Do Terrorists Win? Rebels' Use of Terrorism and Civil War Outcomes

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Abstract How effective is terrorism? This question has generated lively scholarly debate and is of obvious importance to policy-makers. However, most existing studies of terrorism are not well equipped to answer this question because they lack an appropriate comparison. This article compares the outcomes of civil wars to assess whether rebel groups that use terrorism fare better than those who eschew this tactic. I evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of terrorism relative to other tactics used in civil war. Because terrorism is not a tactic employed at random, I first briefly explore empirically which groups use terrorism. Controlling for factors that may affect both the use of terrorism and war outcomes, I find that although civil wars involving terrorism last longer than other wars, terrorist rebel groups are generally less likely to achieve their larger political objectives than are nonterrorist groups. Terrorism may be less ineffective against democracies, but even in this context, terrorists do not win.

How effective is terrorism? This question has generated lively scholarly debate and is of obvious importance to policy-makers. However, most existing studies of terrorism are not well equipped to answer this question for a simple reason—they lack an appropriate comparison. Few studies of terrorism have compared conflicts in which terrorism is used with those in which it is not. This article examines the outcomes of civil wars to assess whether rebel groups that use terrorism fare better than those who eschew this tactic.[1] I argue that terrorism is not a particularly effective tactic for winning outright, nor for obtaining concessions at the bargaining table. On balance, terrorists undermine rather than enhance their military effectiveness by attacking civilians indiscriminately. If it does not help rebels achieve their ultimate political goals, one might reasonably ask why rebels ever employ terrorism? A second finding of this research provides a possible answer. Wars in which terrorism is

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1. This study examines only rebels' use of terrorism, not governments' use of such tactics (state terrorism), thus sidestepping the question of whether the definition of terrorism should be limited to nonstate actors.

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used last longer than others, suggesting that terrorism enhances rebel organizations' survival. Rebels thus appear to face a dilemma: what helps them survive comes at the expense of the larger political goals for which they ostensibly fight.

In the next section I review the literature and debate over the effectiveness of terrorism and argue that civil wars provide a fruitful testing ground for evaluating the relative success of terrorism. I then present definitions and explain how "terrorist" rebel groups are distinguished from others, as well as how I use war outcomes to gauge "success." Next I examine the strategic uses of terrorism to evaluate theoretically its advantages and disadvantages, and to generate hypotheses about its effects on war outcomes. In the following section I discuss how selection effects and endogeneity issues affect this study. After describing the data, I turn to empirical findings. I take a brief detour to look at terrorism as a dependent variable to address endogeneity concerns and then return to the main analysis of the effect of terrorism on war outcomes. The data support hypotheses that although civil wars involving terrorism last longer than other wars, terrorist rebel groups are less likely than those who eschew terrorism to achieve outright victory or concessions at the negotiating table. Terrorism may be somewhat less ineffective against democracies, but even in this context, terrorists do not win.

State of the Debate

A number of authors have argued that terrorism works. Pape, for example, argues that suicide terrorism is on the rise because terrorists have learned that it pays, generating "gains for the terrorists' political cause" about half the time.[2] Similarly, Kydd and Walter argue that terrorism more generally "is a form of costly signaling" and that "terrorism often works."[3] Thomas argues that terrorism gives rebels the "power to hurt," inducing governments to negotiate and make concessions.[4] Some scholars suggest that although terrorism can sometimes backfire and effects may be nonlinear, it is, on balance, effective.[5]

Others, however, maintain that terrorism is not particularly effective. Abrahms argues that the prevailing view of terrorism as a potent coercive strategy rests on scant empirical footing, and that campaigns of violence that primarily target civilians almost never succeed.[6] Jones and Libicki conclude that "there is rarely a causal link between the use of terrorism and the achievement of [group] goals."[7] Merari and

2. Pape 2003, 351. Pape is ambiguous on whether his argument applies to terrorism more broadly, arguing that suicide terrorism is to terrorism as lung cancer is to cancer—a particularly virulent strain. Author discussion with Pape, 11 November 2010; and Pape and Feldman 2010.
3. Kydd and Walter 2006, 49–50.
4. Thomas 2014, 807–9.
5. See Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007; Gould and Klor 2010; and Wood and Kathman 2014.
6. See Abrahms 2005, 2006, 43, and 2012.
7. Jones and Libicki 2008, 32–33.

Cronin both argue that, although terrorist groups may achieve partial or tactical (for example, recruitment) objectives, they almost never achieve their strategic goals in full.[8]

Some of this debate hinges on what one counts as success: only full achievement of the group's goals, or any political concession, or achievement of intermediate goals meant eventually to help a group achieve its goals?—an issue I return to below.[9] Whether terrorism is considered effective also depends on what the chances of success, however defined, are if terrorism is not used. Not surprisingly, terrorists achieve higher levels of success when groups have limited objectives that do not impinge on the core interests of the target state.[10] So perhaps terrorism only "works" when achieving political change is relatively easy. Success rates cannot be judged without some sort of context.

Claims that terrorism "works" or "does not work" reflect a causal argument; that terrorism leads, or does not lead, to political change in favor of the group using it. Implicit in any causal argument is an argument about variation: using terrorism leads to more change (or no more change) than not using terrorism. But few empirical studies examine variation on the independent variable; most look only at terrorist organizations, with no comparison with otherwise similar groups that do not use terrorism.[11]

I use data on civil wars to introduce variation. Civil wars represent a universe of cases in which a group has a serious enough perceived grievance against the state to launch a violent rebellion in which some groups choose to use terrorism as part of their repertoire of tactics whereas others do not. Data on civil wars are relatively well developed, allowing me to explore and control for a number of factors that are likely to affect both this tactical choice and the outcome I wish to explain.

The study of terrorism and the study of civil wars have generally proceeded in isolation from one another.[12] However, if one thinks of prominent cases such as the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the PLO or Hamas in Palestine, the IRA in Northern Ireland, the PKK in Turkey, or the MNLF and MILF in the Philippines, it is clear that much terrorism takes place in the context of civil war. Indeed, the vast majority—75 to 85 percent by most estimates—of all terrorism is domestic.[13] This article merges insights from the two literatures.

This raises the thorny question of the definition of terrorism, however, because some scholars maintain that in the Venn diagram of political violence, terrorism and civil war do not overlap, whereas for others they overlap completely.

8. See Merari 1993, 238–39; and Cronin 2009, 11. See also Acosta 2014.
9. See Krause 2013.
10. See Jones and Libicki 2008, 34; Abrahms 2006, 53–54; and Pape 2003, 355.
11. Wood and Kathman 2014; and Thomas 2014 are exceptions. Abrahms's work is a partial exception, however because he examines only groups designated as "foreign terrorist organizations" by the US State Department, variation on the independent variable is truncated.
12. Exceptions include Sambanis 2008; Findley and Young 2012a; and Boulden 2009.
13. See Enders, Sandler, and Gaibulloev 2011, 323; LaFree and Dugan 2007, 187; and Asal and Rethemeyer 2008a, 447.

Definitions

"Terrorist" Rebel Groups

Defining terrorism is notoriously difficult; as the cliché goes, one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter, and this is particularly true in the context of civil wars. Because it is such a loaded term, its definition is highly contested.[14] I define *terrorist rebel groups* as those who employ a systematic campaign of indiscriminate violence against public civilian targets to influence a wider audience. The ultimate aim of this type of violence is to coerce the government to make political concessions, up to and including conceding outright defeat. This definition allows for distinctions among rebel groups and does not include in the definition other variables whose relationship to terrorism I wish to examine.[15]

For many scholars of terrorism, though by no means all,[16] a defining characteristic of terrorism is that it deliberately attacks civilians.[17] This distinguishes terrorism from "normal" rebel attacks on military targets. However, civilian targeting is ubiquitous; almost all rebel groups (and almost all governments involved in civil wars) target individuals as a form of "control" to force cooperation and deter civilians from providing aid to the opponent.[18] Violence against civilians is thus too broad a criterion by itself to distinguish terrorist rebel groups from others. Moreover, this type of selective violence against civilians to punish or deter collaboration with the other side is not what most people think of when they think of "terrorism."

By narrowing the definition to deliberately indiscriminate violence, I exclude this more common form of violence and focus on that which makes terrorism so terrifying: its randomness; and so outrageous: the intentional targeting of innocent civilians (as opposed to collaborators). This definition also captures what the literature often refers to as the "symbolic" nature of terrorism: that it aims not to influence the victims of the violence but to send a political message to a wider audience.[19] Stanton distinguishes strategies of "coercion" from the above-mentioned control by focusing on the "the use of violence as a means of forcing the opponent to take a particular desired action—to agree to negotiations, to reduce its war aims, to make concessions, to surrender." This strategy is "intended not to coerce civilians themselves,

14. McCormick 2003, 473. For a good discussion of definitions, see Merari 1993.

15. Some draw a distinction, often based on group size or strength or even the regime type of the opponent, between terrorism and guerrilla warfare or insurgency. These definitions exclude all rebel groups, and preclude the examination of the relationship, for example, between terrorism and group strength. See Schmid and Jongman 1988, especially 13–18; Silke 1996; Cronin 2006, 31–32; and Sambanis 2008.

16. Many definitions in the literature are so broad as arguably to encompass all rebel groups in all civil wars. Indeed, much of the terrorism literature could easily substitute *rebellion* or *insurgency* for *terrorism*. See, for example, Hoffman 2006, 40.

17. Cronin 2003, 32–33.

18. See Stanton 2009, 31. Kydd and Walter 2006, 66–69, refer to this as "intimidation." See also Kalyvas 2006.

19. See Crenshaw 1981, 379; and McCormick 2003, 474.

but to coerce *the opponent* into making concessions."[20] An attack on a public market, for example, is intended to influence the government, not shoppers.

Stanton's strategies of "destabilization" and "cleansing," which she distinguishes from coercion, also sound like terrorism to some degree. These involve attacks on civilians intended to destabilize a country or to force people to flee by terrorizing the population. However, Stanton's operational coding of these strategies involve massacres and "scorched earth" campaigns (burning homes and crops), which, although terrifying to their victims are farther from our intuitive understanding of terrorism than the indiscriminate attacks she codes under coercion.[21] Thus, not all who "terrify" a population are "terrorist" as I use the term here—groups such as the RUF in Sierra Leone or the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda are not coded as terrorist under my definition, for example. Some terrorist groups (such as the FMLN or the IRA, depending on one's political leanings) might thus be considered morally preferable to some nonterrorist groups.[22] Indeed, it is important not to let judgments of the morality of a group's cause influence the use of the term *terrorism*.

War Outcomes and Relative Success

Civil wars end in one of four ways: either the government or the rebels win outright, or they reach a peace agreement of some sort, or the rebellion peters out. These possibilities can be thought of as representing a continuum of success for the rebel group. Government victory and rebel victory obviously lie at opposite ends of this continuum, as depicted in Figure 1. Peace agreements represent a second-best outcome from the rebels' perspective. Agreements entail concessions and compromise by both sides, but since rebels fight to change the status quo, whereas governments fight to maintain it, government concessions represent at least partial political victory for rebels. Moreover, agreements require the government to accept rebels as legitimate negotiating partners, itself a significant concession. Indeed, many civil wars coded as ending in an agreement could easily be considered rebel victories in political if not military terms. For example, the peace agreement between South Africa and the ANC represented the fulfillment of that group's primary goal, the end of apartheid.[23]

20. See Stanton 2009, 34–35, emphasis in the original. In more recent work, Stanton refers to this strategy as "terrorism." Stanton 2013.

21. Ibid., 8–9, 90–93. Some of the groups that engage in these strategies also engage in coercion (Stanton's strategies are not mutually exclusive), so are captured under my definition in any case. Investigating the causes and effectiveness of these other types of strategies of violence against civilians is beyond the scope of this article.

22. On the relative morality of terrorism, see Crenshaw 1983, 3; and Merari 1993, 227–31.

23. Some agreements are reached when rebels are largely defeated (for example, the RUF in Sierra Leone), but in the vast majority of cases, agreements represent political gains for the rebels. Terrorism is also sometimes used to prevent agreements between the government and another more moderate group (see my discussion on spoiling). Kydd and Walter 2002. However, an agreement represents a relatively successful outcome for the group that negotiates it.

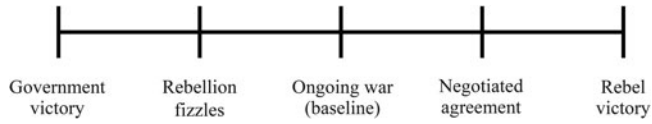

FIGURE 1. *A Continuum of rebel political success*

Second worst from the rebels' perspective are wars that end when a formerly full-scale rebellion fizzles out with violence ending or dropping to such low levels that the conflict is no longer considered ongoing. Although the rebel group may still exist, it is not causing much trouble at this low level of violence. Most rebellions in this category have been largely defeated, though not eliminated outright.[24] Examples include Sendero Luminoso in Peru, which ended its fight after the capture of its leader; and the MQM in Pakistan, which "decided to pursue a peaceful strategy rather than a violent one" after the Pakistani military dealt "a serious blow to the militants."[25]

Scholars in the effectiveness debate differ on how to treat conflicts that have not yet ended. Should ongoing conflict count as failure because rebels have not yet achieved their goals,[26] or success because they have avoided defeat?[27] In relation to a group's ultimate political objectives, one can treat ongoing conflict as a baseline category of intermediate success; neither side has been able to defeat the other, no significant concessions have been agreed to, and the rebels continue to inflict pain on the country. However, rebel groups are organizations, and as such they seek to survive.[28] Ongoing war therefore represents success on that dimension. As I shall show, the goals of political change and organizational survival may be in tension.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Terrorism

Terrorism has both advantages and disadvantages. I argue that the advantages tend to help rebels survive rather than to win, whereas the disadvantages make it harder for terrorists to achieve political concessions or to win outright. Much of the literature considers the usefulness of terrorism in isolation. The implicit comparison is thus effectiveness relative to doing nothing. But how effective is terrorism relative to other tactics a rebel organization could employ? All rebel groups attack military targets;

24. Some conflicts admittedly fizzle out because rebel demands have been partially met (for example, de facto autonomy for Kurds in Iraq after the Persian Gulf War). However, in most low/no activity cases, rebels were all but defeated militarily, making this category a reasonable proxy.
25. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009b, 350.
26. Abrahms 2006.
27. Jones and Libicki 2008.
28. See Wilson 1974, 10; and Acosta 2014.

terrorist rebel groups, as defined here, are distinguished by the fact that they also purposively attack civilians indiscriminately to influence a wider audience.[29]

There are several potential audiences to consider. The primary audience is the government, which rebels hope to induce to make concessions or to give up the fight. There are also secondary audiences, those whose support rebels attempt to win, and those rebels hope to induce to put pressure on the government. Within the country, there is an "aggrieved" population on whose behalf the rebel organization claims to fight.[30] There are also civilians on the other side of the conflict—those who support the government or generally consent to be governed by it. For lack of a better term, I refer to this group as the "mainstream." It includes both those who benefit from and support the state and its use of violence against the rebel group and "fence-sitters." Finally, there are international audiences—particularly those (great or regional powers, neighboring states, relevant diasporas) in a position to aid or pressure either side of the conflict.

Terrorism has obvious disadvantages as a military tactic. Attacking civilians indiscriminately in public places is not useful for taking or holding territory or the capital. It is thus much less effective than other tactics for winning outright. Unlike attacks on the government's military forces, or even other types of attacks on civilians (such as ethnic cleansing of territory, or attacks to prevent collaboration with the enemy), indiscriminate attacks on public targets such as markets or buses have no direct military value.

The terrorism literature identifies a number of less direct ways through which it is thought to "work." These include (1) attrition, (2) advertising the cause, (3) provocation, (4) outbidding, and (5) spoiling.[31] Of these, attrition is arguably the most important because it entails the most direct (or least indirect) link between rebel actions and the achievement of political goals. The other strategies aim at intermediate goals, including mobilizing support, and/or preserving organizational survival, often in competition among groups claiming to represent the same aggrieved population. I discuss each of these strategies in turn, considering both the advantages and disadvantages of terrorism for the rebels' larger military effort.[32]

Attrition

Terrorism is used as part of an attrition strategy, meant to inflict pain on the other side so as to undermine the adversary's will, rather than its capacity, to fight.[33] However,

29. Terrorist groups may also attack civilians in other more discriminating ways, as discussed earlier (for example, to punish collaboration with the enemy). Groups that attack only civilians and no military targets do not reach the threshold of civil war—on selection effects, see section on selection effects.

30. Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007, 369.

31. See Kydd and Walter 2006; Thornton 1964; and Crenshaw 1981 and 2011. Kydd and Walter also discuss intimidation, which as I explained is not considered terrorism in this study.

32. See also Goodwin 2006, especially 2038.

33. See Pape 2003, 346; and Kydd and Walter 2006. See also Arreguín-Toft 2001, especially 105.

terrorist attacks are not the only way to fight a war of attrition. Insurgency or guerrilla warfare tactics classically employ hit-and-run attacks to dog the adversary's forces and undermine its will to continue the fight. Unlike other forms of insurgency, terrorism, by definition, does not target military forces, and thus does not degrade the government's military capacity.

Terrorist attacks do entail some advantages in their sheer ability to inflict pain in a cost-effective manner. It is less costly (in material terms) to attack "soft" civilian targets than "hard" military ones. Because terrorism attacks targets that are inherently hard to defend, preventing every single attack is difficult. As Condoleeza Rice described counterterrorism efforts (paraphrasing the IRA): "They only have to be right once. We have to be right 100 percent of the time."[34] It takes relatively few people to organize and carry out a terrorist attack, making full elimination of terrorist groups difficult; mere remnants can continue to inflict damage.

Terrorism is also a relatively cheap way to impose costs on civilians such that the mainstream population pressures its government to give in to terrorist demands. There is some evidence that this can be effective, up to a point,[35] perhaps particularly so in democracies (see hypothesis 4). However, terrorism can also induce pressure on the government not to concede by rallying the mainstream population around the flag. Moreover, many governments have a stated policy never to negotiate with terrorists. This is often observed only in the breach, and governments are always reluctant to negotiate with and grant concessions to any rebel group. The rhetoric of nonnegotiation with terrorists can nonetheless make it especially politically difficult to do so.

Terrorism is also thought to be a communication device, meant to signal strength and resolve, to convince the opponent that the war of attrition will be long and costly.[36] Compared with not attacking at all, terrorism may indeed be effective as a costly signal, but compared with attacks against the military, the effectiveness of terrorism as a signal of resolve is unclear at best, whereas terrorism signals weakness rather than strength.

Terrorism signals a willingness to use extreme tactics that violate widely held norms and this may be interpreted as a signal of resolve. However, extremism and resolve are not necessarily the same thing. Willingness to attack civilians signals willingness to impose these costs in the future. To the extent that the government cares more about the loss of civilian life than the loss of soldiers' lives, this may provide a signaling advantage to terrorist tactics.

There are also downsides to sending such signals, however. By deliberately violating the norm against targeting noncombatants, terrorists place themselves beyond the pale, painting themselves as untrustworthy—likely to break their promises rather than abide by a negotiated agreement.[37] The targets of terrorism may also infer from the

34. Quoted in Nina Easton, "Condi: The Should-Be Face of the GOP," *Fortune* (Internet ed.), 22 September 2009.
35. Gould and Klor 2010.
36. See Kydd and Walter 2006, 59–60; Merari 1993; and Wood and Kathman 2014.
37. Bapat 2006, 214.

extreme nature of the tactics used that the groups' demands are also extreme; that terrorists seek to destroy their society.[38] Opponents will therefore view negotiations as an act of appeasement. Use of extreme tactics may credibly signal resolve to carry on the fight, but it undermines the credibility of promises to reward concessions with peace.

Terrorism can also make it harder for rebels to accept concessions. Terrorist rebel groups may be particularly suspicious of the government in any potential negotiations to end the conflict. This may be, in part, because of a selection effect if only particularly hardline groups choose terrorist tactics. But it could also be induced by this choice. Having committed terrorist attacks, rebels may not believe that they will be accepted into a peaceful postwar political order.[39] Government promises of amnesty or of a power-sharing role for rebels may therefore not be credible to terrorist rebel groups. Mistrust and problems of credible commitment plague all civil wars,[40] but terrorism makes them even worse. For a number of reasons, then, signaling extremism can make one's would-be negotiating partner less, rather than more, willing to make political concessions.

As a signal of strength, moreover, terrorist attacks are clearly inferior. Despite the empirical (non)finding presented shortly, the deeply embedded conventional wisdom is that terrorism is a "weapon of the weak." To be credible, signals have to be costly. Precisely because it is less costly to attack "soft" civilian targets than hardened military ones, terrorism signals military impotence rather than strength.

In sum, terrorism is a cheap way to inflict costs in a war of attrition, and is hard to eliminate fully, fostering organizational survival. On the other hand, it creates pressures on the government not to concede, and its very affordability undermines its value as a credible signal.

Rebellion, particularly insurgency or guerrilla warfare, as Mao famously stressed, requires a supportive population.[41] Though Mao would disagree, the terrorism literature generally maintains that terrorism is a strategy used to mobilize support.[42] Do indiscriminate attacks on civilians enhance or undermine popular support?[43]

Advertising the Cause

One way terrorism is thought to mobilize support is by publicizing grievances—"propaganda of the deed"—to put the cause on the political agenda.[44] Because they are more

38. Abrahms 2012, 22.
39. This can make terrorism a self-perpetuating tactic. Laitin and Shapiro 2008, 222–23.
40. Walter 2002.
41. Mao 1937. See also Arreguín-Toft 2001, 104.
42. See, for example, Pape 2003; Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007; and DeNardo 1985.
43. To my knowledge, there is no empirical work supporting the contention that terrorism mobilizes support more effectively than other forms of resistance.
44. See Crenshaw 2011, 118; and Thornton 1964, 82–83.

outrageous, terrorist attacks usually generate more publicity than attacks against the military. This attention can create a sense of urgency about resolving a political issue.

At whom is such a strategy aimed? Publicizing grievances probably plays less of a role in situations that have escalated to the level of civil war than in lower-level conflicts. In civil wars, both the aggrieved and the mainstream population are already aware of the grievances. Terrorism can, however, publicize grievances to international audiences; or in some conflicts over secession or autonomy, to advertise the plight of an aggrieved population whose lives are quite remote to citizens in other parts of the country.

The disadvantages of targeting civilians to generate their support are obvious. Those who see such attacks as justified given their view of the righteousness of the cause, are those most likely already to support the rebellion. Terrorism "preaches to the choir." Those potential supporters who remain to be mobilized—less radical or politicized members of the aggrieved population, "fence-sitters," and the international community—are more likely to feel revulsion at the taking of innocent life.[45] Moreover, as Abrahms argues, the publicity gained by terrorism often focuses on the "senseless" or irrational nature of the violence rather than the grievances or demands the terrorist group wishes to make.[46] In the battle for legitimacy and "hearts and minds," terrorism is counterproductive.[47]

Provocation

The literature also suggests that terrorism can be used to mobilize support by provoking the state to overreact.[48] This strategy hopes to induce the government to crack down on the aggrieved population, creating new grievances and exacerbating old ones, causing an increase in support for the rebel organization. Because they violate norms of warfare, terrorist attacks may be more likely than attacks on military targets to provoke an overreaction. However, using terrorism for this purpose is risky for two reasons. First, successful provocation requires that the aggrieved will blame the government for the crackdown, rather than the rebel group that provoked it.[49] Second, by attacking civilians, terrorist attacks make it easier for the government to justify—both domestically and internationally—draconian measures to crush the rebellion. The opprobrium directed against a government that employs extreme

45. The international reaction may be particularly pronounced after 11 September 2001 and the US-led strengthening of the norm against terrorism.

46. Abrahms 2012, 21.

47. Cronin 2009, 93. Stephan and Chenoweth 2008 argue that violence in general decreases legitimacy and discourages broad-based participation.

48. See Kydd and Walter 2006, especially 69–72; Lake 2002; and Crenshaw 2011, 119.

49. Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson suggest that the aggrieved cannot credibly threaten to punish "extremists" for provoking the government's crackdown because the crackdown itself (by diminishing economic opportunities) makes the population inclined toward direct struggle. Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007, 375. But why should the population react to diminished opportunities brought on by the conflict by choosing to continue it, rather than settle?

measures will be lower when it is fighting a terrorist rebel group than a nonterrorist rebel group.[50] For provocation to work, the rebels must be able to goad the government into a "middling level of brutality."[51] A government strongly committed to human rights is difficult to provoke, whereas one willing to employ extreme brutality in its fight will be able to wipe out the rebels and the constituency they claim to represent.[52] In this Goldilocks equation, terrorism may induce governments to move from "too soft" to "just right," but can also make governments "too hard," allowing them to justify measures to crush the rebels rather than creating a backlash of support in their favor.

Outbidding

Terrorism is thought useful as a means of competing with other rival groups that claim to represent the same aggrieved population. Outbidding is intended to mobilize popular support for a group by demonstrating commitment to the cause and ability to fight for the interests of the aggrieved.[53] But why should the aggrieved population support groups that use terrorism over those who do not? Kydd and Walter respond that it is advantageous to be represented by an agent who will drive a harder bargain than oneself, and extreme tactics signal a tougher negotiating stance.[54] This argument discounts the cost of continued conflict to the aggrieved population, however. Supporting a group whose reservation price is higher than one's own by definition rules out settlements one would prefer to ongoing conflict. If one fears the government will never compromise (Kydd and Walter's second answer), then one should prefer not a more extreme agent, but a militarily more competent one. Given that terrorism signals military weakness rather than strength, it is unclear how attacking civilians rather than military targets might win political support.[55] Although competition among groups and factions is undoubtedly an important motive for rebel behavior, it is questionable how terrorism serves these competitive purposes better than other tactics.

Spoiling

Spoiling is another manifestation of competition among rebel groups. It occurs when a more extreme group is threatened by the prospect of peace between the government

50. Hence the attempt by almost all governments to label rebels as "terrorists" whether they employ terrorist tactics or not.
51. Kydd and Walter 2006, 70.
52. Arreguín-Toft 2001, 109.
53. Bloom 2005.
54. Kydd and Walter 2006.
55. Terrorist attacks are likely to signal lack of popular support to the aggrieved, rather than strength. Laitin and Shapiro 2008, 216.

and a more moderate group. By launching a terrorist attack and inducing doubt about the moderates' ability or willingness to control terrorism, extremists can derail peace.[56] This can help ensure the survival of an extremist group that might otherwise become obsolete in the face of peace. Spoilers presumably hope for an eventual outcome more favorable to their cause than the one moderates were willing to accept, but spoiling does nothing to ensure this more favorable outcome rather than a less favorable one. Terrorism driven by spoiling thus contributes to survival but does nothing to help a group achieve its political goals.

Hypotheses

This evaluation of the pros and cons of terrorism relative not to inaction but to other types of attacks (notably attacks on military targets), leads to several hypotheses. On balance, terrorism generally undermines military effectiveness. It has no direct value for winning the war outright; it does not degrade the government's military capability, nor can it be used to take and hold territory. It is a cheap way to inflict costs on the enemy and may help signal resolve, but its low cost also signals weakness. It may help advertise the cause, but it also drives potential supporters away. It can provoke a government into self-destructive overreaction, but it can also help the government justify draconian measures in their fight against rebels.

H1: Terrorist rebels are less likely than nonterrorist rebels to achieve military victory.

Terrorism also makes the second-best outcome for rebels less likely. Governments will grant fewer concessions to a less militarily effective opponent. Moreover, rebels' use of extreme tactics makes it harder for the government to negotiate an agreement and exacerbates the problems of trust and credible commitment that plague all civil wars.

H2: Rebels using terrorism are less likely than those who eschew terrorism to achieve negotiated settlements.

There are, however, some advantages to terrorism for organizational survival. Terrorist rebel groups are hard to eliminate entirely, and spoiling can prevent peace with more moderate groups from making extremist groups obsolete. For both these reasons, and because terrorism prevents negotiated settlements that would otherwise end the war more quickly, terrorism should increase civil war duration.

56. Kydd and Walter 2002.

H3: Wars involving terrorist rebels are likely to last longer than those involving nonterrorist rebels.

I argue that terrorism is, on balance, ineffective for achieving political goals. But there are several reasons to think that terrorism might be relatively more effective against democracies than against autocracies. First, democratic governments are likely more sensitive to civilian loss of life.[57] If terrorism works by inflicting pain on civilians who then pressure their government to make concessions, then it stands to reason that the more accountable the government is to popular pressure, the more likely this strategy will work.

Second, democracies are thought to have trouble repressing or preventing and policing terrorist groups.[58] Because they start on the "soft" end of the spectrum, democracies should be more likely provoked into the "just right" level of brutality discussed earlier, whereas nondemocracies will be provoked into a response that is "too hard" and that brutally but effectively represses rebellion.

Terrorism may also be less likely to backfire by undermining support among the aggrieved when its victims are seen as "complicitous" in government policy because they have voted the government into power in democratic elections.[59]

H4: Terrorism will be more effective against democratic governments than against nondemocratic governments.

Selection and Potential Confounders

Because I look at the use of terrorism only in the context of civil wars, this study does not cover all terrorist organizations, raising issues of selection bias. The analysis excludes transnational terrorist groups that attack primarily across borders rather than in their home state.[60] It also excludes organizations involved in conflicts that do not meet the standard 1,000 battle death threshold of a civil war.[61] The smallest and weakest groups are thus excluded.[62] Focusing on the deadliest groups is

57. See Stanton 2009; and Heger 2010.

58. See Cronin 2006, 31; Crenshaw 1981, 383; Pape 2003, 349–50; and Eubank and Weinberg 1994. But see also Lyall 2010.

59. Goodwin 2006, 2027.

60. It is not clear what the equivalent nonterrorist actors would be for a comparison with transnational terrorist groups.

61. Battle deaths exclude civilian deaths, so this could in theory exclude highly lethal terrorist groups that did not also engage in significant attacks on military targets. I checked the Global Terrorism Database to ensure that no domestic terrorist group responsible for 1,000 deaths was omitted from the study. LaFree and Dugan 2007.

62. In some terrorism databases, the majority of "terrorist" groups have never killed anyone. See Asal and Rethemeyer 2008b; and Sánchez-Cuenca and de la Calle 2009, 35.

defensible on policy grounds and is necessary for empirical comparison with nonterrorist groups. It does, however, limit generalizability because I evaluate terrorism by only groups capable of mounting civil war, not terrorism relative to other options for those without this capability. The notion that terrorism is used only by those with no other option is belied, however, by the terrorist rebel groups examined in this study, who by definition can mount a civil war.

The selection of organizations involved in civil wars likely overrepresents ethnonationalist organizations, which are more likely to have clear political or territorial goals that are more easily negotiable than the goals of other types of terrorist organizations.[63] The data used here also exclude coups,[64] which are quite unlikely to involve terrorism and which may be more often successful than other types of rebellion. All of these selection issues bias the study toward finding terrorism successful, and against my own argument.

The temporal bounds of the data used in this study (post–1989) do not cover the era of decolonization, and therefore exclude a set of highly successful rebellions; virtually all of these cases led to independence. Some notable cases of terrorist success (for example, Algeria) are thus omitted. If terrorism was used disproportionally in anticolonial wars of this era (an open empirical question), excluding this era will bias the results away from finding terrorism effective. On the other hand, anticolonial struggles enjoyed particular legitimacy; relationships in that era may not apply to more recent conflicts.

Arguably more important as a concern than selection bias are the thorny issues of endogeneity and spuriousness for although terrorism inflicts random violence, it is not a tactic chosen at random. To assess its effectiveness accurately, I must therefore pay particular attention to any variables that might affect both the use of terrorism and the outcome of the war. The literature on the causes of terrorism, particularly on why terrorism appears in some places rather than others, suggests several potential confounders. I explore the relationships between these factors and the use of terrorism in greater depth elsewhere, but I discuss them briefly here.[65]

The most obvious potential confounding variable is the strength of the rebel group relative to the government. If, as is commonly asserted, terrorism is a "weapon of the weak,"[66] failure to take this into account will make terrorism look less effective than it really is.

The relationship between democracy and terrorism has generated significant theoretical and empirical debate.[67] Many see a positive relationship between democracy

63. Cronin 2003, 39–40.
64. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009a.
65. Fortna 2014.
66. Among many examples, see Crenshaw 1981, 387; McCormick 2003, 483; Merari 1993, 231; Pape 2003, 349; Sánchez-Cuenca and de la Calle 2009; and DeNardo 1985, 230. Little empirical work has tested this conventional wisdom directly, however. The few existing studies come to contradictory conclusions. See Stanton 2009 and 2013; Goodwin 2006; and Metelits 2010.
67. For a good overview, see Chenoweth 2010 and 2013.

and terrorism, in part because terrorism is thought to be more effective against democracies, as discussed earlier.

Terrorism is also thought to be a tactic used by groups with particularly extreme aims. This argument is often tautological: groups that use extreme tactics such as terrorism are considered extremist, therefore extremist groups use terrorism. But it is possible to assess group aims independent of their tactics by focusing on how far rebels' stated aims are from the status quo. I argue elsewhere that in wars over a particular region, secessionist rebels can be considered more extreme than those fighting for autonomy, whereas in wars over control of the state, those who seek to transform society in fundamental ways (for example, by instituting Sharia in a secular state, or communism in a capitalist state, or vice versa) are more extreme than those merely engaged in a power struggle to take the reins of power (the fight between Lissouba and Sassou Nguesso in Congo–Brazzaville is a good example).[68]

Secessionist aims are particularly important to consider because scholars such as Pape and Stanton suggest that terrorism should be especially likely in secessionist conflicts.[69] Fazal suggests just the opposite, however; because separatists desire to become accepted members of the international system, they have incentives to avoid targeting civilians indiscriminately.[70] Scholars have also noted links between religious conflict and terrorism,[71] and between population and/or gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and terrorism.[72] Terrorism as defined here may be less likely in Africa than elsewhere,[73] and may be more likely where rebels do not have the advantage of rough terrain that enables other forms of insurgency.[74] The outbidding argument suggests that terrorism is more likely when there are several rebel groups active as part of the same struggle.[75]

This set of variables by no means exhausts the list of factors that might make rebel groups more likely to choose terrorism—this is obviously an important question in its own right. For the purposes of this article, however, my focus is on variables that likely also affect the outcome of war, and whose omission could thus lead to spurious findings about the effectiveness of terrorism.[76]

68. Fortna 2014.
69. See Pape 2005, 23; and Stanton 2009, especially chapter 5.
70. Fazal 2013.
71. See Pape 2005, 22; Svensson 2007; Asal and Rethemeyer 2008a; Stanton 2013; and Satana, Inman, and Birnir 2013.
72. See Chenoweth 2010; Sánchez-Cuenca and de la Calle 2009; Burgoon 2006; Li and Schaub 2004; and Abadie 2006.
73. Boulden 2009, 13.
74. Laitin and Shapiro 2008, 213.
75. See Lawrence 2010; Bloom 2005; and Nemeth 2014. But see also Findley and Young 2012b; and Stanton 2009, 232–33.
76. On the relationship between these variables and war outcomes, see Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009a; DeRouen and Sobek 2004; Fortna 2008; Balch-Lindsay, Enterline, and Joyce 2008; and Mason, Weingarten, and Fett 1999.

The Data

The data analyzed here consist of 104 rebel groups involved in full-scale civil wars active between 1989 and 2004. Much of the data come from Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan's Non-State Actor data set (hereafter CGS),[77] which builds on and expands the well-known Uppsala-PRIO Armed Conflict Data (hereafter UCDP)[78] by identifying each nonstate (or rebel) actor.[79] These data are particularly useful for several reasons. First, the unit of analysis is the government-rebel group dyad, rather than the conflict as is common in many data sets on civil war. Second, the relative strength of the government and each rebel group is coded. The CGS data are time varying, allowing for variables that change over the course of the conflict, for example, changes in the relative strength of the actors, or changes in democracy or economic variables.

The dependent variable is war outcome for each dyad, covering the five possibilities discussed here: government victory, rebel victory, agreement (including peace agreements and ceasefire agreements), wars that fizzle out to "low or no activity" by dropping below twenty-five battle deaths per year, and ongoing conflicts. Outcomes data are from UCDP through 2003; I updated through 2009 and corrected a few cases based on case-specific research.[80]

The measure of the main independent variable, whether a rebel group uses terrorist tactics, comes from Stanton's coding of "high casualty terrorism," a measure of a group's systematic use of "small-scale bombs … to attack unambiguously civilian targets" excluding attacks on infrastructure (for example, power stations, pipelines, bridges) which impose costs on civilians, but in which casualties are rare.[81] I use this more restrictive, high-casualty-only measure of terrorism because it best captures the deliberate and indiscriminate killing of civilians on which my definition and theory focus. Of the 104 cases examined here, twenty-four (23 percent) use high-casualty terrorism.

This measure captures groups generally classified as "terrorist" by other sources, such as the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the Taliban in Afghanistan (after 2003), the FARC in Colombia, the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland, and so on. One advantage

77. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009a, version 2.4.

78. See Gleditsch et al. 2002.

79. Note that although the overall conflict must reach the 1,000 battle death threshold, it is not the case that each rebel group/government dyad included in this study reaches this threshold.

80. For example, I updated Sri Lanka versus LTTE to reflect the government victory in 2009. This updating introduces possible inconsistencies since some variables are coded only through 2003. I also recoded cases in which a peace agreement was reached shortly after UCDP codes a war as terminated in low activity (for example, the Good Friday Agreement settling the Northern Ireland conflict). This change improves the outcomes for two terrorist rebel groups (Provisional IRA and the MNLF in the Philippines) thus working against the argument made here. I also corrected two clearly miscoded cases: Burundi versus CNDD, and UK versus Real IRA. Cases affected by these changes are dropped in robustness tests.

81. Stanton 2013, 1014–15. For further discussion, see also Stanton 2009. In some cases, Stanton's coding for a single case was applicable to more than one dyad in the CGS data (for example, Stanton codes Fatah and Hamas together in a single conflict against Israel).

of Stanton's data over databases more commonly used in the terrorism literature is that this minimizes some of the well-known geographical biases in the terrorism data, particularly their overrepresentation of terrorism in Western democracies and underrepresentation or spotty coverage of groups in Africa and other strategically less important (to the US) places. The main disadvantage of this measure is that it is limited to full-scale civil wars active between 1989 and 2004, thus providing the bounds of the empirical analysis. Merging the Stanton and time varying CGS data yields 104 cases and 566 observations over time.[82] The cases are listed in Table A1 in the appendix.[83]

Stanton found surprisingly little variation over time within conflicts in the types of strategies rebels and governments used in terms of targeting civilians. With very few exceptions, groups that used terrorism did so throughout the conflict, whereas those who eschewed the tactic early on continued to avoid it later.[84] This in itself is quite interesting, and suggests that rebel organizations' choices about using terrorism are remarkably "sticky."

The CGS data include a five-point indicator of rebel group strength relative to the government, ranging from much weaker to much stronger. This variable summarizes assessments of the rebel group's ability to mobilize supporters, arms procurement ability, and fighting capacity, which Cunningham and colleagues argue capture the rebel group's ability to target government forces, or "offensive strength."[85] To capture the effects of war aims, I include two dummy variables. The first marks whether the group seeks full independence and is taken from Coggins's data on secessionist movements.[86] The second differentiates among groups fighting for control of the center, marking those who aim to transform society in fundamental ways. This I coded myself, based on case descriptions in the CGS data coding notes, Minorities at Risk (MAR), START's Terrorist Organization Profiles (TOPs), UCDP's case summaries, and case-specific sources.[87] Together, the independence and transform society dummy variables can be compared with an omitted category of relatively "moderate" rebels who aim either for autonomy, or who are engaged in power struggles at the top without a desire to transform society.[88] Because this is a newly coded variable,

82. Because thirty-four cases involve wars that began before 1989, there are another 449 observations in the data that are used for some robustness checks.

83. Replication data and codebook are available in the supplementary appendix.

84. The PKK turned to terrorism after 1993 (a shift reflected in the time-varying data used here). The MILF (Philippines) did so after 1986 (before the start of the data). E-mail correspondence with Stanton, 25 July 2008. The Taliban did not use terrorism in its fight against the Rabbani government of Afghanistan in the 1990s, but used terrorism against the Karzai government and its Western backers in the 2000s. These are treated as separate conflicts here.

85. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009a, 574–75.

86. Coggins 2011.

87. See Minorities at Risk Project 2009; National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism 2008; and Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2012. Detailed coding notes available from the author.

88. This moderate category is dominated by power struggle cases, of which there are twenty-three, because there are only a handful (five) of cases of rebel groups fighting for autonomy only.

Figures 2 and 3 provide information about its relationship with both terrorism and war outcomes, respectively. From this bivariate look at the data, we see that moderate rebels appear to be less likely to use terrorism and more likely to succeed, making inclusion of this variable particularly important to avoid spuriousness.

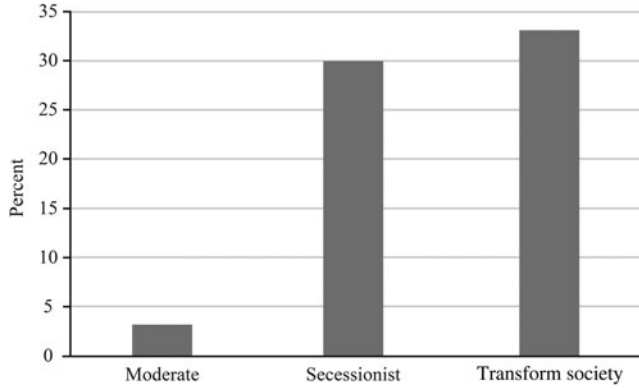

FIGURE 2. *War aims and percent terrorist*

Democracy is measured with a dummy variable marking cases with a Polity score of 6 or higher. Measures of the natural log of population and the natural log of GDP per capita are included. A measure of whether the rebel group's religion differs from that of the government captures distinctions within as well as between major religions (distinguishing among Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians, and among Sunni and Shia Islam, for example).[89] A dummy variable identifies civil wars fought in Sub-Saharan Africa. A (logged) measure of mountainous terrain in the country captures the effect of rough terrain.[90] A dummy variable (from CGS) marks conflicts in which multiple rebel groups were active, as a proxy for outbidding dynamics. I also control for the age of wars in 1989 to capture the fact that some were already underway when the data on terrorism begin.[91]

In all of the results reported, I calculate robust standard errors with cases clustered by country. Results are robust, and often stronger, if clustered by conflict instead of country.

89. From Svensson 2007; and Lindberg 2008 and the sources listed in Lindberg's appendix.

90. Fearon and Laitin 2003.

91. These often very long-running wars complicate the duration and competing risks analysis. The data are "stset" on the full length of the war whenever it began, but the regressions shown here do not use observations from before 1989 for which data on terrorism are unknown, and include a control for the age of the war in 1989. Results are robust to: using a dummy for pre-1989 wars; including earlier observations on the (questionable but in this case necessary) assumption that groups' use of terrorism is the same before and after 1989; and dropping these wars altogether.

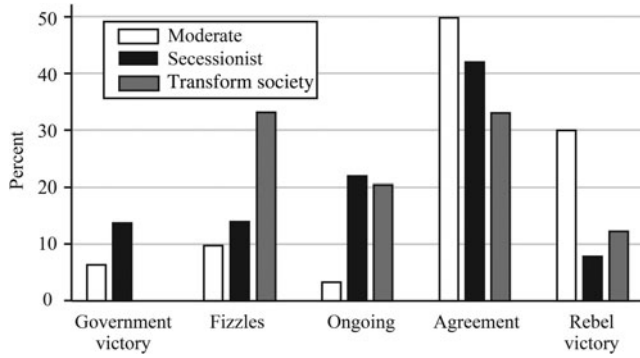

FIGURE 3. *War aims and percent in each war outcome*

Which Groups Use Terrorism?

Before turning to tests of the hypotheses, I take a brief detour to address the issue of spuriousness, examining the effects of potentially confounding variables on the use of terrorism. Of the rebel groups examined in this study, fewer than a quarter used terrorism as a tactic in their fight against the government, whereas the rest did not. What accounts for this variation? Table 1 shows the results of logistic analysis with terrorist rebel group as the dependent variable.[92]

This analysis of terrorism as the dependent variable, rather than the independent variable as it is in the rest of the article, suggests that terrorism is most likely in civil wars in democracies, where rebels face governments representing a different religion,[93] and is seldom seen in Africa (indeed in the data used in this study, there are no cases of high-casualty terrorism by African rebel groups).[94]

Given how deeply entrenched it is, the conventional wisdom that terrorism is more likely to be used by weaker groups receives surprisingly weak support. The relationship between relative strength and terrorism is negative, but it is never statistically significant.[95] I also find that the apparent link between a group's war aims and its use of terrorism seen in Figure 2 disappears once other variables are controlled for. Those fighting for secession are, if anything, less likely to use terrorism, whereas those aiming to transform

92. Independent variables are from the first observation in each dyad (even if this occurs before 1989) because, as I noted, the use of terrorism rarely varies over time. Results are robust to using 1989 data for wars that begin before then, and to including all observations (in which case population and GDP become significant). Terrorism is no more likely in wars that began after 1989 than those held over from the Cold War.

93. The coefficient just misses tests of significance when cases are clustered by conflict.

94. More recent use of terrorism in Nigeria and Somalia may, unfortunately, temper this finding.

95. This could be the result of selection effects; this analysis covers only the strongest opposition groups, those involved in full-scale civil wars. However, among these relatively strong groups, it is clearly not the case that only weak groups resort to terrorism.

society appear more likely to do so, but neither effect is significant. Together, these findings indicate that the extremity of a group's aims are not necessarily associated with the extremity of its tactics. I find no relationship between rough terrain and terrorism, nor between the number of groups involved in the conflict (outbidding) and terrorism.

TABLE 1. *Determinants of terrorism in civil war (logit)*

	Coefficient	*P-value*
RELATIVE REBEL STRENGTH	−0.84	.264
	(0.76)	
DEMOCRACY	1.55	.031
	(0.72)	
AIM: INDEPENDENCE	−0.24	.878
	(1.56)	
AIM: TRANSFORM SOCIETY	1.37	.408
	(1.65)	
DIFFERENT RELIGION	1.23	.016
	(0.51)	
POPULATION	0.22	.383
	(0.25)	
GDP/PER CAPITA	0.44	.183
	(0.33)	
AFRICA	–	–
MOUNTAINS	−0.06	.855
	(0.31)	
MULTIPLE GROUPS	0.10	.889
	(0.73)	
Constant	−7.23	.163
	−(5.19)	
N	70	
Pseudo-R^2	0.31	

Notes: Africa predicts "failure" perfectly—thirty-four observations in Africa therefore dropped, leaving an N of 70. Robust standard errors (clustered by country) reported in parentheses.

Although these findings shed some light on questions about when and where terrorism arises, fuller theoretical and empirical analysis of why some rebels resort to terrorism whereas others refrain from targeting civilians in this way is beyond the scope of this study.[96] However, now that we have some sense of which rebel groups are most likely to use terrorism, we can return to the question that motivates this article—is terrorism an effective tactic for rebels in civil war?

Do Terrorist Rebels Win? The Effects of Terrorism on War Outcomes

Figure 4 shows the percentage of terrorist and nonterrorist rebellions ending in each outcome. Although these bivariate relationships obviously do not yet take into

96. See Fortna 2014.

account potentially confounding variables, the figures do suggest preliminary support for H1 to H3. Most tellingly, of the groups examined here none of those that deliberately killed large numbers of civilians through terrorist attacks won its fight outright.[97] Peace agreements, which I argue represent significant concessions to the rebel cause, are also much less frequent when rebels use terrorism. Meanwhile, government victories and wars ending through low or no activity are slightly more common in civil wars involving terrorism. Wars in which rebels used terror were much more likely to be ongoing as of 2009 than were wars with nonterrorist rebels, suggesting that terrorism makes wars particularly difficult to terminate.

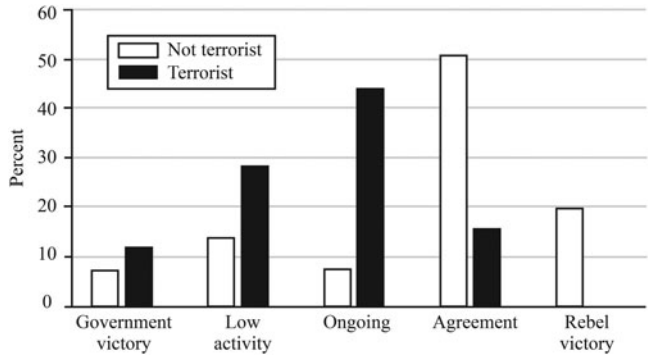

FIGURE 4. *Terrorism and percent in each war outcome*

I employ several different multivariate models to test the effects of terrorism on the duration and outcome of war, controlling for the possible confounding variables discussed earlier.[98] Because it is most straightforward (and forms a baseline for subsequent models), I first discuss H3, on terrorism and the duration of war. Table 2 shows the results of a Cox proportional hazards model. In duration models such as this one, hazard ratios are interpreted relative to 1. Hazard ratios less than 1 indicate variables associated with longer wars; those with hazard ratios greater than 1 with shorter wars. The hazard ratio of 0.41 for terrorism indicates an estimated 59 percent reduction in the hazard of war termination, all else equal—an effect that is highly statistically significant.[99] Figure 5 shows the same results graphically, depicting the survival function for wars in which terrorism is and is not used.[100] As expected, civil wars in

97. Nor have any of the cases of terrorist rebel groups that were ongoing as of 2010 ended in rebel victory since then (at least as of this writing [January 2015]).

98. Because I found no evidence that rough terrain or multiple groups influence the use of terrorism, I exclude them from the analysis that follows. Results are robust to including them.

99. Results are substantively the same if a Weibull model is used instead. Tests based on Schoenfeld residuals show no violation of the proportional hazards assumption.

100. All other variables are held at their median or modal values.

which rebels use terrorism last longer than those in which rebels do not; terrorism contributes to organizational survival.

TABLE 2. *Terrorism and the duration of war (Cox PH model)*

	Hazard ratio	*P-value*
TERRORIST REBELS	0.41	.005
	(0.13)	
RELATIVE REBEL STRENGTH	1.16	.455
	(0.23)	
DEMOCRACY	0.59	.185
	(0.24)	
AIM: INDEPENDENCE	0.53	.075
	(0.19)	
AIM: TRANSFORM SOCIETY	0.53	.025
	(0.15)	
POPULATION	0.94	.502
	(0.09)	
GDP/CAPITA	0.92	.641
	(0.17)	
AFRICA	0.57	.055
	(0.17)	
DIFFERENT RELIGION	1.54	.139
	(0.45)	
WAR AGE IN 1989	0.96	.214
	(0.03)	
N	566	
Subjects	104	
Failures	86	
Log pseudo-likelihood	−261.95	

Note: Robust standard errors (clustered by country) reported in parentheses.

There are several ways to test the effect of terrorism on war outcomes as opposed to duration. None of them is perfect, however, so I use different models to triangulate. Because the rank ordering of outcomes as a measure of rebel success represents an argument rather than an established fact, and especially because my argument is that terrorism's effect on outcomes is nonmonotonic (since terrorism increases the duration of war), I first employ a multinomial logistic regression model (Table 3), in which no assumption is made about the order of the five outcomes categories.[101] I also control for the log of the duration of war to date (or "time at state") to account for the effects of time and duration dependence.[102]

101. Multinomial logit assumes the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA), an assumption that is questionable in this case (the choice between ongoing war and negotiating a settlement is clearly affected by the possibility of winning or losing outright). However, see Dow and Endersby 2004 for an explanation of why this is not a serious concern where the set of choices is quite stable (as is true here), and why multinomial logit is preferable to alternatives in the absence of a very large-N (in the tens of thousands).

102. Following Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009a.

The basic pattern in the bivariate analysis represented in Figure 4 generally holds, even when potential confounders are controlled for. Although there is no significant difference between ongoing war (the omitted baseline category) and rebel defeat or wars that fizzle out, the "good" outcomes for rebels—peace agreements and rebel victory—are both significantly less likely, relative to ongoing war, when rebels employ terrorism as a tactic, supporting H1 and H2. Multinomial logit coefficients are difficult to interpret on their own. Table 4 shows the predicted probability of each outcome for terrorist and nonterrorist rebels, and the difference between them (holding all else constant at mean or modal values). The predicted probability of a war ending in an agreement is 6.6 percent for rebels that do not resort to terrorism, but only 1 percent for those who do. The predicted probability of a rebel victory is low for all rebellions, but drops from 3.4 to 0 percent for those who employ terrorism.[103]

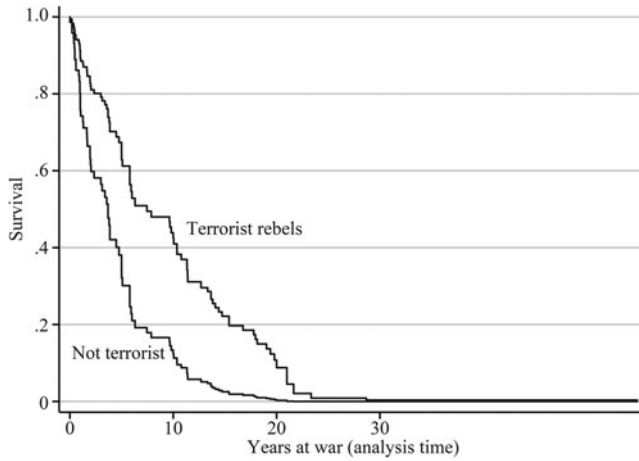

FIGURE 5. *Terrorism and the duration of war*

I also test these hypotheses with a competing risks model.[104] As before, I control for potentially confounding variables such as RELATIVE REBEL STRENGTH, DEMOCRACY, etc. The results, presented in Table 5, indicate the same pattern as the multinomial logit. The reported subhazard ratios are, as in Table 2, interpreted relative to 1; those significantly

103. The difference in predicted probabilities is significant at 95 percent confidence levels for agreements ($p = 0.04$). The difference for ongoing wars just misses significance at 90 percent confidence ($p = 0.11$), and because there are so few cases in which the rebels win outright, the confidence interval around the difference for rebel victory is rather large ($p = 0.20$). The size of this last difference should thus be taken with a grain of salt.

104. This framework is not ideal because tests of the proportional subhazards assumption suggest that it does not necessarily hold for all independent variables, in particular, for democracy. More problematically, the terrorism variable also occasionally fails proportionality tests. However, this framework better models the fact that ongoing war is not actually an outcome so much as a lack thereof, and can handle the censored nature of the data.

TABLE 3. *Terrorism and war outcomes (multinomial logistic—relative to ongoing war)*

	Government victory		*Low or no activity*		*Negotiated agreement*		*Rebel victory*	
	Coefficient	*P-value*	*Coefficient*	*P-value*	*Coefficient*	*P-value*	*Coefficient*	*P-value*
TERRORIST REBEL GROUP	0.27	.647	−0.30	.561	−1.99	.001	−14.96	.000
	(0.59)		(0.52)		(0.62)		(1.58)	
RELATIVE REBEL STRENGTH	−0.02	.962	−1.21	.007	0.65	.019	0.40	.379
	(0.45)		(0.45)		(0.28)		(0.46)	
DEMOCRACY	−2.31	.017	−1.72	.104	0.37	.487	−16.00	.000
	(0.96)		(1.06)		(0.53)		(1.80)	
AIM: INDEPENDENCE	−0.33	.777	−0.94	.329	−0.81	.065	−0.93	.157
	(1.16)		(0.97)		(0.44)		(0.66)	
AIM: TRANSFORM SOCIETY	−17.68	.000	−0.46	.601	−0.73	.156	−0.71	.263
	(1.46)		(0.89)		(0.51)		(0.63)	
POPULATION	0.15	.523	0.25	.315	−0.23	.159	0.46	.250
	(0.23)		(0.24)		(0.17)		(0.40)	
GDP/CAPITA	0.62	.405	0.74	.083	0.09	.765	−0.63	.422
	(0.74)		(0.43)		(0.32)		(0.79)	
AFRICA	−17.45	.000	−0.01	.989	−0.59	.105	−0.17	.865
	(0.73)		(0.69)		(0.37)		(0.99)	
RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE	−0.77	.398	−0.21	.716	1.28	.005	−0.44	.728
	(0.91)		(0.58)		(0.46)		(1.25)	
WAR AGE IN 1989	−0.16	.264	−0.00	.949	−0.06	.054	0.01	.664
	(0.15)		(0.03)		(0.03)		(0.03)	
LOG DURATION TO DATE	−0.07	.851	−0.17	.415	0.42	.016	−0.12	.665
	(0.37)		(0.21)		(0.18)		(0.27)	
Constant	−7.39	.366	−8.48	.081	−2.20	.497	−1.69	.802
	(8.17)		(4.86)		(3.24)		(6.74)	.802
N	566		*Pseudo* R^2		0.16	*Log pseudo likelihood*	−291.54	

Note: Robust standard errors (clustered by country) reported in parentheses.

less than 1 indicate variables associated with a lower risk of each war outcome, those greater than 1 with a higher risk. This analysis indicates that the use of terrorism increases the risk of government defeat by more than four times. Unlike the multinomial logit results, this effect is statistically significant. Terrorism has no appreciable effect on the likelihood of war fizzling out. Meanwhile, the use of terrorism reduces the likelihood that rebels reach a negotiated agreement by 80 percent, and given that there are no cases of rebel victories by terrorist rebels, the competing risks model predicts that terrorism reduces the chance of a rebel victory to zero;[105] both results easily pass tests of statistical significance. In other words, I again find strong support for H1 and H2.[106]

TABLE 4. *Terrorism and war outcomes (predicted probabilities)*

	Government victory	*Low activity*	*Ongoing*	*Negotiated agreement*	*Rebel victory*
Not terrorist	4.41%	2.03%	83.62%	6.58%	3.37%
Terrorist	6.28%	1.64%	91.10%	0.98%	0.00%
Difference	1.88%	−0.39%	7.48%	−5.59%**	−3.37%

Note: **Difference significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Figure 6 shows the results of the competing risks analysis graphically, plotting the cumulative incidence rate of each outcome over time for terrorist and nonterrorist rebels, holding other variables at their mean or modal values.[107] As can be seen, the incidence of the best outcomes for rebels, negotiated agreement and rebel victory, are lower for those who resort to terrorism, whereas the worst outcome, government victory, is higher for terrorist rebels. In sum, rebel groups who deliberately and indiscriminately kill civilians are, all else equal, much less likely to win outright or to achieve concessions in the form of an agreement than are nonterrorist rebel groups, but are no less likely to fizzle out or be defeated rather than to live to fight another day.[108]

105. The same zero-likelihood issue accounts for the large coefficients for TRANSFORM SOCIETY and AFRICA for the government victory results.

106. Models (not shown) including interactions with time or ln(time) to fix violations of the proportional hazards assumption indicate that terrorism is associated with a low risk of government victory or low activity at the outset but that these risks grow significantly over time. In some tests, the risk of agreement and of rebel victory also appear to start low for terrorist rebels and to grow over time, however because there are no cases of rebel victory for terrorist rebels, the results of PH tests for this outcome are suspect. Interactions between democracy and time or ln(time), which are more consistently significant, indicate that the risk of bad outcomes for rebels (government victory and low activity) start off very high and decline over time, while the risks of good outcomes (agreements and rebel victory) display the opposite pattern. In other words, democratic governments tend to defeat rebels quickly but rebels that can survive over time fare rather well. Exploring these substantive relationships is a fruitful avenue for theoretical and empirical work but is beyond the scope of this article.

107. Cumulative incidence functions shown here do not take violations of the PH assumption into account and so should be interpreted with caution.

108. The negative relationship between terrorism and negotiated agreements found here stands in stark contrast to Thomas 2014. This is likely attributable to differences in our definitions of terrorism. I focus

TABLE 5. *Terrorism and war outcomes (competing risks)*

	Government victory		*Low or no activity*		*Negotiated agreement*		*Rebel victory*	
	Subhazard ratio	*P-value*	*Subhazard ratio*	*P-value*	*Subhazard ratio*	*P-value*	*Subhazard ratio*	*P-value*
TERRORIST REBEL GROUP	4.12	.021	1.01	.991	0.20	.011	0.00	.000
	(2.52)		(0.54)		(0.13)		(0.00)	
RELATIVE REBEL STRENGTH	0.94	.882	0.22	.001	1.51	.145	1.33	.492
	(0.38)		(0.10)		(0.43)		(0.56)	
DEMOCRACY	0.14	.064	0.51	.472	2.12	.124	0.00	.000
	(0.15)		(0.48)		(1.03)		(0.00)	
AIM: INDEPENDENCE	0.88	.909	0.64	.646	0.79	.632	0.48	.280
	(1.00)		(0.62)		(0.39)		(0.33)	
AIM: TRANSFORM SOCIETY	0.00	.000	1.84	.477	0.75	.603	0.84	.767
	(0.00)		(1.58)		(0.41)		(0.50)	
POPULATION	1.13	.646	1.12	.544	0.75	.063	1.16	.663
	(0.30)		(0.22)		(0.12)		(0.41)	
GDP/CAPITA	1.45	.597	2.00	.073	0.85	.614	0.36	.232
	(1.02)		(0.77)		(0.27)		(0.31)	
AFRICA	0.00	.000	1.36	.689	0.82	.674	0.66	.676
	(0.00)		(1.03)		(0.38)		(0.65)	
RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE	0.35	.303	0.73	.589	3.51	.018	1.16	.835
	(0.36)		(0.43)		(1.86)		(0.81)	
WAR AGE IN 1989	0.95	.578	1.24	.000	1.18	.000	1.41	.000
	(0.08)		(0.07)		(0.05)		(0.09)	
Failed	9		18		44		16	
Competing	78		69		43		71	
Log pseudo likelihood	−29.04		−57.71		−151.39		−44.92	
N	566			*Subjects*			104	

Note: Robust standard errors (clustered by country) reported in parentheses.

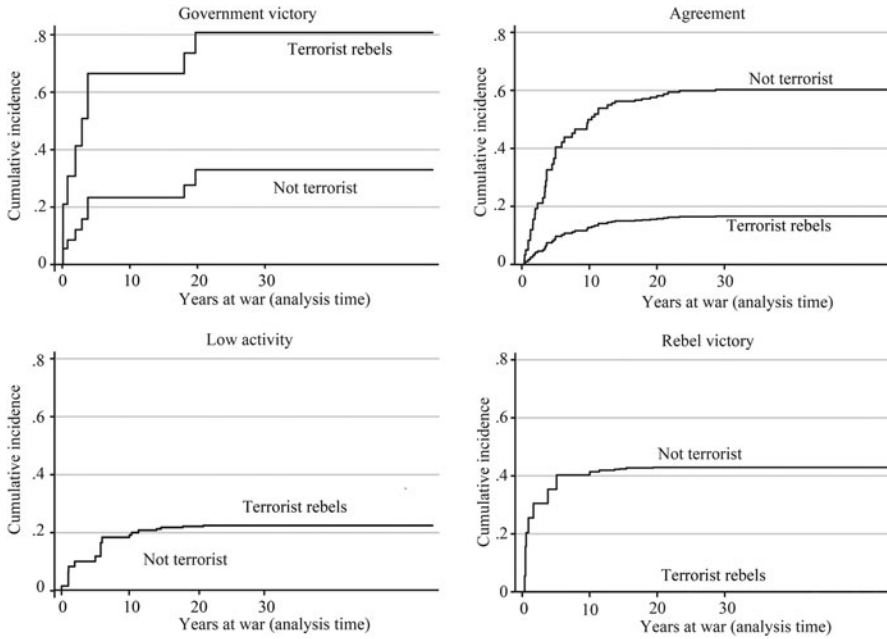

FIGURE 6. *Terrorism and war outcomes (competing risks)*

I turn, finally, to analysis of the relative effects of terrorism against democratic and nondemocratic governments. An initial look at the cases is consistent with H4; of the terrorist rebel groups that succeeded in reaching a negotiated agreement, three out of four fought democratic governments.[109] Because there are relatively few cases of civil war in democracies (the government is democratic in a third of the observations in these data), it is difficult to examine the finer-grained distinctions among war outcomes. I therefore combine the two best outcomes for rebels ("success" here consists of rebel victory and negotiated agreements) and the two worst outcomes ("failure" combines low activity and government victory). An interaction term between terrorism and democracy allows us to see whether terrorism is more effective against democracies. Table 6 presents the results of logistic regression in which ongoing wars are dropped from the analysis (Model 1); a multinomial regression of these two categories compared with ongoing war (Model 2); and a competing risks model of these combined outcomes. These models include the same controls as previous analyses (control variable results not shown in the interest of space).

here on deliberately indiscriminate, high-casualty attacks on civilians, while she includes a much broader category of violence against civilians.

109. These include Fatah versus Israel, IRA versus the UK, and the MNLF versus Philippines (all in 1993). The only case of an agreement with terrorist rebels in a nondemocracy is the CPN-M/UPF versus Nepal in 2003.

TABLE 6. *Effectiveness of terrorism against democracies*

	(1) Logit		*(2) Multinomial logit*				*(3) Competing risks*			
	Success		*Failure*		*Success*		*Failure*		*Success*	
	Coefficient	*P-value*	*Coefficient*	*P-value*	*Coefficient*	*P-value*	*Subhazard ratio*	*P-value*	*Subhazard ratio*	*P-value*
TERRORIST REBEL GROUP	−2.39 (1.64)	146	−0.12 (0.45)	.788	−2.07 (1.22)	.088	1.78 (0.85)	.220	0.20 (0.24)	.182
DEMOCRACY	0.84 (1.39)	.546	−1.52 (1.34)	.259	−0.06 (0.52)	.903	0.51 (0.57)	.552	1.24 (0.65)	.682
DEMOCRACY×TERRORISM	1.26 (2.18)	.564	−0.35 (1.30)	.786	0.36 (1.25)	.775	0.49 (0.57)	.537	1.29 (1.66)	.844
	Control variable results not shown									
Failed/competing							27/60		60/27	
N/subjects	87		566				566/104		566/104	
Pseudo R^2	.31		.12							
Log pseudo-likelihood	− 36.93		− 260.75				−108.68		−222.16	

Note: Robust standard errors (clustered by country) reported in parentheses.

TABLE 7. *Effectiveness of terrorism and democracy (predicted probabilities)*

Government regime type		*(1) Logit*	*(2) Multinomial logit*		
		Success	*Failure*	*Ongoing*	*Success*
Nondemocracy	*Not terrorist*	70.61%	6.64%	82.13%	11.23%
	Terrorist	18.06%	6.58%	91.84%	1.58%
	Difference vs. nondemocracies	−52.55%**	−0.06%	9.71%**	−9.65%**
Democracy	*Not terrorist*	84.74%	1.55%	87.25%	11.19%
	Terrorist	64.14%	1.07%	96.70%	2.23%
	Difference vs. democracies	−20.60%	−0.48%	9.44%**	−8.96%**

Note: **Difference significant at the $p < .05$ level.

In all of these models, the negative effects of terrorism on rebel success are reduced in democracies, as H4 suggests; however, the size and statistical significance of the difference in effect depends on the model. The coefficients and subhazard ratios for terrorism capture estimated effects against nondemocracies and are consistent with the findings reported here.[110] The coefficients and subhazard ratios for the interaction term must be interpreted along with the base term for democracy.[111] Results for the logit and multinomial logit are easiest to see in the predicted probabilities reported in Table 7. In the logit model, the use of terrorism is associated with a statistically significant 53 percent decrease in the probability of success when the government is nondemocratic, but only a (no longer significant) 21 percent decrease against democracies. In the multinomial logit model, the reduction in the probability of success associated with terrorism is much less stark: from 10 percent against nondemocracies to 9 percent against democracies.[112] The competing risks analysis results are most easily seen in the cumulative incidence functions plotted in Figure 7. The top graph shows an increased incidence of failure when terrorist rebels fight nondemocracies (top two lines), but little substantive difference in the incidence of failure between terrorist and nonterrorist rebels when the government is democratic (bottom two lines). The bottom graph reveals that although terrorism reduces the incidence of success against both types of government, the gap is slightly, but not markedly, larger against nondemocracies than against democracies.

I thus find only mixed support for H4 overall. The negative effects of terrorism are smaller against democracies, but not always significantly so. Terrorist rebels may be somewhat more likely to succeed against democratic governments than nondemocratic governments, but they are still less likely to succeed than rebels who do not use terrorism.

110. These results are not quite statistically significant at conventional levels due to smaller numbers of cases in each category once one parses the data by democratic and nondemocratic governments.

111. Braumoeller 2004.

112. The difference terrorism makes within each regime type category is significant, but the difference in differences between them is not.

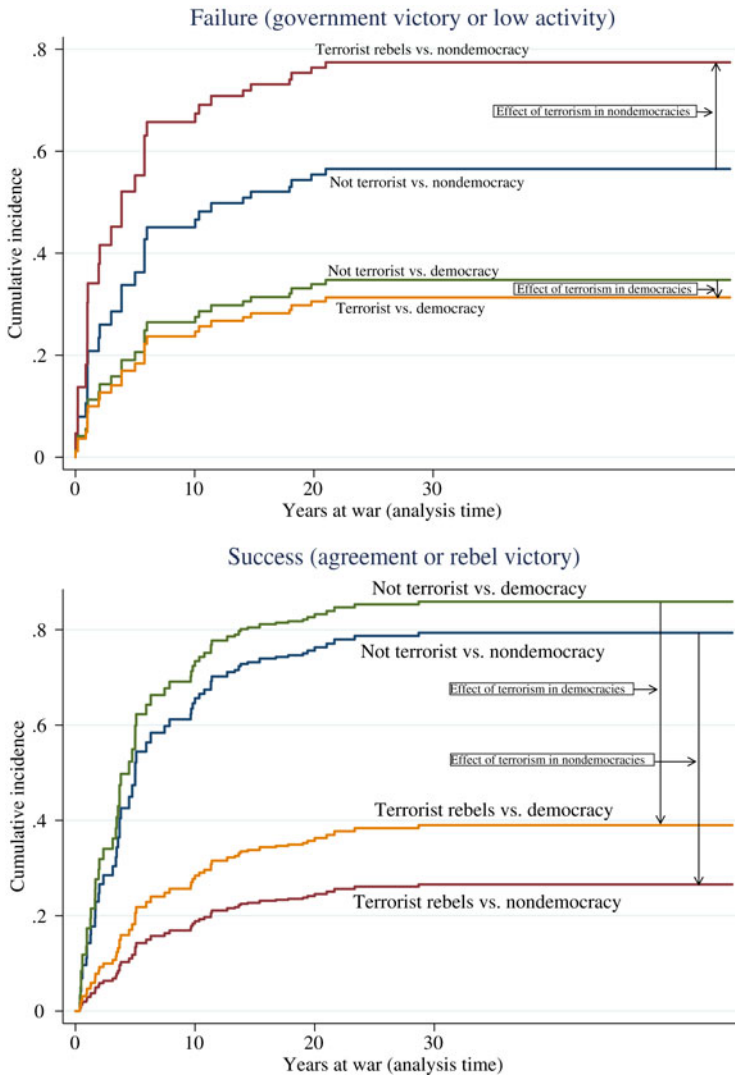

FIGURE 7. *Terrorism and democracy (competing risks)*

Conclusion

Research on terrorism has exploded since 2001 for obvious reasons. However, the ability of this literature to answer fundamental questions has been hampered by a lack of variation on the phenomenon. This project uses variation within civil wars,

namely the fact that some rebel groups use terrorism whereas others do not, to help resolve the debate about the effectiveness of terrorism.

I argue that when it comes to achieving a rebel group's political goals, the disadvantages of terrorism generally outweigh its advantages. It is a cheap way to inflict pain on the other side, and terrorist groups are hard to eliminate completely, but it is useless for taking or holding territory. It may help signal commitment to a cause, but because it is cheap, it signals weakness rather than strength. It may be useful for provoking an overreaction by the government, but it also helps justify draconian measures to crush the rebellion. Its outrageous nature may help bring attention to a cause, but it also undermines legitimacy and alienates potential supporters. Terrorism may help achieve tactical results, but these apparently do not translate into strategic success. It may also be useful at lower levels of conflict or for groups that do not have the ability to wage full-scale war (a question I cannot yet address with available data). Empirically, I find much more support for the argument that terrorism is likely to backfire than for the notion that it is effective. Rebels who use terrorism do not win outright, and they are less likely to achieve concessions in a negotiated outcome. This negative effect may be somewhat attenuated when rebels fight against democracies rather than autocracies. But even in democratic states, terrorist rebels groups do not achieve victory and are unlikely to obtain concessions at the negotiating table. The short answer to the question "Do terrorist rebels win?" is "No."

If terrorism is so ineffective, one might reasonably ask why rebel groups use it, especially rebels who are not fighting democratic governments.[113] The answer may lie in the finding that civil wars in which terrorism is used last significantly longer than others. The use of terrorism contributes to rebels' organizational survival. Rebels thus appear to face a dilemma—using terrorism as a tactic is good for the immediate goal of survival, but comes at the expense of the long-term political goals for which they are, ultimately (or ostensibly) fighting.

This study begins to shed light on the causes of terrorism, as well as its effects. I examine this question only briefly in this article, focusing on variables that might also affect war outcomes, to avoid spurious results. The results are intriguing, however. They cast doubt on the conventional wisdom that terrorism is a "weapon of the weak." Among rebels fighting full-fledged civil wars, there is surprisingly little evidence that weaker groups are more likely to use terrorism than stronger ones. Nor is terrorism more likely, again contrary to conventional wisdom, in secessionist wars, or when rebels profess extreme aims. Terrorism is more likely, however, in civil wars in democracies, as many have argued, and where religion divides rebels from the government they fight. It is much less likely to be used in Africa, a finding that remains to be explained theoretically. Expanding the analysis of why some groups turn to terrorism whereas others do not is an obvious avenue for further research.

113. Forty-two percent of the rebels who use terrorism were engaged in civil war in a nondemocratic state (measured in the year the war started).

Extensions of this study to further our understanding both of where terrorism arises, and how successful it is, will require new data. Data are currently available for only a relatively short period (1989–2004) and for full-fledged civil wars. Extending the analysis temporally before the end of the Cold War and to include more recent conflicts, and especially to lower level conflicts will strengthen the analysis, and in particular allow fuller testing, for example, of the notion that terrorism is a "weapon of the weak."[114] Further research is also needed to establish how rebel groups navigate the tradeoff between organizational survival and politically efficacy.

In the meantime, the empirical evidence presented in this study suggests that terrorism is likely to be a persistent problem—elongating the destruction and suffering that civil wars entail—but not a potent force for political change. Terrorism may help rebel groups survive, but it does not help them get what they want politically.

114. Both extensions are possible with the CGS data, which include minor conflicts involving as few as twenty-five deaths annually as far back as 1945, but the coding of whether rebel groups use terrorism needs to be expanded to cover the longer time span and these smaller conflicts. For efforts in this direction, see Fortna, Lotito, and Rubin 2014.

APPENDIX The Cases. *(government vs. rebels & year ended)*

	Government victory	*Low activity*	*Ongoing war*	*Agreement*	*Rebel victory*
Nonterrorist rebel groups	Cambodia vs. Khmer Rouge/PDK 1998 Croatia vs. Serbian irregulars 1995 Croatia vs. Serbian Rep. Krajina 1995 Indonesia vs. GAM 1991 Sri Lanka vs. JVP 1989 Yemen vs. Dem. Rep.Yemen 1994	Congo-Brazzaville vs. Ninjas 1999 Mali vs. FIAA 1994 Indonesia vs. Fretilin 1989 Indonesia vs. Fretilin 1992 Iraq vs. KDP/DPK 1993 Iraq vs. PUK 1993 Iraq vs. SAIRI 1996 Morocco vs. POLISARIO 1989 Pakistan vs. MQM 1996 Rwanda vs. Opposition alliance 2002 Uganda vs. UDCM/UPDCA 1991	Angola vs. FLEC Burma vs. KNU Burma vs. SSA Colombia vs. ELN India vs. Naxalites/PWG Uganda vs. LRA	Algeria vs. FIS 1997 Angola vs. UNITA 1994 Angola vs. UNITA 2002 Azerbaijan vs. Nagorno Karabakh 1994 Bangladesh vs. JSS/Shanti Bahini 1992 Bosnia vs. Croatian Rep. B. & H.. 1994 BiH vs. Croatian irregulars 1994 BiH vs. Serbian irregulars 1995 BiH vs. Serbian Rep. B. & H. 1995 Burma vs. MTA 1996 Burundi vs. CNDD 1998 Burundi vs. CNDD-FDD 2003 Burundi vs. Palipehutu-FNL 2003 Cambodia vs. FUNCINPEC/ANS 1991 Cambodia vs. KPNLF 1991 Chad vs. CSNPD 1994 Chad vs. FARF 1998 Congo/Zaire vs. RCD 2001 Djibouti vs. FRUD 1994 El Salvador vs. FMLN 1991 Georgia vs. Rep. Abkhazia 1993 Guatemala vs. URNG 1995 India vs. NSCN 1997 Indonesia vs. Fretilin 1998 Indonesia vs. GAM 2003 Mali vs. MPA 1990 Moldova vs. Dniestr Republic 1992 Mozambique vs. Renamo 1992 Nicaragua vs. FDN/Contras 1989 Papua New Guinea vs. BRA 1996 Russia vs. Rep. Chechnya 1996 Senegal vs. MFDC 2003 Sierra Leone vs. RUF 2000 Somalia vs. SRRC 2002 Somalia vs. USC Faction 1996 South Africa vs. ANC 1993 Sudan vs. SPLM 2003 Sudan vs. SPLM Faction 1997 Tajikistan vs. UTO 1996 Yugoslavia vs. UCK 1999	AFG vs. Hezb-i-Islami 1992 AFG vs. Jamiat-i-Islami 1992 AFG vs. Taliban 1996 AFG vs. UIFSA 2001 Congo-Brazzaville vs. FDU 1997 Congo/Zaire vs. AFDL 1997 Ethiopia vs. EPDM 1991 Ethiopia vs. EPLF 1991 Ethiopia vs. EPRP 1991 Ethiopia vs. OLF 1991 Ethiopia vs. TPLF 1991 Guinea-Bissau vs. Military faction 1999 Rwanda vs. FPR 1994 Somalia vs. SNM 1991 Yugoslavia vs. Rep. Croatia 1991 Yugoslavia vs. Croatian irregulars 1991

Continued

APPENDIX *Continued*

	Government victory	*Low activity*	*Ongoing war*	*Agreement*	*Rebel victory*
Terrorist rebel groups	India vs. ULFA 1991 Philippines vs. MNLF (faction) 2002 Sri Lanka vs. LTTE 2003	Algeria vs. GIA 2003 Egypt vs. al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya 1998 Egypt vs. al-Jihad al-Islamiy 1998 Egypt vs. Tala i al-Fath 1998 India vs. Sikh insurgents 1993 Peru vs. Sendero Luminoso 1994 United Kingdom vs. Real IRA 1998	Afghanistan vs. Taliban Colombia vs. FARC India vs. Kashmir insurgents India vs. ULFA Faction Israel vs. Fatah Israel vs. Hamas Philippines vs. Abu Sayyaf Philippines vs. MILF Philippines vs. NPA Russia vs. Rep. Chechnya Turkey vs. PKK/Kadek	Israel vs. Fatah 1993 Nepal vs. CPN-M/UPF 2003 Philippines vs. MNLF 1993 United Kingdom vs. PIRA/IRA 1993	

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available at http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S200281831500089.

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