to explore: What explains the shift from democratic terrorism to semidemocratic and nondemocratic terrorism—especially after 9/11?

I offer five speculations, which serve as potential explanations for researchers to test. First, many groups that had previously used terrorism in advanced democratic countries were either suppressed under new and harsh counterterrorism laws, or else they voluntarily de-escalated or disbanded after losing the motivation to be placed in the same category as al Qaeda or its affiliates (Neumann 2003). Abrahms (2007) has argued that advanced democracies are particularly adept at striking the optimal balance between liberty and security.

Second, American-led military occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq seem to have diverted most global terrorism incidents to those places. South Asia (India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan) and the Middle East (Iraq and Israel) have become the predominant theaters in which terrorism thrives, whereas Europe and the Americas, despite long-simmering conflicts, have witnessed a decline in terrorist violence (Chenoweth 2012).

Third, many authoritarian regimes now possess many of the same features thought to increase terrorism. With the rise of hybrid regimes after the Cold War (Levitsky & Way 2011), most authoritarian regimes allow for some political competition, which would classify them as partial autocracies in the scheme described above. Legitimacy is low and mobilization is high in such regimes—a combination that may create both the grievances and the organizational dynamics thought to increase terrorist violence. Some scholars have already attempted to examine terrorism in dictatorships (Aksoy et al. 2012), finding that many of the same factors that explain terrorism in democracies—political and institutional exclusion—also explain terrorism in authoritarian regimes.

Fourth, after 9/11, it became more profitable for authoritarian regimes to report terrorist incidents, particularly by Islamist groups. The United States and its allies provided military aid to any regimes providing assistance to the Global War on Terror. Incidentally, regimes that previously reported very little terrorism, such as Morocco and Saudi Arabia, began to report higher levels of violence and the emergence of a number of new terrorist groups. This resulted in more observed terrorist behavior. Importantly, however, it is not clear that the reported terrorist attacks were actual terrorist attacks. As became obvious during several of the popular uprisings

in 2011, some Arab leaders tended to label their political opponents as terrorists whether their opponents were using terrorism or not. Therefore, the inflation of terrorist violence in partial autocracies in the late 2000s may be due, ironically, to overreporting on the part of dictators.

And fifth, current data on terrorism may be suffering from construct validity errors. Particularly due to the rhetoric and framing of the Global War on Terror, it is possible that news sources and researchers began to count as "terrorist attacks" events that should really be categorized as violent incidents during guerrilla warfare. It is notable, for instance, that the GTD reports only 10 terrorist incidents in Vietnam during the entire 1970–2010 period (START 2011). The first such incident occurred in 1992, according to the database. Yet we know that the Viet Cong occasionally used terror tactics. It was just not common parlance at the time to refer to them as terrorism. After 9/11, however, it became extremely common to refer to violent actions in Iraq as terrorist actions—despite the fact that the perpetrators were rarely known. This last point highlights some of the dangerous ground on which terrorism analysts tread. Not only must they rely on data with limited temporal coverage and potential underreporting bias, but also researchers are troubled by the parlance and norms of different threat environments, which make it difficult to evaluate the internal and external validity of existing data or the inferences researchers make based on those data.

Nevertheless, without superior alternatives, many terrorism researchers will continue to rely on these data out of necessity. If we are to believe the trends shown by these data, however, one critically important pattern is obvious: many of the patterns of terrorism since 2000 are virtually indistinguishable across the fully democratic, fully autocratic, failed-state, and transitioning-regime types. The continuity is that there is more terrorism in the middle, but this is not necessarily surprising. What these trends suggest is that the democracy-nondemocracy divide may not be as important as the political environments below the structural surface, which means that dichotomous and static values of regime type may not be the most interesting, important, or useful indicators by which to explain patterns of terrorism.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? RECONCILING DIVERGENT FINDINGS

Bearing these trends in mind, I conclude by offering four suggestions for how the field should proceed. First, I suggest viewing terrorism as one part of a larger repertoire of contention. Very few studies take seriously the relationships between terrorism, insurgency, civil war, nonviolent civil conflict, and electoral politics (for an exception, see Moore et al. 2011). Yet all of these activities are linked, often quite closely, and are often motivated by the same kinds of factors (Chenoweth 2010a, de la Calle & Sánchez-Cuenca 2012). The field would benefit from incorporating a wider view of contention, so as to identify the processes that produce terrorism and provide groups with viable alternatives to using it.

My second suggestion is to launch a concerted attempt to reconcile findings that contradict one another, such as divergent expectations about the effects of institutional constraints and differing electoral rules. When one looks at this explosion of new studies, the conclusions one can draw from this body of work are unclear. If a certain country undergoes a democratic transition and a policy maker wants to know whether we expect more or less terrorism, we might be able to offer some thoughts based on current knowledge. But if the same policy maker asked whether there is a way to create institutions so as to reduce suffering, enhance legitimacy, provide legitimate good governance, and reduce incentives to use violence, researchers would have difficulty answering that question. Terrorism researchers might therefore focus more on how their combined understanding

might matter the most to people on the ground. Through such efforts, terrorism research may also become more unified and consensus oriented rather than divergent and disparate.

There are two ways to approach this problem. The first is to adopt the practice of testing findings on a variety of measures of terrorism. As suggested above, many studies rely on different measures of terrorism and even conflate transnational and domestic terrorism, which may be driven by fundamentally different causal processes. But if terrorism researchers clearly specify their outcomes of interest, test their findings on a variety of agreed-on measures of terrorist activity—such as attack counts, group counts, and fatalities (severity)—and use a variety of different sources (GTD, ITERATE, etc.), we may be able to adopt some more reliable conclusions, as Young & Findley (2011a) suggest. The second way to approach this problem is by being more precise about the conditions under which different associations are expected to hold. This will require more theory building and more direct empirical knowledge about particular cases (for a model example, see Ron 2001).

This leads to my third suggestion, which is to diversify the methodological approaches used to study terrorism. Before 9/11, the field was dominated by qualitative approaches, resulting in a rich body of work about particular cases (see, for instance, Crenshaw 1983, Wilkinson 2006). Recent years have seen a multitude of well-executed quantitative studies concerning the correlates of terrorism that produce a number of different findings. But the field has not yet dealt with the problems with underreporting and qualitative shifts in the meaning and measurement of terrorism over time. Nor can quantitative analysis always yield inferences that reliably and meaningfully contribute to policy debates. For these reasons, I believe that the terrorism field would benefit from returning to more in-depth historical and ethnographic work—not because this approach is superior but because the terrorism field, by relying exclusively on quantitative data, may be too distant from the politics of terrorism itself for the field to produce new and meaningful insights.

For example, in evaluating the theoretical approaches discussed above, only a few scholars have ever actually asked terrorist actors or radical groups why they target democracies (Bloom 2004 and Stern 2004 are exceptions). However, if scholars could obtain access to such actors and ask them why they target any particular democracy, I doubt they would point to civil liberties, coercive effectiveness, publicity, or organizational competition. Instead, they would probably cite their grievances concerning the democracy's policies and anger with the civilian population for failing to hold policy makers in check. This is not to say that terrorist violence is ever justified. In my view it is not. Rather, the argument here is that terrorism usually occurs because of deep dissatisfaction with the status quo and because government policies and institutions may be failing some portion of the population. When terrorism persists and escalates beyond minimal levels in a given society, it may be a symptom of wider problems.

This leads to my final suggestion, which is to remove an ironic blind spot in research on the democracy-terrorism link: the state itself. Although much research focuses on state features, there is far less focus on state behavior—arguably a major source of motivation for all sorts of contentious activity (Davenport 2007). In fact, although we can often identify the propensity for terrorism to occur in certain types of countries, researchers rarely look at what specific decisions provoked contentious actions at particular points in time (Jackson 2005, Davenport 2007). Terrorism researchers have generally avoided questions about state behavior, almost never looking at the unpopular, incompetent, or otherwise unjust policies that governments pass from time to time that produce widespread mobilization, including terrorism. It is understandable why people object to or avoid such topics, but many of the lingering puzzles in the field might be resolved by seriously taking on the primary variable that terrorism scholars seem to routinely omit when studying the democracy-terrorism link. Fortunately, this trend is changing somewhat (Piazza 2009, 2011; Piazza & Walsh 2010a; Young & Findley 2011b), but the field still has far to travel in this regard.

Scholars should make serious attempts to collect and account for the actions of states rather than just the actions of nonstate actors. Early efforts to do so (Moore et al. 2011, Dugan & Chenoweth 2012, Shapiro et al. 2012) reveal that there is much states can do to either escalate or de-escalate conflicts with terrorist actors.

In the meantime, terrorism scholars have identified one core dilemma—that democracies have not yet resolved some major problems of governance, and that these deficiencies are sometimes accompanied by terrorist violence. Despite being superior in many ways to authoritarian regimes, emerging democracies often remain plagued by wealth disparities, minority discrimination, violations of civil liberties and human rights, and poorly managed political conflicts. The democratization process tends to exacerbate rather than reduce terrorism. Some advanced democracies continue to find themselves entangled in foreign involvement that motivates people to target them with terrorism. In other words, democracy still needs some improvement if terrorism is to be eradicated as a method of contention.

Fortunately, research on democracy and terrorism also provides some solutions to these problems. Robust commitment to civil liberties, enhanced political access for dispossessed minority groups, institutionalization of nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms, improved human rights practices (Piazza & Walsh 2010a, 2010b), and genuine support for political freedom and economic well-being through foreign aid have been found to reduce transnational terrorist violence against donor states (Young & Findley 2011b). Less provocative foreign policies may be indicated as well (Braithwaite & Sobek 2005, Savun & Phillips 2009, Dalacoura 2011).

If there is a common message emerging from recent research, it is that a country's best defense against terrorism is to enhance its legitimacy, not only through democratic practices but also through genuine liberal practices both at home and abroad.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author is not aware of any affiliations, memberships, funding, or financial holdings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

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