Lecture, Monday March 29: Terrorism (1)
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- This morning’s attacks: two bombs on Moscow subway, believed to be Chechen women (“black widows”).

- What is terrorism?
  - Terrorists are bad people and bad people are terrorists.
  - State department: “the term ‘terrorism’ means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents”
  - DoD: An individual who commits an act or acts of violence or threatens violence in pursuit of political, religious, or ideological objectives.
  - Hoffman’s definition: must involve violence or threat of violence, have an effect beyond immediate victims (contrast to assassination), seek to effect political change.
  - Richardson’s definition: violence or threat of violence; politically inspired; designed to send a message to the enemy, not defeat them; symbolic significance of act/victim (think WTC); substate groups, not states; victim and audience are not the same (Bloom takes this farther); deliberate targeting of civilians. (Government officials? Off duty military? Non-combat military? State department says civilians, military personnel (whether or not armed or on duty) who are not deployed in a war zone or a war-like setting.)
  - Distinguish from criminal: political goal (although terrorists can commit criminal acts, usually to fund terrorist ones – robbing banks etc.).
  - Distinguish from insurgent/guerilla fighter: very tough (DoD: “the organized use of subversion and violence by a group or movement that seeks to overthrow or force change of a governing authority”) – not a clear line, but we can draw some generalizations. Terrorist groups are more likely to be organized in cells with a weaker central authority. Insurgent/guerillas tend to look more like a military. More likely to hold territory, have a clear chain of command, even wear uniforms.
  - What makes a good definition? Is it what we think of? Is it useful? What if CIA, or Mossad, commits terrorist acts. Does distinguishing between state and nonstate groups make sense?

- Are terrorists rational?
  - Why do we care? If terrorists can be treated as rational actors, our existing theories can be applied to them. If, however, they’re simply mad men, deterrence is impossible.
  - Pape’s argument for rationality
    * Timing: occur in clusters, as part of an organized campaign, not randomly
    * Target: democracies (lower pain tolerance because of electoral accountability; free press for advertising. BUT, what about easier to influence government? And note that this only works for medium cost, medium concessions – too much pain and you get a backlash; too big a demand and will not give in).
* Goal: territorial concessions – establish a homeland – high cost strategy is worth it if very valuable goal, and what’s more valuable than a homeland?
* Increase in response to success
  – Distinguish between those that plan attacks and those that carry out attacks, esp. suicide attacks

- Strategies of terrorism
  – Coercion: can’t hope to actually defeat the enemy, but can cause them pain, convince them that pain will keep coming/costs will keep rising as long as enemy does not withdraw/change/etc. Perceived randomness and targeting of civilians increases fear.
  – Provoke backlash: Some of the population is radicalized (terrorists and terrorist supporters), but some (most likely majority) are not – do not see enemy as enemy, or as big threat, or extreme methods as necessary or justified. It is to the radicals advantage to convert these moderates into radicals – to strengthen radical movement, or for political gain. Radicals can then use terrorism to provoke a (disproportional) backlash, which works to radicalize the moderates.
  – Spoiler: Not all members of terrorist group are the same – some are willing to compromise/negotiate and some are not. When a negotiation is reached, it is (by definition) with the moderates. Agreement is reached with the understanding that it will be kept – that what the moderates say will hold. Radicals don’t want compromise made. So once agreement is reached, radicals increase attacks in order to commit other party that the moderates don’t speak for the group/can’t keep their promises. This is one explanation for why we see an increase in attacks just after an agreement is reached.
  – Outbidding: strongest group gets to be the legitimate representative of the people. Audience might be those people, rather than the enemy.

- Suicide terrorism
  – Strategic reasons (instrumental): suicide bombers can get closer to targets, can improvise, etc. EXAMPLE Tamil Tigers (LTTE, 1987-recent, Sri Lanka). “Black tigers” were suicide troops, but death not goal of mission, just acceptable way to accomplish missions. Coming back alive (and thus able to carry out more missions) is also acceptable. Carry cyanide pills and encouraged to commit suicide rather than be captured, but more practical than expressive – torture likely.
  – Demonstrative (norm violation): suicide is taboo/shocking in many cultures, so use is deliberate (can also be strategic reasons for using suicide bombers). If death IS goal, then intrinsic use of suicide. But more likely on continuum between instrumental (LTTE) and intrinsic (self-immolators).
  – There is a difference between (near) certainty of death and intention of death. Compare to war-time heroism.
  – Note difference between suicide and martyrdom. Both Christianity and Islam forbid suicide, but martyrdom is acceptable, even praised.
  – Generally only a small part of overall strategy (though possibly most noticeable), and used after non-suicide tactics have failed (second conflicts)
What affects the likelihood of using suicide missions? Think of IRA, ETA, which do not. Relies on volunteers (FARC tried to fly plane into Uribe’s (Columbia) presidential palace, but couldn’t find a pilot). If community conditions aren’t too bad, will be hard to find willing people. If the group relies on the community for support and/or protection, will only use suicide missions if community is roughly as radicalized as a group. Therefore, see suicide missions when group has strong community backing (LTTE, Hamas) or little connection to community (19th century anarchists), but not when heavily reliant on moderate population (IRA, ETA).

Suicide bombers tend to be firmly entrenched in the group – see their deaths as martyrdom, altruistic.

Female suicide bombers – rare but growing more prevalent.

* 1980-2003, 20% of LTTE, 60% of Chechens, 71% of PKK.
* Tend to be secular groups BUT growing in Islamic ones (Chechen women → Hamas.)
* Generally treated as anomic (reaction to abrupt change – death of loved one, esp. child or husband, rape) rather than altruistic.
* Some belief about reclaiming honor – alternative to plain suicide if they have no male support, divorced, infertile, victims of rape.
* But anomic → altruistic is path of understanding of male suicide bombers – should women be treated differently?
* May be strategic reasons for using women – traditionally viewed as less violent/dangerous, so less likely to arouse suspicion, can get closer to targets. Also attract more sympathy/attention to cause.

Religion and terror – what role does religion play? What else can play that role?

Islam is the only religion directly involved with suicide attacks, but less than half of suicide missions are Islamic. 1981-2003, 165 Islamic missions, 257 secular ones (deadliest: LTTE).

Placing self above/beyond earthly/man-made laws/taboos/norms

Placing self in context of something larger/longer, something after your own life ends

Motivational tool/organizer tool of logisticians, way to keep focused and separate from outside influences

Nationalism (French Revolution)? Non-religious ideological or political motivation (Communism, leftist European groups such as the Baader-Meinhof gang, PKK is ethnonationalist, LTTE is atheist)?