

## Applications: Civil War and Terrorism

# Civil War

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# Civil War

A war in which the main participants are within the same state.

Jeffrey Frieden, David Lake and Kenneth Schultz. *World Politics: Interests, Interactions, and Institutions*. 5th ed. Norton, 2021. © Norton. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

FIGURE 6.1 *Interstate and Civil Wars, 1816–2016*

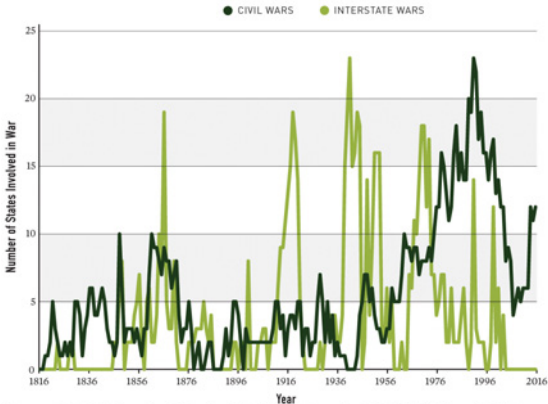


Figure source: For 1816–2007, data are from the Correlates of War (COW) War Data, version 4.0; Meredith Reid Sarkkees and Frank Wayman, *Resort to War: 1816–2007* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010). Data for 2008–16 are from UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 17.1. Marie Allanson, Erik Melander, and Lotta Themnér, “Organized Violence, 1989–2016,” *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 4 (2017): 574–87. Note that while these two datasets use somewhat different criteria for identifying conflicts, they agree reasonably well in their overall patterns.

# Civil War

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The United States' recent wars started as interstate war and became civil wars.

→ Afghanistan: Government falls in 2 months, civil war 18+ years.

→ Iraq: Government falls in 1.5 months, civil war 8 years.

# Civil War

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At first glance, civil war might not seem “international”

... but:

- ▶ Cross-border contagion
- ▶ Foreign support for actors/proxy wars
- ▶ International triggers for domestic wars (Arab spring, Aid shocks)
- ▶ Peacekeeping
- ▶ Refugee flows (Syrian civil war)

# Why Rebel?

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Greed or Grievance?

Four main aims of rebels:

1. Separatist (want independent territory)
2. Irredentist (want to join another state)
3. Center-seeking (want to take over the state)
4. Rent-seeking (want to make money)

# Should every group have a state of its own?

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Separatist claims are compelling under norms of self-determination

But...

- ▶ How to protect new minorities in the territory?
- ▶ Cascade of demands for succession?
- ▶ Risk of new country collapse

# When do grievances lead to civil war?

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## Group-level factors

Groups need to overcome collective action and commitment problems.

- ▶ Groups that inspire fighters through “pleasure in agency”
- ▶ Common ethnicity, religion, or tribe (polarization, security dilemma)
- ▶ Resources – rebels can loot and pay
- ▶ Slavery – forced recruitment into soldiering



# When do grievances lead to civil war?

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## Country-level factors

- ▶ Wealth
- ▶ State weakness
- ▶ Natural resources and rough terrain
- ▶ Regime type (more violence in the middle)
- ▶ past civil war

# When do grievances lead to civil war?

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## **International** factors

- ▶ Proximity to ongoing civil war
- ▶ Irridentism, shared ethnicity
- ▶ Shared ideology
- ▶ Geo-politics (proxy wars between great powers)

# Civil war as bargaining failure

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How well does the bargaining model of war apply?

## *incomplete information*

- ▶ unlikely given length of most civil wars
- ▶ Signaling: concessions to one group lead to more rebellion elsewhere.

## *commitment problems*

- ▶ very likely, hard to disarm, hard to keep bargains
- ▶ temporary shocks trigger wars (Nielsen et al. 2011)
- ▶ most wars are won outright, few settlements

## *indivisible goods*

- ▶ successionist rebels want a whole “homeland”
- ▶ center-seeking rebels want the whole state

# Terrorism

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# Terrorism

Use (or threat) of violence against non-combatants by non-state actors for political ends.

## “Propaganda by deed”

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FIGURE 6.3 *Transnational Terrorist Attacks and Fatalities, 1970–2014\**

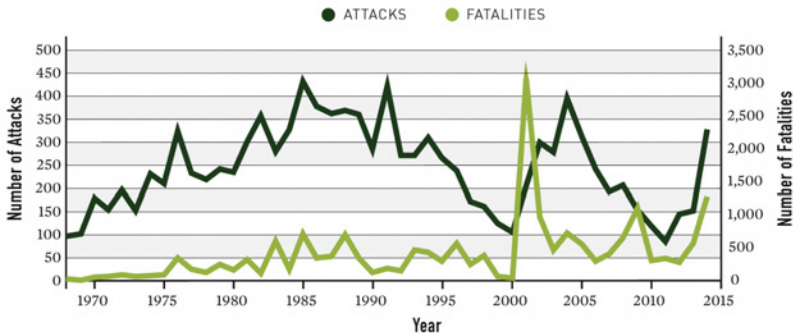


Figure source: Attack data are from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), Global Terrorism Database [Data file], 2017, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>. Transnational attacks were identified using Kirssa Ryckman, “GTD Add-On: Terror Groups’ Home,” doi:10.7910/DVN/F6MTML, Harvard Dataverse, V1 (2016).

# Goals of Terrorists

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Five recurring goals of terrorists:

1. **regime change:** the overthrow of a government and its replacement with one led by the terrorists (Marxist groups).
2. **territorial change:** taking territory away from a state either to establish a new state (Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka) or to join another state (Lashkar-e Tayyiba in Kashmir region).
3. **policy change:** a broader category of lesser demands, such as al-Qaida's demand that the US stops supporting Israel.
4. **social control:** constrains the behavior of individuals, rather than the state (Ku Klux Klan).
5. **status quo maintenance:** the support of an existing regime or a territorial arrangement (right-wing paramilitary organizations in Latin America in response to Marxism).

# Strategies of Terrorism

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Terrorist violence is a form of costly signaling.

Terrorists are extremists

- ▶ too politically weak relative to the demands they make
- ▶ not strong enough to impose their will directly by force of arms

Sometimes strong enough to persuade audiences to do as they wish by altering the audience's beliefs about the terrorist's ability to impose costs and their degree of commitment to their cause.

Two key audiences: (1) target government/population and (2) "home" constituency

# Strategies of Terrorism

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Four key terrorist strategies:

1. **coercion:** Induce policy change by imposing costs
2. **provocation:** Trying to provoke disproportionate response
3. **spoiling:** Disrupting negotiations between gov't and moderates
4. **outbidding:** Win over supporters, out-do other groups



# Motivation

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There is debate over whether terrorism is effective or not.

## Why Terrorism Does Not Work

*Max Abrahms*

**T**errorist groups attack civilians to coerce their governments into making policy concessions, but does this strategy work?<sup>1</sup> If target countries systematically resist rewarding terrorism, the international community is armed with a powerful message to deter groups from terrorizing civilians. The prevailing view within the field of political science, however, is that terrorism is an effective coercive strategy. The implications of this perspective are grim; as target countries are routinely coerced into making important strategic and ideological concessions to terrorists, their victories will reinforce the strategic logic for groups to attack civilians.

Abrahms, Max. "Why Terrorism Does Not Work." *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 42-78. © The President and Fellows of Harvard College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

# Counter-terrorism Strategies

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Deterring terrorists is difficult.

Strategies for countering terrorism include:

- ▶ Deterrence?
- ▶ Preemption?
- ▶ Defensive measures
- ▶ Criminalization
- ▶ Negotiation and compromise

# Counter-terrorism in Israel

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Defensive measures against terrorists in Israel include:

- ▶ a fortified wall between Israeli- and Palestinian-controlled territory
- ▶ numerous checkpoints manned by armed guards
- ▶ Iron Dome

These measures appear to have reduced the number of terrorists attacks in Israel, but they are expensive and inconvenient for everyone, not just the terrorists.

# Combating Insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan

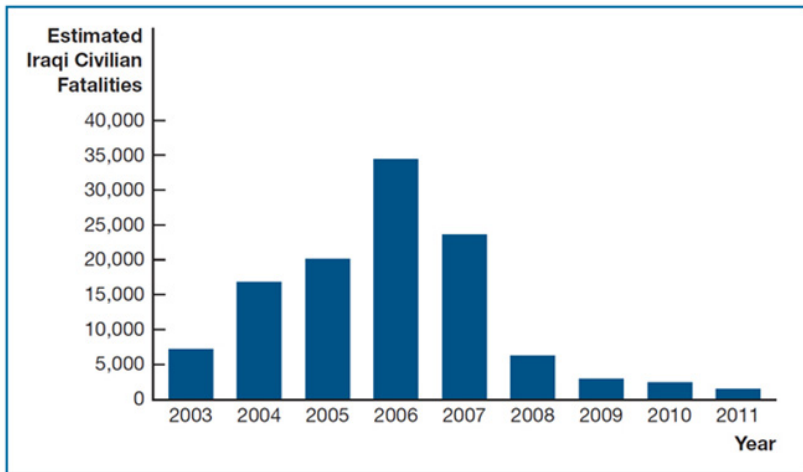
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Initially the strategy for U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq focused on targeting insurgents.

- ▶ The strategy failed.
- ▶ Called “mowing the grass,” since soldiers would repeatedly clear areas of insurgents only to see them reappear afterward.

# Combating Insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan

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# Combating Insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan

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## COIN

Current counterinsurgency strategy focuses on protecting the population with a special emphasis on political and economic development.

Evidence shows that the provision of certain government services does lead to a reduction in violence.

# Combating Insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan

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The logic is:

- ▶ Insurgents cannot operate without civilians learning something about their location and identities.
- ▶ The more effective the government at serving civilians, the more likely it is that they will prefer the government over the insurgents.
- ▶ In turn, the population will provide the government with a steady stream of tactically useful information.



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