TERRORISM IN THE WAKE OF THE COLD WAR ORDER

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ABSTRACT

The end of the Cold War had immense consequences on the shape of the global structure of power, leaving America as the world’s sole superpower. Countries that had previously received aid and weapons from the Soviet Union no longer had a superpower to rely on, and the disenfranchised began to direct their frustrations against what they saw as an imperialist force. To what extent did this collapse have an effect on terrorism? Some expected that in a uni-polar world, people would be more likely to direct the frustration that their disenfranchisement engendered against the United States, clearly the most powerful and visible symbol of the new order. Others contended that the collapse of a neighboring superpower would swamp these effects, leading to a greater increase in terrorism in the Middle East than in the West, in the wake of the Cold War order. This paper attempts to measure the effects of this collapse on terrorism, focusing specifically on the West and the Middle East. Using data on terrorist incidents as well as national demographic and socioeconomic conditions, I find a strong and unambiguous increase in terrorist incidents in Middle Eastern countries as compared to NATO countries, led by the US, because of the collapse of the Soviet Union.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

The beginning of the 1990s was a turbulent time on the international stage. At the end of the previous decade, the Berlin Wall fell, unleashing forces that would eventually lead to the collapse of an empire. Mikhail Gorbachev was losing ground to his (brief) political ally, the liberal Boris Yeltsin. On December 8, 1991, the leaders of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine signed the Belavezha Accords, formally dissolving the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This news was greeted with both shock and joy in the West, and with much more trepidation among the former Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR’s) and some other countries in Central and Middle Eastern Asia, which had strong political, financial, and military with the Kremlin. As Russia began to turn inward toward to address its collapsed economic and political institutions, its satellite countries were now forced to rely on themselves or on new mutually beneficial cooperative agreements.

Many Middle Eastern governments and their citizens were also forced to face a powerful, and for some, terrifying notion – that the United States would essentially be the sole arbiter of global affairs for the foreseeable future. The US represented many of the ideals that radical Islamists despised most – unbridled capitalism, consumerism, secularism, and neo-colonialism. Many therefore reasoned that on an individual level, in addition to the national instability caused by the changing global power structure, the most disenfranchised and/or extremist elements of this part of the world would focus their ire on the West and its allies.
Unfortunately, quantitative analysis is severely lacking in the study of the implications that the end of the Soviet Union had for global terrorism, and thinkers have just begun to pick up the slack in the wake of September 11th. The vast majority of literature related to terrorism is qualitative in nature; case studies, formal modeling, and theorizing predominate. Many of these have, of course, been quite useful.

Nevertheless, as Schmid and Jongman (1988) argued, “Much of the writing in the crucial areas of terrorism research is impressionistic, superficial, and at the same time often also pretentious, venturing far-reaching generalizations on the basis of episodal evidence.” Others like Hoffman (1999) have used quantitative analysis, but relied on summary statistics to show trends in terrorism rather than its determinants over time. Thus, while there have been a number of quantitative analyses on terrorism, the literature on terror in the wake of the Soviet Union is scant, at best.

This thesis will first review the existing literature on trends in terrorist incidents during and after the Cold War, followed by an analysis of the general theories of what makes a terrorist. Next, I will outline some of the conceptual issues discuss methodological concerns that have hindered previous research attempts. Finally, I will present the data and empirical models, and discuss the results observed.

Scholars have been equally critical of statistical models for being inductive rather than deductive in their approach, as they have of formal theoretical models that do not attempt to connect the formal theory to data over time. My model of terrorism, and the
forces that would shape it after the Cold War, is inherently inductive, though I argue that the results effectively justify the logic behind my inductive methods.

The difference-in-differences model was designed to compare the effects of the collapse on the West and the Middle East, before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The years I used for the initial model were 1987, 1988, 1997, and 1998, to have a cluster of data before and after the collapse. The reason why I chose my post-collapse years to be near the end of the 1990s was to look at the data after the “dust had settled”, in which longer-term trends would likely present themselves more clearly. I then decided to run a full time-series model as a check on the robustness of the difference-in-differences model. The time series model includes all of the years from 1987 to 1998 (excluding 1991, which turned out to be a large outlier among the data).

The results of both empirical models show an increase in terrorist incidents in the Middle East cohort, as compared with the NATO countries of the West. The results suggest that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent re-ordering of the international structure of power did in fact have a direct effect on the level of terrorism in the Middle East. This effect is statistically significant, and flies in the face of a number of theories that the end of the Soviet Union left only one superpower, upon which the vast majority of attacks and criticism would be heaped, including terrorism. Additionally, the results of the statistical models imply that a loss in military and/or
economic support by the neighboring Soviet Union may have further destabilized the region in the 1990s.
Chapter 2. Review of Literature: Conceptual Issues and Models

*Terror and the Cold War System*

Synthesizing a number of prominent theories, I can build a number of assumptions for what makes a terrorist frustration, whether at the individual, group, or national level, turns into aggression. The aggression is then generally directed at the “system,” or structural factors, and the US and its allies were the best representative of that system in the wake of the Soviet Union.

The end of World War II radically altered the landscape of the international political system. Rarely in history have two superpowers so closely matched each other in terms of political, military, and economic strength. The United States and the Soviet Union represented two completely different philosophies concerning class relations, individualism, governance, and the nature of power. All of these factors, combined with the pivotal role that the US and the Soviet Union both played in winning the Second World War, made both countries acutely aware of the raw power that they each held, and could potentially hold. Thus, the stage was set for the global confrontation that took place over the next 50 years.

This ideological confrontation directly shaped and characterized the forms that terrorism would take during the Cold War. Realists believed that any loss in relative power to the Soviet Union (or vice versa) would have a serious snowball effect ending either of the superpowers’ hegemony. Each side therefore, either deliberately or for the
purpose of psychological justification for their actions, viewed its championed ideology through a universalist lens. Communism, of course, is nothing if not a “proselytizing ideology.” Drawing from Hegelian and Marxist notions of historical determinism, the communist movement was by definition an international one, in which “The very notion of ‘socialism in one country’ was a betrayal of communism…” (Steel, 1995). It is therefore easy to see how the political debate between capitalism and socialism (as well as that between democracy and authoritarianism) took on a metaphysical and cosmic quality to it.

Likewise, whether in genuine belief or as a natural response to the totalizing nature of communism, the US and its allies essentially adopted the same approach to (classically) liberal and democratic ideology as well. As Barry Buzan (1983) argues:

Liberty is not merely a blessing to be savored privately, but a grace that must be spread to others. It is proselytizing by nature…It is the way that the nation justifies to itself, as well as to others, the universality of its principles.

The Western proponents of liberal democracy during the Cold War co-opted much of the Soviet Union’s verbal imagery, which served to greatly narrow the discourse of the conflict. Even tiny losses by either side now took on new and vaguely apocalyptic implications, which further entrenched the rigidity of each side’s belief that they held the solutions to the problems of the global system.

As the front of the Cold War moved to proxy battlefields in the Third World, nationalist movements began to arise in response. This period saw a dramatic increase in
the amount of post-colonial and separatist terrorism (which was often also leftist in nature) in countries such as Sri Lanka. What stands as probably the best example of this phenomenon, however, is the campaign fought by the mujahideen of Afghanistan after its invasion by the Soviet Union in 1979. The USSR fought in support of the Marxist Democratic People’s Party of Afghanistan, while the United States and a number of other Middle Eastern countries involved in Cold War politics supported the opposition rebels.

The repeal of the Clark amendment in 1985, which prohibited the US government from providing covert aid to fighters in the Angolan civil war, provided an important and ominous precedent. It essentially gave the US government tacit permission to engage in violent counter-terrorist activities wherever they believed them to be necessary, and CIA chief William Casey “took the lead in orchestrating support for terrorist and proto-terrorist movements around the world…” according to Mamdani (2005). Essentially, the American government now viewed proxy violence as a legitimate tool in fighting the Soviet Union, and there exist a multitude of examples, from the Contras of Nicaragua to the Mozambican National Resistance Movement, that support this notion. Through its intervention in Afghanistan, the US hoped to mobilize the millions of Muslims in the region to fight for their freedom and sovereignty from the Soviets in the name of Arab nationalism.

It thus appears that the Cold War, in combining two totalizing and opposing ideologies, had a tangible and equally totalizing effect on the psyches of policymakers.
and radical extremists alike. This phenomenon also seemed to have a call-and-response quality to it, in which both the superpowers and the non-state terrorists that supported or opposed them reacted in kind to each other’s transgressions, often even more brutally than their opponents. Many scholars view terrorism during this period broadly as a response to the exigencies brought forth by the competing powers of the bipolar system, in which individual or group agency in a world of opposing and monolithic superpowers could only be attained through violent, non-state and non-institutional means, if at all.

Unipolarity and the Break-Down of the Cold War Order

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the entire Eastern Bloc in 1991 was possibly the most unprecedented change to the international system in history. Rarely has the structure of the global order changed so vastly and so quickly. Needless to say, the dissolution of the Soviet bloc brought drastic changes to the political power structure of the world. No longer was there a bipolar order, in which mutual deterrence kept both powers in check and avoided all-out war as a result of its very structure. During this time, both the Soviet Union and the United States overestimated the importance of the Third World in their conflict, and were therefore left dealing with the array of nationalist terror groups they both supported in their proxy wars (Smith, 1987).

While Russia turned inward to deal with its economic and political collapse, the United States emerged as the sole superpower in the world. For the first time in history,
America alone was faced with the task of shaping the international order in whichever way it believed was necessary. Philip Zelikow (2000) asserts:

The system is founded on the largely latent, but evident, supreme power of the United States. The United States sits atop all three major hierarchies of power – political, military, and economic. Its influence is accompanied not by ever vaster expenditures of money around the world but by wide adherence to its norms for the international order.

While the latter point may no longer be true in the wake of the second Iraq War, it should still be noted that the 1990s saw a period of unparalleled relative power for the United States, in which nations by and large did, in fact, conform to the norms it imposed on the rest of the world.

Nevertheless, while it appears that communism was defeated in the Cold War, it is not quite so apparent that liberal democracy has emerged victorious. Opposition to the global power of the United States has grown steadily, if not exponentially, in the time since its ascension to the role of the world’s only superpower. The re-structuring of the global system also brought a concurrent change in the nature of global terrorism itself. Marxist terrorist groups do still exist, but most of them became marginalized by the decaying Soviet Union. Ethno-nationalist terrorism is also less prevalent in some areas of the world (Bosnia and Rwanda certainly excluded) than it was during the Cold War. According to Gurr (2000), between 1993 and 2000, the number of separatist wars fought around the world was cut in half. And, of the 59 ethnic wars going on in the world in 1999, only 7 were considered to be escalating. Using vector auto-regression analysis,
Enders and Sandler (1999) argue that “the end of the Cold War has provided a dividend in terms of reduced transnational terrorism.” The dividend arrives, according to their analysis, after the Brussels summit of NATO leaders on January 10-11, 1994, when NATO made moves “to integrate Eastern Europe with the West.”

Nevertheless, Cronin (2002), using data from *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, shows that the overall percentage of international terrorism against US targets or citizen rose “from about 20 percent in 1993-1995 to almost 50 percent in 2000.” Thus, any dividends for the US appear to have been short-lived, and the US became the primary global scapegoat as the decade wore on.

The new post-Cold war international system gave the United States full license to pursue its own foreign policy goals. Even in its attempts to divert attention from its hegemony, the US seemed only to affirm its unique status in the world. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott once argued:

…the United States defines its strength – indeed, its very greatness – not in terms of its ability to achieve or maintain dominance over others, but in terms of its ability to work with others in the interests of the international community as a whole…American foreign policy is consciously intended to advance universal values.

Talbott recognized the importance of the world’s perception of the United States’ foreign policy, but in the process, undermined his efforts with his own words. Calling the values of America universal, whether true or not, takes on an imperialist overtone in the minds of those who are skeptical of America and its motives to begin with.
Throughout the 1990s, the US was virtually unopposed in all its major international operations. The main foreign policy strategy of the US in this time became the “suffocation of disorder,” which replaced the outdated containment doctrine to which it had previously adhered (Steel, 1995). America’s hegemony was not confirmed, however, until its invasion of Iraq in the first Iraq War. Victory was fast and complete, and some American policymakers now believed, with some good reason, that the US was free to act without regarding the wishes of other nations. Continuing the Cold War mindset, America arrived at a peak of its internationalist sentiments, with most policymakers holding the genuine belief that it had both the right and the moral obligation, as the only democratic superpower, to intervene in the world where necessary. This brief period of time is what Ronald Steel (1995) called America’s “unipolar moment.” I would also argue that this “moment” stretched on through the end of the 1990s, with the US-backed intervention in the Balkan Wars being another manifestation of America’s unique supremacy in the international system.

_Terror and American Hegemony_

Terrorism as a political tool was, unsurprisingly, not abandoned in the wake of these monumental events. It has, however, transformed quite a bit, largely abandoning Marxist and ethnic motivations for terror in favor of religio-political ones. After the Cold War, the Middle East did not have the same strategic value for the US and the USSR
anymore. Formerly Soviet-inclined countries like Afghanistan, Syria, and Libya were destabilized by the loss of economic and/or military support from the Soviet Union (Hansen, 2004). In other words, Hansen argues that the systemic change also provided an “asymmetrical realignment and different self-help conditions.” During this decade, the Middle East underwent a great decline economically, and was either unable or unwilling to successfully meet the demands of the West – namely, for market liberalization and democratization. All of these factors were further exacerbated by the continued conflict between Arabs and Israelis in the region, along with America’s unyielding support for Israel and continued need for oil, and combined to create a fertile ground for terrorism to grow there.

Given the devoutly religious character of much of the region, it is not surprising that the growing rebellion that arose against the prevailing order, as well as its discourse, were co-opted by the radical Islamist right. The religion and doctrines of Islam are extremely complex, and the fact that the authority to interpret Islam is given to religious scholars made the process even easier. Incendiary words like *jihad* and *jahiliyyah*, which were historically ambiguous and contained within themselves a number of different meanings, also facilitated radicalization by giving Muslim scholars great license to interpret the Koran as they wished, and to impose that interpretation on the public.

To be fair, however, American foreign policy in the Middle East during this time was thoroughly inconsistent at best, and often enraged the people it was supposedly
trying to help. It is no secret that the United States trained thousands of the Afghan
mujahideen to fight against Soviet and Marxist forces. One professor of Middle East
studies, Eqbal Ahmad, argues that “Without significant exception during the 20th century,
jihad was used in a national, secular and political context, until, that is, the advent of the
anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan.” Clearly, the strategic tactics that characterized the Cold
War, in which the enemy of your enemy is always a friend, are most responsible for this
change. In overestimating the significance of countries like Afghanistan in the Cold War,
the US has inadvertently trained and armed the very radical terrorists with whom it is
now struggling.

Given the largely anti-American character of the Islamist movement, it will be
helpful to analyze the nature of American hegemony (or at least dominance) and its
recent relationship with the disenfranchised citizens of the Middle East. First, let us
consider the words of Osama bin Laden (2004) himself:

Security is one of the important pillars of human life, and free men do not take
their security lightly, contrary to Bush's claim that we hate freedom. Let him
explain why we did not attack Sweden, for example. Clearly, those who hate
freedom – unlike the 19, may Allah have mercy on them – have no self-
esteeem. We have been fighting you because we are free men who do not
remain silent in the face of injustice. We want to restore our [Islamic] nation's
freedom. Just as you violate our security, we violate yours.
I say to you, as Allah is my witness: We had not considered attacking the
towers, but things reached the breaking point when we witnessed the iniquity
and tyranny of the American-Israeli coalition against our people in Palestine
and Lebanon – then I got this idea.
Despite the rhetoric of the Bush administration, most scholars (and bin Laden himself) would probably agree that the attacks of September 11th were politically motivated. Bringing up the case of Sweden proves his point quite well – that it is not “our freedom” that groups like Al-Qaeda hate, it is, rather, our perceived imposition of this “freedom” onto the people of the Middle East that seems to spark such a reaction. More than anything, aside of course from their vehement anti-Zionism, it appears that most radical Islamists just want to be left alone to create their own authoritarian governments and political systems, no matter how oppressive they may be.

This presents a problem to the United States, which, by economic necessity, must interact with Middle Eastern countries that sit on a huge portion of the world’s oil reserves. As Richards and Waterbury (1990) put it, “The political economy of the Middle East is dominated by three simple facts: little rain, much oil, and increasingly many (and therefore young) people.” If we take these three arguably indisputable facts as given, the problem of Islamist political discourse then evolves into a question of how these factors interact dialectically with the forces controlling the global system, as well as the nature of those forces themselves. Regardless of the benefits it can bring, American or Western hegemony in the world inevitably reduces the agency of other movements to establish their own political, religious, and economic systems. Again, the problem is therefore not just about what actual effects Western civilization and globalization bring
to the Middle East, but also the way these effects are perceived by the Arabic and Persian populations of this region.

So, exactly how has the international system changed since the end of the Cold War, and how has its interdependent relationship with terrorist discourse subsequently changed? American hegemony in the world clearly plays a large role in this, but to simply say America’s existence causes terrorism is a coarse oversimplification at best. After the thorough analysis of the “what now?” problem at the end of the Cold War the one concept that has dominated the dialogue among international affairs scholars has been globalization. The force of globalization has been building steam for centuries, but it was in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet bloc that its momentum skyrocketed. In reality, the originating catalyst was probably the end of the Second World War and the creation of globalist institutions such as those of the Bretton Woods conference. But with communism discredited in the eyes of most by the 1990s, the world was finally able to turn its focus toward the all-encompassing force of globalization.

Globalization has been highly beneficial to the people of the world in a number of ways, creating vast new sums of wealth for the world, and even more importantly, bursting open the lines of communication, bringing vital news and information to people who previously had no access to them. Nevertheless, it would be extremely myopic to call the project of globalization an unqualified success. Scholars in this field have given thorough attention to the notion of a growing economic stratification that globalization
seems to have brought with it. Linguistically, the problem seems to be that even these scholars speak of it as if the GATT treaty signed itself, and History created the WTO, rather than individual people with specific interests. When globalization is framed in terms that imply a benevolent dictatorship rather than an imperfect democracy, the reaction to it (and its adherents) becomes all the more zealous. This is not to imply, however, that globalization is not a self-sustaining and even self-empowering force.

Countries get into spirals whereby incremental integration into the global economy necessitates a subsequent further integration. As the market for imports to a Third World country widens a bit, consumers there develop a taste for a new product, which puts pressure on the country’s foreign currency reserves. This then forces the government to reorient its production toward export markets, which may necessitate a trading agreement, which in turn may require further cuts to import restrictions, and so forth (Rapley, 2004).

The reaction the Middle East has had to globalization in the wake of the Soviet Union has been equally contradictory; Islamists want to turn away from what they see as an imperialistic system, but feel that they must continually engage with that very system in order to undermine it. As Benjamin Barber (1995) puts it, “…Jihad stands not so much in stark opposition as in subtle counterpoint to McWorld [his term for globalization] and is itself a dialectical response to modernity whose features both reflect and reinforce the modern world’s virtues and vices – Jihad via McWorld rather than Jihad
versus McWorld.” The most conservative elements of Middle Eastern culture have attempted to turn inward, seeking a new era of Caliphates, and feel that modernization has brought the debased culture of secular consumer capitalism with it. Simultaneously, though, the most radically conservative of these voices have, realizing that a majority of Muslims actually prefer McWorld, decided to dismantle this system, or at least to terrify its propagators into eschewing the Middle East in their plans.

The reasons why America is now seen as the prime target for terrorist attacks are manifold. There is, for one, the directly political reaction to America’s foreign policies, such as its support for Israel, its stationing of large numbers of troops in countries like Saudi Arabia, and of course, its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. People like bin Laden address these issues when speaking to the West because they are the most tangible and arguably the most reversible as well. There is the aforementioned conflicting evidence on the causal link between economic inequality and violent conflict as well. But we must also take into account the relevant issue of American dominance in global affairs. This alone does not cause terrorism, but when combined with what seems to many the totalitarian nature of economic and cultural globalization, of which America is clearly the most visible proselytizer, America becomes the biggest symbolic representative of these forces in public discourse. The public perception of an increasingly diminished agency, according to Dollard’s Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, therefore could incite a violent reaction in the most disenfranchised citizens of the world, who see no way out of
living in a world of injustice. To attack America therefore became a symbolic attack on modernity, secularism and consumer capitalism in the eyes of Islamists and other terrorists alike.

Conceptual Concerns

First, I will say a word on the general limitations inherent in analysis at the international systemic level. There is no one single characteristic of any level of international relations analysis that can answer for us the vital question of what creates a terrorist, and conducting analysis at the broadest possible level inherently means that we must subsume more individualized factors such as psychology into our grouped model. My paper does not seek to use generalizations in order to find the answer to this elusive question. There are many historically specific factors, such as the individuals who happen to be leading the major and minor powers of the international system, which cannot fit neatly into a formula. My thesis will, instead, analyze the question of terrorism (particularly in the context of the Cold War’s end) through the lens of both absolute and perceived notions of agency among individuals, as well as the levels of political and economic stability in the nations that had previously relied on the Soviet Union for support.

The notion that economic inequality induces political conflict in the general sense of the word is a very common one among Economists and Political Scientists. However, statistical analyses have “proven” all sorts of conflicting theories about this relationship,
as Lichbach (1989) argues. He, along with many scholars, asserts that those who have used statistical modeling in this area use an approach that is excessively inductive, "relying on sifting through masses of evidence with essentially ad hoc reasoning.” In other words, the statistical models tend not to be derived deductively from any formal theoretical model, with uniform and explicit assumptions, but rather based on what appears to the case when sifting through the data. This argument could be lobbed at statistical modelers in many fields, but it is a valid one. Nevertheless, I argue that if a model is self-coherent, that is, derived from logic and using specifications that reliably measure and operationalize each variable, Lichbach’s claim will no longer hold true.

One of the biggest problems, he argues, lies in the operationalization process. As we can see from the literature, there are many ways of defining economic inequality, and, indeed, terrorism itself. Luckily, academia has more or less converged on a general definition of the latter over time, but not so for the former. Instrumental variables are often created, such as the model Lieske (1978) used which measured “institutional discrimination” through white/nonwhite police and teacher ratios. Lichbach also points out that statistical modelers use a variety of regions in cross-national analyses, and differing time frames as well. All of these factors contribute to the fact that some studies have shown a positive relationship between economic equality and political conflict, and some a negative one. Fair and Shepherd’s (2005) survey in 14 Muslim countries showed
that “very poor respondents and those who believe that religious leaders should play a larger role in politics are less likely to support terrorism than others.”

Some theorists have argued that there is a convex relationship between inequality and conflict, where political violence occurs at extremely low and high levels of economic inequality (Havrilesky, 1980). Others, like Nagel, have suggested the opposite – a concave relationship – in which “political violence will occur most frequently at intermediate levels of economic inequality.” And, finally, some argue that there is no real relationship between the two at all, and other variables such as absolute poverty are more important. Midlarsky (1988) argues that “rarely is there a robust relationship discovered between the two variables. Equally rarely does the relationship lunge into the depths of the black hole of nonsignificance.”

Of those who operate on formal modeling or theory-building, Lichbach is equally critical. He argues that the models can logical deduce a relationship between economic inequality and discontent, but “have not linked discontent with violent behavior by the discontented.” Thus, while he criticizes many statistical models for being derived from inductive logic or ad hoc reasoning, Lichbach simultaneously condemns formal models and theories for not being tested scientifically. It seems to me that the best approach is to use inductive logic to derive our hypothesis, and then test that hypothesis using data, as long as we are extremely careful about the specifications of our model.
Next, I will briefly discuss the logic and arguments that motivate the major theoretical camps – Relative Deprivation and related theories, which are based in political economy, psychology, and sociology, as well as Rational Actor theory, which is based on the perceived marginal returns to terrorist activity.

Relative Deprivation Theories

The ancestry of the Relative Deprivation theory of what creates terrorists lies in the developments in Freudian psychoanalysis in the 1930s. It was at the end of this decade that Dollard and some of his colleagues at Yale’s Psychology department published the groundbreaking *Frustration and Aggression* (1939). In this book they argue that “…the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression.” Ted Gurr’s famous Relative Deprivation theory is a direct descendant of the Frustration-Aggression hypothesis, synthesizing it with political economy and sociological theory. Gurr (1970) argues that a “tension develops from a discrepancy between the ‘ought’ and ‘is’ of collective value satisfaction, that disposes men to violence…” He directly states that the “frustration-aggression relationship provides the psychological dynamic” for the relationship between relative deprivation and collective violence. Essentially, a feeling of frustration is caused by the perception of a personal or collective relative injustice (e.g. economic inequality, ethnic discrimination, and political
alienation), and if frustration naturally leads to aggression, then political violence will occur as a result.

One of the main problems with Gurr’s theory, which he points out himself, is that it leaves unanswered the question of where the “normative justifications” for violence come from. Lichbach (1989) also points out that there are a variety of possible mechanisms through which these justifications can arise, such as cultural forces and norms for social interaction.

Perhaps the most convincing argument that terrorism and poverty/education levels are not linked causally is from Krueger and Maleckova’s (2003) recent paper. They find little to no evidence that a reduction in poverty or an increase in educational attainment would substantially reduce terrorism. “Any connection between poverty, education and terrorism is indirect, complicated and probably quite weak,” they argue, using both micro- and macro-level, cross-national evidence. For example, they note that 33% of deceased Hezbollah fighters attended secondary school, compared with 23% of the Lebanese population aged 15-38. They qualify the income inequality argument, claiming that their results suggest “poverty and government repression interact to foment terrorism,” although their model did not find a statistically significant interaction between GDP and civil liberties/political freedom across countries.
The Rational Actor Theory

Despite what some pundits might say, the vast majority of researchers in this field would probably not write off terrorists as psychopaths, and in the case of the Rational Actor theory, they posit just the opposite. This theory, in stark contrast to the Relative Deprivation theory, assumes that individuals and groups are “self-regarding” rather than “other-regarding” (Lichbach). Its foundation lies partially in rational choice and game theory (see Rapoport, 1971), as well as Micro-theory. Essentially, Rational Actor theorists argue that terrorists, instead of looking at their situation relative to others, make their decisions whether or not to attempt violence based on their perceived marginal returns to that action. A cognitive cost-benefit calculation is made, and individuals and/or groups make their decisions based on their analysis, taking into account both uncertainty (Sandler, Tschirhart, and Cauley, 1983) and Olson’s Collective Action theory.

Thus, if the returns to an act of sabotage are perceived to be larger than the perceived costs (including the likelihood of capture/imprisonment/death), the group will act, according to Rational Actor theory. Berman (2003) uses the logic of Rational Choice modeling to argue that Hamas and other radical religious militias like the Taliban and Jewish Underground, act in accordance with the “good club” framework, and are “efficient providers of local public goods in the absence of government provision.”
Chapter 3. Data and Empirical Methods

The dependent variable (Y), the number of terrorist incidents in a given year, was taken from the ITERATE database. The International Terror: Attributes of Terrorist Events project (ITERATE) is a quantitative database that includes characteristics of transnational terrorist groups, and their attacks that have an international impact. It covers events beginning in 1968, and updated each year since then. The ITERATE data set was created by Edward F. Mickolous, Todd Sandler, Jean M. Murdock and Peter A. Flemming, and has become over time one of the most used data sets in terrorist literature.

There are a number of independent variables (X) I controlled in my model, which were culled from a few different data sets, including population and income. To control for the “political economy” effects on terrorism over time, I culled data from the Summers-Heston database, such as real gross domestic product - RGDP- and a variable comparing each country’s RGDP with that of the US each year (standardized as percentiles of US RGDP). These serve as measures of both absolute and relative poverty. This data set also includes information I used on RGDP growth rates and population levels.

The other major data set that I will be using is Freedom House’s Freedom in the World Comparative and Historical Data. Here I simply used the variables that they created for political rights and civil liberties, which are on a scale of 1-7; with 1 being the most free and 7 being the least. Political Rights is based upon a number of criteria such as
whether there are free and open elections with viable opposition parties, while the Civil Liberties variable captures questions such as whether there is freedom of the press, assembly, religion, etc. For a more detailed description of all multitudinous questions measured by each variable, see the Freedom House web site:


The group of countries that I am analyzing includes all countries that were members of NATO by 1980, as well as a cohort of 12 Middle Eastern countries – Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates. Economic data on a number of Middle Eastern countries, such as Lebanon, which was wracked by war in the 1980s, will have to be excluded because the data is incomplete, but I do not believe this will have a major effect on the results of the model. Additionally, most of the SSR’s such as Tajikistan predictably had spotty or non-existent data available before the collapse. This implies that my results may have a negative bias in terms of the effects of the collapse on the Middle East.

Tables 1-4 present the basic descriptive statistics of the data used in this thesis. They include the major variables of analysis (such as per capita GDP or population), separated by cohort, as well as the years included (1987-1990 and 1992-1998).

My analysis is based on a comparison of the frequency (or severity) of attacks in NATO countries compared with a cohort of Middle Eastern countries, before and after
the collapse (a difference-in-differences –DD- approach). My research question, therefore, is whether being a superpower, or being 

allied with one, make terrorist attacks in your home country more likely in the wake of the Cold War? Using the DD approach, I estimate whether and how much the collapse of the Soviet Union itself changed the frequency of terrorist attacks, controlling for a number of political, economic and governmental variables.

The specification for the model I estimate is as follows:

\[
Y_{it} = \alpha + X'_{it}\beta + \gamma_0 ME_i + \gamma_1 D_t + \gamma_2 MED_{it} + \epsilon_{it}
\]  

where \( Y \) is the dependent variable, 

\( X \) refers to the set of controls described (e.g. CGDP, population, etc.), 

\( ME \) is a dummy equal to 1 if the observation is in the Middle Eastern cohort, 

\( D \) is a dummy equal to 1 if the observation is from 1997-98, 

and \( MED \) is an interaction of \( ME \) and \( D \).

The dependent variable for this analysis (\( Y \)) is the number of terrorist incidents that occur in a country in a given year, using the ITERATE database. I used the years of 1987, 1988, 1997, and 1998 as a starting point, using a difference-in-differences model, and then checked for the robustness of my model using another time series model that includes all of the years from 1987-1998. The idea with the original model was to get as close as possible to the collapse, and then to have a “post-88” period of evaluation that is far away enough from the collapse. This was any effort to minimize the interference of collapse-related noise, in the model, especially during 1990-1991.
The variables of interest are M, D and MED. The coefficients on these variables describe the average level of terrorist acts in the Middle East relative to other countries ($\gamma_0$), the overall average change in the number of attacks in all included countries ($\gamma_1$), and the change in terrorist acts in Middle-Eastern countries relative to other countries during the period of analysis ($\gamma_2$). A positive parameter estimate for $\gamma_2$ would signify that terrorist incidents increased in Middle Eastern countries after 1988. The theory that US hegemony would lead to an increase in terrorism for NATO countries implies that $\gamma_2$ would be negative, while the theory that a loss of Soviet support destabilized many Middle Eastern nations and fomented terrorism implies that $\gamma_2$ should be positive.

To test the robustness of the model (as well as the logic behind the years chosen for evaluation), I also ran an identical time series model, including data from all of the years between 1987 and 1998. For this model, I created dummy variables for each of the years, and interacted them with the ME dummy I previously had created, in order to examine the trends in the ME*year interactive parameters over time. This approach is likely superior to the difference-in-differences model for the simple reason that it contains more observations, making it less likely that the D-D model is simply showing trends specific to 1987-88 or 1997-98.

The specification for this expanded DD model is:
\[ Y_{it} = \alpha + X'_{it} \beta + \gamma_0 ME_i + \sum D_t \gamma_t + \sum MED_t \delta_t + \varepsilon_{it} \]  

(2)

where \( \sum D_t \gamma_t = \gamma_{87} D_{87} + \gamma_{88} D_{88} + \ldots + \gamma_{98} D_{98} \)

and

\[ \sum ME D_t \delta_t = \delta_{87} MED_{87} + \delta_{88} MED_{88} + \ldots + \delta_{98} MED_{98} \]

A positive parameter estimate for \( \gamma \) would signify that there were a greater number of terrorist incidents in a given year than in the base year of 1987, irrespective of whether the incident occurs in a NATO country or the Middle Eastern cohort. A positive parameter estimate for \( \delta \) means that there were a greater number of terrorist incidents in the Middle Eastern cohort than in NATO countries in a given year.
Chapter 4. Results

The initial difference-in-difference in model implies the opposite of what so many of the “Unipolar Moment” scholars have predicted. In the base specification (1), the interaction variable, ME*post88, is statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.20$ level, and the model has an R-Square value of 0.1243. In the expanded DD specification (2), the ME*post88 parameter is statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.10$ level. The parameter estimate indicates that, ceteris paribus, the average country in our Middle East cohort is predicted to have about 4 more terrorist incidents in the post88 time horizon than the NATO cohort. This contradicts much of what the theoretical and qualitative literature maintains about the implications of Western dominance after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

It is also interesting to note, and this will be a recurring theme with the time series models as well, that political and civil liberties do not have a statistically significant effect on the frequency of terrorist incidents. Despite their lack of significance, with the exception of the dummy for Partially Free status of civil liberties (which has a p-value of 0.1342), 3 of the four governance parameters imply a positive relationship between civil and political freedoms and terrorism, regardless of region. The “civpartfree” parameter is 3.06, which is a substantial difference. Population, while a highly statistically significant parameter, shows a very small positive predicted change for an increase in a country’s populous, ceteris paribus.
Also interesting is the fact that the only economic variable in the first model that was statistically significant above the 0.2 level was the variable measuring CGDP as compared to that of the United States. A one percentage-point increase in a country’s per capita GDP compared with that of the US is predicted to result in a decrease of 0.14 attacks per year in the difference-in-differences model (this estimate doubles in absolute value in the time series model). While that seems small, over time, and depending on the magnitude of the attacks, this is certainly a significant number.

Next, in order to test the robustness of the original model and its assumptions, I re-ran the same variables, except in a time series model, inclusive of all years between 1987 and 1998. The first time series model I ran contained a huge outlier in the year of 1991 (see Figure 2). Because of this outlier, I excluded the year of 1991 from my final time series model. The rest of the parameters indicate a continued positive trend, which appears to start leveling off at the end of the observation period. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the MED coefficients over time for the model I used excluding 1991. Similarly, it shows a continued positive trend, except there appears to be an increase at the end of the observation period, after a couple years of leveling off.

The result was a loss of about 4 percentage points in the amount of variation explained by the model (as measured by the $R^2$ of the model). The coefficients on the interaction variables, however, all increase in their statistical significance, some by over 60 percentage points (particularly in the earlier years). A trend that emerges is that, with
the exception of 1991, there is essentially a steady increase in the disparity between the number of terrorist incidents occurring in NATO and Middle Eastern countries. With the absence of 1991 in the model, there is a clear and relatively steady upward trend in the parameter estimates, although the interaction parameters seem to begin to stabilize in the last few years. The ME*98 parameter, significant at the $\alpha$-level of 0.01, indicates that, compared with the base year 1987, countries in the Middle East cohort had an average of about 11 more terrorist incidents per year than their NATO counterparts, holding all other variables constant. The economic variables (CGDP, CGDP vs. US CGDP) as well as population were all statistically significant at the $\alpha$-level of 0.10, with the same expected signs that emerged in the original difference-in-differences model, and with nearly identical parameter estimates.
Chapter 5. Policy Implications

Despite some of the limitations on the information available on Middle Eastern countries before the collapse of the Soviet Union, both models (though the final time series model appears the most robust) provide quantitative evidence that the change in the structure of the global system from one dominated by two superpowers to one dominated by the United States and its allies resulted in an increase in terrorist activity in the Middle East compared with NATO countries. This increased level of incidents, as we saw in the time series model, grows substantively larger and more statistically significant over time, though it appears to begin to stabilize near the end of our time horizon. All of the interaction variables are significant at the $\alpha$-level of 0.05 by the end of 1993. Regardless, the year 1991 needs further study as to why it is such a distant outlier from the trends we see in the rest of the data.

With so much of the terrorism and Cold War literature being qualitative in nature, and so the bevy of methodological issues that arise when conducting quantitative analysis at the international systemic level and especially on global terrorism, one should still take these results with a dose of skepticism. The one variable that I think could have had a substantial impact on the data that I did not include was ethno-linguistic fractionalization, which has historically had a strong correlation with terrorist activity, for obvious reasons. Unfortunately, this variable, though available to use through the University of Gothenburg’s Quality of Government data sets, was only measured for one year, if that,
for each country of observation, and is therefore a static value, making it a highly unreliable measure of ethnic fractionalization for our purposes. Nevertheless, there is still some reason to believe that our results could be negatively biased, due to the fact that Soviet Socialist Republics could not be used for want of data. These countries, even more directly affected by the Soviet Union’s disintegration would likely have had little if any terrorism before the collapse, due to the fact that people were living in a police state.

Another implication that the data provides us is that socioeconomic factors, including those that capture both absolute and relative poverty, are more statistically significant predictors of the number of terrorist incidents that occur, at least in the countries we observed. This, of course, provides evidence that the simplistic argument that they “hate us for our freedom” at the very least needs to be backed by more quantitative evidence than we have seen so far. Aside from the variable for change in GDP, all of the economic and population variables were statistically significant, with the highest p-value being that of CGDP, at 0.011. Relative poverty seems to be one of the most important control variables here, as an increase of one percentage point compared with US CGDP is predicted to lead to a decrease of 0.29 terrorist incidents in a given year, \textit{ceteris paribus}.

Clearly, the data shows that the break down of the Cold War order had a more serious effect on the Middle East in terms of terrorist activity, holding all other variables constant. This supports the theories of those like the aforementioned Birthe Hansen,
rather than those who saw the collapse as a time where global frustration would be concentrated most on the US and its allies, once it become the world’s only hegemon. This does not, of course, imply that the consolidation of power had no impact on terrorism in the West. It appears, though, that the collapse of a superpower virtually next door, with the accompanying loss in military, financial, and political aid that a number of the countries had been receiving, made for a destabilizing effect on the Middle East, resulting in an increase in terrorist activity. The results, in the end, suggest that in times of a global collapse and re-distribution of power, nations who formerly relied on that power will require a drastic increase in diplomatic engagement as well as support to keep viable political and economic institutions intact.
Chapter 6. References


Mamdani, Mahmood. “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism.” American Anthropologist, Vol. 104, No. 3.


### Table 1
Descriptive Statistics - Middle East Cohort, 1987-1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3.1923</td>
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</tr>
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<td>31109.95</td>
<td>402.134</td>
<td>113975.2</td>
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<td>CGDP ($)</td>
<td>7972.51</td>
<td>6297.52</td>
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<td>CGDP as % of US CGDP</td>
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<td>30.0525</td>
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N = 48
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<td>CGDP as % of US GDP</td>
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<td>Political Rights Score</td>
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### Table 3
Descriptive Statistics - NATO Cohort, 1987-1990

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<td>Population</td>
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<td>CGDP Growth Rate (%)</td>
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<td>Civil Liberties Score</td>
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Table 4

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### Table 5: Regression Results

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<th>Explanatory Variable</th>
<th>Model 1 Base Specification</th>
<th>Model 2 DD Specification with controls</th>
<th>Model 3 Time Series Model</th>
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<td>ME</td>
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<td>CGDP Growth</td>
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<td>Adjusted R-Squared</td>
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Note: P Values are in ()
Figure 1: Visual Representation of Time Series Model Excluding 1991
Figure 2: Visual Representation of Time Series Model Including 1991