POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERROR

WHERE DO WE DRAW LINES?
WHAT IS TERRORISM?
TERRORISM

• Unlike revolution, terrorism ALWAYS uses violence
  • Defined as the use of violence by nonstate actors against civilians in order to achieve a political goal, OR
  • Deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or threat of violence used to achieve political or social change
    • General assumption of rational actors

• Types of terrorism:
  • State terror (use of violence against civilians for political aims → Mao, Stalin)
  • State-sponsored terror (use of terrorist organizations by weak states as a proxy)
  • Post-revolutionary state terror (Robespierre)
TERRORISM VS. GUERRILLA WAR

GUERRILLA VIOLENCE

• Primarily engaged with **hard targets** (Moncada Barracks, Cuba)
  • Generally **accept the rules of war** and **target the state, not civilians**
  • State actors seen as **legitimate** (FARC peace talks)

TERRORISM

• May include hard targets, but also (and especially) **soft targets**
  • State actors seen as **illegitimate**
    • Therefore, why target the state directly?
FORMS OF STATE AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

- War
- Guerrilla war
- Human rights violations (domestic)
- War crimes (international)
- State-sponsored terrorism
- Terrorism

TARGET

STATE

- State
- Non-state

NON-STATE

- State
- Non-state

ACTOR
TERRORIST STRATEGIES

• Goal to **atomize society** and create **widespread disorientation** towards the incumbent regime

• Use of discrimination and/or indiscriminate attacks to **generate high levels of anxiety**
  • Either **extremely meaningful targets**, or incredibly **banal targets**

• Disorient populations by **provoking government repression** (eg, domestic security clampdown or harsh retaliation)
  • Ensure attacks are “news worthy” by ever more spectacular attacks
CHANGING NATURE OF TERRORISM

• **Traditional structure** → politically motivated, hierarchic, bureaucratic organization
  - Narrow set of political goals (eg, legitimacy and authority over territory)
  - Common actions: hijackings, hard targets

• **Structure influences strategy**

• **Primary audiences** (within organization) vs. **secondary audiences** (potential supporters outside)

• Examples: IRA, ETA, PLO, FARC
CHANGING NATURE OF TERRORISM

• Modern terrorism → motivated by amorphous goals, decentralized
  • THERE IS NO PERMANENT CENTER

• Broader, supra-political ideologies

• Non-political goals and networked structures increase scale of violence
  • Without a secondary audience, there’s no limiting factor on violence → the only audience is the primary audience

• Network tactics → difficult to find, capture, or limit actions
CAUSES OF TERRORISM

• Not as many cohesive, systematic forms of analysis as for revolution
  • Still possible to think in terms of institutional, ideational, and individual explanations

• Institutional explanations most common → **poverty and lack of education**?
  • Not entirely convincing, as **upper echelon of terrorist organizations often have high degrees of education**, relatively economically advantaged → unlike revolution in this regard

• Weak state autonomy and capacity stronger correlations with terrorism