

Terrorism, security, and risk

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Learning Object Description:

Terrorism undermines military, political, societal, and economic security. This lesson argues that in order to know what terrorism is and what its causes and consequences are, we should look at it as an international security risk. In the case of threats, it is relatively easy to identify adversarial actors, hostile intentions, and damage potentials. But in the case of risks, this becomes more difficult. This lesson also shows that uncertainty leads to fear and that policy makers are trying to counter the terrorist strategy of causing fear.

Learning Object Objectives:

To list the key characteristics of an international security risk; to elaborate on the impact of terrorism on different security sectors; to argue why it is often difficult to identify adversarial actors, hostile intentions, and damage potentials; and to show that uncertainty leads to fear.

Terrorism is one of the most prominent — and controversial — topics on the international security agenda today. Terrorism causes considerable damage, but it is difficult to say what terrorism actually is and what its causes and consequences are. To better understand terrorism, it is helpful to look at it as a security risk. According to the simplest definition, risk can be understood as consisting of two factors: damage occurring in the future and the probability that the damage might occur. However, a third element is important: the ability of humans to influence both future damage and the probability of damage. Natural catastrophes that humans cannot influence are therefore not considered a risk. We speak of risks when damage will occur with a certain probability and when our actions might influence the occurrence and/or the scale of the damage.

Terrorism and sectors of security

To understand the impact of terrorism on security, it is useful to distinguish between different security sectors: military security, political security, societal security, and economic security. Here are some illustrations how terrorism can impact on these security sectors:

Military security

Terrorism causes a loss of lives and damage to property. It affects military security in the sense that it threatens the ability of governments to guarantee the security of their citizens. The fact that terrorists are non-state actors who challenge military security poses a special problem, which became evident on 11 September 2001, when a relatively small organization attacked the United States. The strategy of deterrence with which the US prevents conventional attacks from states did not work against Al-Qaeda. Militarily strong states thus become highly vulnerable, especially when the terrorists are committed to suicide bombings.

Political security

Terrorists undermine the monopoly of the state over the legitimate use of force. They try to create a climate of fear and thereby potentially undermine the stability and legitimacy of states. Moreover, when they murder members of the state, be they politicians, soldiers, or citizens, the state loses its credibility. Democracies are particularly vulnerable to terrorism, because freedom and the absence of fear are important prerequisites for the functioning of the democratic process.

Societal security

Terrorism and counter-terrorism policies can affect societal security. Terrorism can be seen as a violation of fundamental human rights. To prevent terrorists from attacking a country, governments often restrict civil rights. Maintaining an open society in spite of terrorist attacks is like walking a tightrope between increasing security and preserving freedom and fundamental rights.

Economic security

The link between economic security and terrorism becomes evident when we look at the direct and indirect costs of terrorism. People believe that terrorism destabilizes the political situation, leading to diminished economic activity. Terrorists often try to cause economic damage by attacking sensitive sectors such as the tourism industry.

Question:

Which security sectors do you see as most affected by terrorism?

Option 1: Military security

Option 2: Political security

Option 3: Societal security

Option 4: Economic security

Option 5: All of them equally

Option 6: None of the above

Option 7: I cannot say

Is terrorism a threat or a risk to security?

Given that terrorism negatively affects security in various ways, we might conclude that terrorism is a classic threat to the security of a country. The main difference between a risk and a threat is the level of uncertainty. When it is relatively easy for policy-makers and societies to identify adversarial actors, hostile intentions, and damage potentials, we speak of threats. With risks, the potential dangers are more difficult to discern. There is uncertainty about the actors, the intentions, and the means. We can take the example of Al-Qaeda and the attacks of 11 September 2001 to illustrate the problem:

Adversarial actor

Since the 11 September attacks, everyone knows that a group hostile to the US has tried to harm US citizens and interests. Regarding Al-Qaeda, many people argue that the organization has a network structure. However, it is unclear whether Al-Qaeda is organized hierarchically or whether relatively autonomous cells operate alongside each other, how big Al-Qaeda is, and who its leaders are.

Hostile intention

The hostile intention of Al-Qaeda towards the US seems to be obvious now, but since when? Since the 11 September attacks? Or since the fatwah of Bin Laden urging for a jihad against the US published early 1998? Or even since the founding of Al-Qaeda? And is Al-Qaeda only hostile towards the US or towards the West in general? Or even against all non-Islamic countries?

Damage potential

How can we assess the damage potential of Al-Qaeda after having seen that in the 11 September attacks, terrorists were able to use conventional airplanes as deadly and highly effective weapons? Can an attack like this one be repeated? And how can we be sure that Al-Qaeda will not use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the future?

Bruce Hoffman, a prominent expert on terrorism, has the following to say about Al-Qaeda:

It is remarkable that more than a decade after its founding, six years after it first came to international attention, and 18 months after the simultaneous attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon catapulted it to prominence, Al-Qaeda remains such a poorly understood phenomenon. The ways in which it is variously described or perceived is a case in point. Hoffman, Bruce 2003: Al-Qaeda, Trends in Terrorism and Future Potentialities: An Assessment. Santa Monica (CA.): Rand, p 3.

Hoffman's statement reveals the high level of uncertainty concerning the actors, the intentions, and the damage potential of Al-Qaeda. People inevitably perceive the problem of terrorism differently from one another. Imagine the situation before the attacks of 11 September 2001. What could have been less likely than terrorists flying airplanes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon?

Risk and fear

Appreciating the fact that there is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding terrorism is important not only in academic discussions, but also for understanding public attitudes towards terrorism and the way governments respond to terrorism. The typical human reaction to situations with a high level of uncertainty is fear. Regarding the reaction of the US public after 11 September, political scientist Robert Jervis wrote:

People now seem to be worried as they were during the height of the Cold War despite the fact that a terrorist or rogue attack, even with WMD, could cause only a small fraction of a possible World War III's devastation. Jervis, Robert 2003: Understanding the Bush Doctrine. Political Science Quarterly 118: 3, p 382.

The following statement by US Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge is an attempt to counter the terrorist strategy of causing fear:

And to terrorists who think America would ever do otherwise, this country again has proven you wrong. Your goal is to sow fear. But you will not succeed in the United States of America.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040109-6.html>

Source

National Threat Level Lowered. Statement by Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge (website accessed on 20-1-2004).

Conclusion

Terrorism negatively affects security in different ways. Terrorists cause loss of lives and damage to property, and they often target militarily strong states. They try to undermine the stability and legitimacy of states by creating a climate of fear. Terrorist attacks challenge governments' capacity to guarantee security (political security). Terrorism reduces economic activity and threatens important economic sectors (economic security). And terrorists violate fundamental human rights and thereby affect societal security.

Consequently, governments must try to reduce the risk of terrorism. But who are the terrorists? What do they want? What damage can they cause? These and other questions show that terrorism is clouded

in uncertainty. Uncertainty causes fear among populations. One important step to reduce the negative consequences of terrorism is to address this fear. Through visible action, a government can try to restore the feeling of security of its citizens. Uncertainty leads also to different perceptions about the causes and consequences of terrorism. Hence, policy options are often highly contested.

External Document:

Printable file The file includes the full text of this learning object in a printer-friendly format.

External Document:

Risk Download a printable file with a definition of risk.

External Document:

References Download and print out a list with recommended literature.

History and recent trends of terrorism

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Learning Object Description:

This lesson provides an overview of the history of terrorism. It shows that three main reasons help explain the rise of terrorism: the fact that the political order has ceased to be perceived as God-given, that extremist political ideas spread, and that mass media now offers new propaganda options. The lesson then distinguishes between five historical phases of terrorism.

Learning Object Objectives:

To explain that the term terrorism has had different connotations at different times; to list three reasons for the rise of terrorism; and to distinguish between different phases in the history of terrorism and to list the main characteristics of these.

To better understand terrorism, it is important to know its historical developments — the entanglement of terrorism with other political developments in the modern period and the renaissance of terrorism in the 19th century, as well as its ancient forms. Since World War II, terrorism has been on the increase, but over the years it has changed considerably. The most dramatic change is the recent appearance of global terrorism, which aims to cause mass casualties.

The historical perspective

The term terrorism became prominent during the French Revolution, when the word "terreur" was used to describe the action of the revolutionary government known as the "Régime de la terreur", led by Maximilien Robespierre (July 1793 — July 1794). At that time, terror stood for the violent repression of opposition within and outside the government and the use of fear to achieve political goals. As opposed to today, terrorism was used then by state representatives and not by clandestine non-state actors. But this is not the only difference from terrorism today. Another difference are the connotations of the term. Whereas today we see terror as illegitimate, it was not originally perceived that way. This can be seen in a fragment of Robespierre's speech Republic of Virtue:

If the strength of popular government in peacetime is virtue, the strength of popular government in revolution is both virtue and terror; terror without virtue is disastrous, virtue without terror is powerless. Terror is nothing but prompt, severe, and inflexible justice; it is thus an emanation of virtue [...].

Hyperlink to:<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/virtue.html>

Source

The History Guide's Lectures on Modern European Intellectual History (accessed 10-2-2004).

In the second half of the 19th century, the anarchist movement discovered terrorism as a strategy for non-state actors. Anarchists shared Robespierre's use of the term. Unlike today's perpetrators of political violence, they had no problems calling themselves terrorists.

The rise of terrorism

The calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to attain political goals by non-state actors is a modern phenomenon. There are three main reasons why groups adopted the strategy of terrorism:

Political order was no longer God-given

After the French Revolution, the notion that rulers were ordained by God lost some of its appeal. The appropriate political order, people increasingly believed, was the result of political struggle. Terrorism became part of this struggle.

Extremist political ideas spread

Communists, anarchists, and nationalists propagated an alternative system to the existing order, and they also argued that fundamental political changes required a revolution, to be triggered by acts of terrorism.

Mass media and new propaganda options

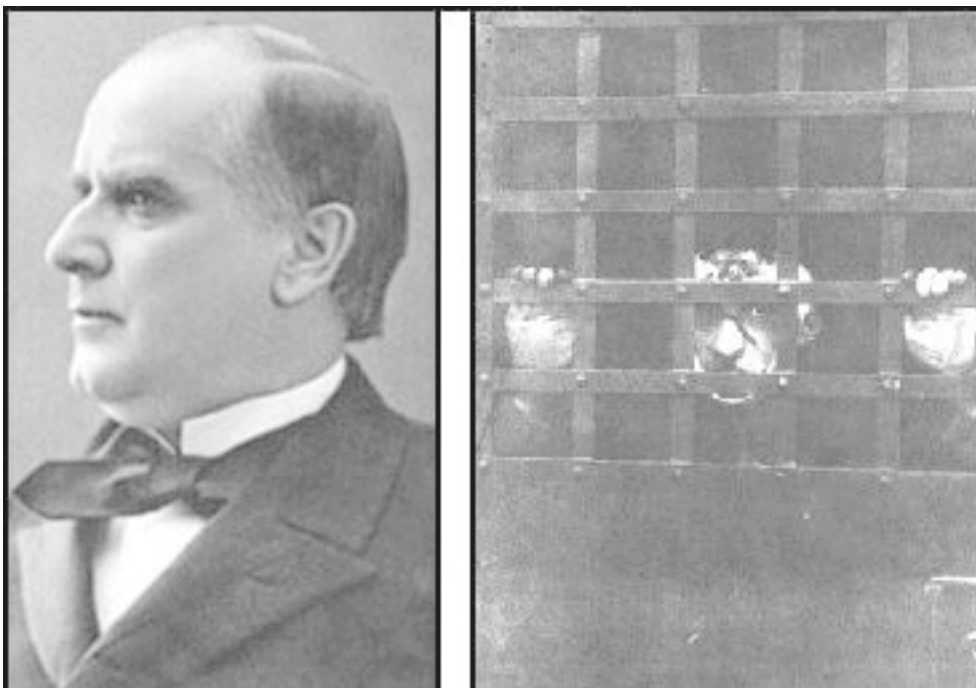
Normally, terrorists do not hope to change the political order through a military victory but aim to send a political message to a wide audience through acts of violence, thereby destabilizing a country. For this, they need mass media. The rise of mass media in the 20th century was thus beneficial to terrorists.

Historical phases of terrorist activity

For analytical purposes, it is useful to distinguish between five historical phases of terrorist activity. In each phase, a different type of terrorism was predominant (although all types of terrorism occurred in all phases).

Phase 1

From the second half of the 19th century, anarchists in various countries started to fight for a regime change. The Italian militant Enrico Malatesta (1853-1932) developed the concept of the "propaganda of the deed". His idea was that sensational murders or acts of destruction would help publicize injustice, destabilize governments, and intimidate ruling elites. Russian anarchist Michail Aleksandroviè Bakunin (1814-1876) developed the concept of a revolutionary mass movement. His ideas influenced the anarchists, who founded the Narodnaya Wolya movement in 1878 to end the tsarist rule in Russia. They considered the use of terror as a legitimate element in their struggle against the ruling classes, but only if innocent civilians were not hurt. In 1881, the group killed Tsar Peter Alexander II. In the US, anarchists were active as well. In 1901, President William McKinley, whom some accused of conducting imperialist foreign policies, was shot in Buffalo by a Polish born anarchist. He died of his wounds eight days later. The assassin was later executed.



*US President William McKinley; Leon Czolgosz, after assassinating McKinley
(sources: <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAmckinley.htm> [29-4-2004].*

At the beginning of the 20th century, ethno-nationalists used terrorism in their struggles for independence. Narodna Odbrana and Crna ruka were terrorist organizations fighting against the Habsburg empire for a greater Serbia. The successor to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, and his wife were shot dead by a Serbian nationalist as they visited Sarajevo (18 June 1914). The assassination led Austria-Hungary to declare war on Serbia, which in turn led to World War I.

What about terror as a strategy for governments suppressing their people? The historian Eric Hobsbawm called the 20th century the "age of the extreme", starting with the communist revolution in 1917 in Russia. The creation of the Soviet Union was followed by the creation of other authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. These regimes — whether national-socialist, fascist, or communist — used violence and fear as part of their ruling strategy. The first years of Stalin's domination of the Soviet Union, for example, is known as the period of "great terror", and the same term could be used to describe the situation in Nazi Germany. The calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to attain political goals, which in these cases helped extremists to form a government, was later employed against other states and societies. We could say that totalitarian regimes using the same methods in a systematic way might expand this period. However, it is important to use the terms "terrorism" and "terrorist" restrictively. For the purposes of this lesson it is reserved for non-state actors.

Question:

Do you agree that the use of the terms "terrorism" and "terrorist" should be restricted to non-state actors?

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Option 3: I cannot say

Phase 2

In the late 1940s and the early 1950s, terrorism was used by groups for their anti-colonial struggle. In some conflicts, terrorism replaced guerrilla warfare. As Bruce Hoffman notes, some states, for example, Kenya, Algeria, Cyprus, and Israel, became independent only after anti-colonial groups had resorted to terrorism.

Reference:

Hoffman, Bruce 1999: Inside terrorism. London: Indigo.

In Israel, the Jewish organization Irgun was founded in 1937. Irgun first retaliated against Arabs who had begun to rise up against the British, who at the time occupied Palestine. Soon, Irgun turned against the British. During World War II, Irgun called a pause to its campaign so as not to weaken the allied fight against Nazi Germany. In 1943, Menachem Begin, who later became Israel's Prime Minister (1977-1983), commanded the group. At the end of World War II, Irgun once more turned against the British Occupational Forces. The goal was not to defeat the British militarily, but to destroy their prestige and undermine their control over Palestine. As a result, the symbols of British might became targets. The most "spectacular" event was the bombing of the King David Hotel in 1946, which hosted the British secretariat and the command of the British Forces in Palestine and Trans-Jordania. Ninety-one people were killed and 45 were wounded. The British government found it difficult to retaliate, as Britain's reputation as a liberal democracy disallowed severe countermeasures, and such countermeasures would have further increased the popularity of terrorists and their cause.

In the 1960s and 1970s, separatist movements began to copy the tactics of anti-colonial terrorist groups. The Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) are two examples. Often, such groups combined the goal of independence with ideological objectives, such as a communist revolution. In Spain, ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna) initially fought against the dictatorial regime of General Franco and for an independent Basque state. Since Franco's death in 1975 and the transition to democracy, ETA has continued its terrorist fight for an independent Basque state.



This picture shows the symbol of the Basque separatist organization ETA.

Phase 3

A new phase began when some terrorist groups, which so far had operated in a geographically limited area, changed their strategy and began to operate internationally. The first event of this kind was the kidnapping of an Israeli El Al airplane in 1968 by terrorists of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Their objective was to exchange their hostages for imprisoned PLO members. But they also deliberately attacked a symbol of Israeli statehood and by doing so sent a strong message to a global public.

However, the key event was in 1972, when PLO terrorists of the Black September organization launched an attack at the summer Olympics in Munich, Germany. They kidnapped 11 Israeli athletes (two were shot at once) and demanded an exchange with Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. The raid ended dramatically: All hostages and all kidnappers but one died during an ill-prepared police operation at a German military airport, from where the terrorists had tried to leave Germany. The terrorists did not achieve their immediate objective, but in some ways they succeeded, since the events received worldwide media coverage. For the first time, there was a global audience for the cause of Palestinian terrorists. Thus, the operation was seen by Black September as a success. Only this public relations success may explain why these Palestinian terrorists served as an example for many other terrorist groups. From the 1970s on, international politics were marked by terrorist acts designed to address a global audience.

Further, in the 1970s, terrorist groups began to cooperate with one another, beginning with the Palestinians, who trained European terrorists such as the West German Red Army Fraction (RAF). In addition, some states began to support terrorist groups. The Soviet Union and other communist countries thought they could take advantage of terrorist groups and their anti-imperialist or anti-capitalist fight and supported some of them financially and logistically.

Question:

Please match the first four phases in the history of terrorism with their specific characteristics.

1. Terrorism was used by groups for their anti-colonial struggle. Later, separatist movements began to copy the tactics of anti-colonial terrorist groups. (correct match is 2)
2. Anarchists fought for a regime change and ethno-nationalists used terrorism in their struggles for independence. (correct match is 1)
3. Terrorist organizations with political-ideological goals decreased in number, while the number of terrorist organizations with religious goals increased. (correct match is 4)
4. Some terrorist groups, which so far had operated in a geographically limited area, changed their strategy and began to operate internationally. (correct match is 3)

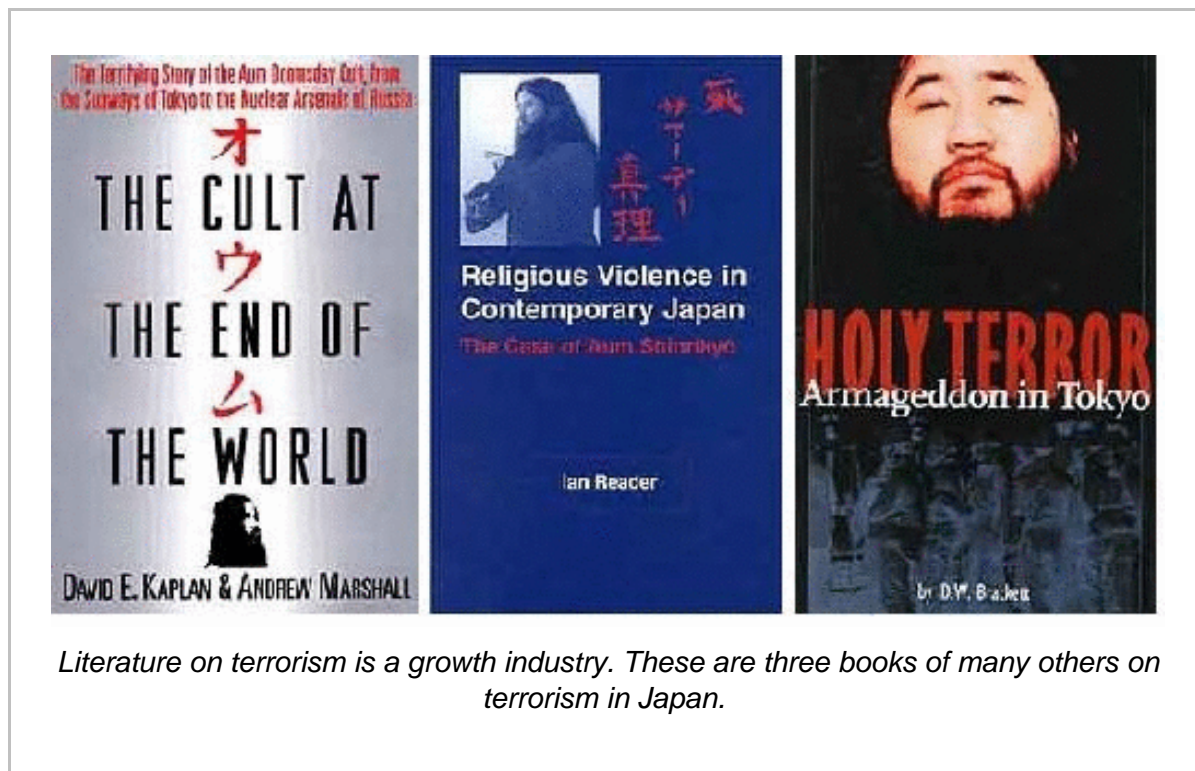
List of all matchables:

1. Phase 1; 2. Phase 2; 3. Phase 3; 4. Phase 4;
-

Phase 4

From the beginning of the 1980s, terrorist organizations with political-ideological goals decreased in number, while the number of terrorist organizations with religious goals increased. A great number of these were Islamic terrorist groups, but other groups also turned to terrorism, for example the Japanese Aum sect, which staged a nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995, and the Christian Patriots in

the US, which were associated with the bombing in Oklahoma in 1995. It should be noted that many terrorist groups in the earlier phase were also religiously homogeneous; however, they were terrorists not for religious but for political reasons. This is the case with the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), and the PLO.



The most important grouping of terrorist organizations, in terms of the number of active terrorists, the number of attacks, and the number of people killed, is by far Islamic terrorism. A key factor in the evolution of Islamic terrorism was the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979). The revolution in Iran was the first major success for political Islam in recent times. Moreover, the hostage taking of US diplomats and the following conflict with the US provided a wider ideological framework for many Islamic extremists, including terrorists. Eventually, the Islamic Republic of Iran began to support terrorist groups financially and logistically.

Recent trends — the beginning of a new phase

In view of these new patterns of terrorism, we can speak of a new, fifth phase of terrorism. But what is the main characteristic of recent developments? Religiously motivated terrorists like Al-Qaeda try to be as violent as possible, which is why some observers speak of apocalyptic terror. Observers who believe in Al-Qaeda consists of a network and has a multi-national constituency speak of transnational terrorism.

However, the central characteristic for the purposes of this lesson is the global dimension of terrorism. In contrast to the third phase, which also included international terrorism, Al-Qaeda does not merely seek international attention for its message. By declaring all Western democracies and their allies enemies, it is trying to trigger a global conflict. And indeed, the US is implementing its countermeasures globally. We thus call the fifth phase the phase of global terrorism.



http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/terror/framesource_map.html [20.03.04]

The map shows the main terrorist incidents that are believed to have been committed by Al-Qaeda or like-minded terrorist groups.

Question:

Guess how many significant terrorist incidents occurred in 2002.

Option 1: Fewer than 50

Option 2: About 75

Option 3: About 100

Option 4: **More than 125**

Hint: Note that the incidents were counted by the US government's Incident Review Panel criteria, according to which a terrorist incident is judged significant if #it results in loss of life or serious injury to persons, abduction or kidnapping of persons, major property damage, and/or is an act or attempted act that could reasonably be expected to create the conditions noted."

Details of the hint: Check your answer at: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2002/html/19990.htm>

Conclusion

This brief historical overview of terrorism shows that terrorism is not a new phenomenon but a dark aspect of modernity. A five-phase model is useful for understanding the evolution of terrorism, although other models are possible. The various phases depicted here show that terrorists, their goals,

and their means have changed over time, and the meaning associated with terrorism has also varied. The attacks of 11 September 2001 were dramatic but are nevertheless in keeping with the recent developments of terrorism. Considering the global dimension of the conflict caused by Al-Qaeda, we can speak of a current phase of global terrorism.

External Document:

Printable file The file includes the full text of this learning object in a printer-friendly format.

External Document:

References Download and print out a list with recommended literature.

Causes of terrorism

Author

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Instructional Designer

Cornelius Friesendorf; International Relations and Security Network (ISN)

Publisher

International Relations and Security Network (ISN); ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich)

Learning Object Description:

This lesson deals with the difficulties in understanding the causes of terrorism. It shows that a lack of information about terrorism and terrorists, as well as cultural differences, make it difficult to identify the causes. The lesson shows that terrorism can be a strategy in an ongoing conflict, that members of protest movements have in the past turned to terrorism, and that terrorists can be motivated by religious ideologies. It also shows that the media might involuntarily play a central role in the strategy of terrorists. Whereas understanding the causes of terrorism and the goals of terrorists is difficult in general, understanding the underlying causes of suicide bombings and the activities of Al-Qaeda is even more difficult, leading to diverging explanations by experts for these types of terrorism.

Learning Object Objectives:

To understand why it is difficult to understand the causes of terrorism; to list various functions of the use of violence; to elaborate on how terrorism can be used as a strategy in an ongoing violent conflict, how terrorism can evolve out of a protest movement, and to describe religiously motivated terrorism; to say how the media can play a part in terrorist strategies, and to explain why suicide bombings and the global terrorism of Al-Qaeda are different from earlier forms of terrorism; and to list three different views about the objectives of Al-Qaeda.

For policies to be effective, policy makers must be able to identify the causes of a problem. However, there are many problems whose causes are more or less obscure. Terrorism is one of these, not least due to a lack of information about who the terrorists are, what they want, and what means they might use to achieve their goals. Cultural differences aggravate the difficulty of understanding terrorism, particularly religious terrorism. This lesson deals with the difficulties in understanding the causes of terrorism.

Terrorism - A strategy for the weak

Terrorism as a strategy in an ongoing violent conflict

Terrorists can deliberately opt for a violent conflict strategy, as did the PLO in the 1960s. This example also shows that terrorism is a strategy for the weak. In 1964, the Palestine Liberation

Organisation (PLO) was formed to unite various Palestinian resistance groups. At the beginning, it was not associated with terrorism. The PLO's main objective was to gain territory occupied by Israel. From 1967 onwards, the more radical Al Fatah became increasingly dominant. The PLO became more extreme, as Israel became militarily more successful. The PLO, which had build up quasi-troops in Syria and Jordan, was pursuing a guerilla strategy against Israel. However, this strategy gave Israel the possibility to undertake military strikes against the PLO bases. In the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, Israel dispatched the combined forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, but Israel also directly attacked the PLO bases. The remaining PLO factions were expelled by Jordan in 1970.



The young PLO leader Yasser Arafat (source: BBB, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/v3_ip_timeline/html/1964.stm [3-5-2004]).

During this time, the PLO and its leader Yassir Arafat decided to turn from a guerilla strategy to a strategy of terrorism. In 1972, PLO terrorists of the Black September organization attacked Israeli athletes at the summer Olympics in Munich, Germany, which created an enormous amount of publicity for the Palestinians and their struggle. Only two years later, the Arab states recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of all Palestinians, and Arafat was able to speak at the United Nations General Assembly.

Hyperlink to:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/v3_ip_timeline/html/default.stm

Timeline of the Middle East conflict

The BBC publishes a timeline of important events relating to the Middle East conflict. The timeline includes pictures and short descriptions of events.

Terrorism and protest movements

A glance at the development of various terrorist groups in the 1960s and 1970s shows that terrorism and protest movements are linked in that terrorism is the end result of an escalation process. The Federal Republic of Germany is a good example. At the end of the 1960s, some prominent members of the anti-establishment, left-wing protest movement were convinced that, in view of the tough police reaction, the movement should turn to violence. Only violent means, they argued, could initiate a revolution.

Initially, they restricted their violence to objects, avoiding people as targets. In 1968, attacks on warehouses in Frankfurt/Main marked the beginning of the terrorist group the Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Fraction, RAF). In 1972, police arrested the RAF leaders (Andreas Baader, Gudrun Enslin, and Ulrike Meinhof). In the following years, the remaining members and sympathizers tried to liberate them, and some subsequent attacks led to the deaths of several people. As more terrorists were arrested by police, the liberation of prisoners became an important goal of the remaining terrorists. The escalation continued.

When humans first became targets, the terrorists restricted their attacks to "representatives of the system", that is, political and economic leaders; later they included soldiers and police. Eventually, the RAF engaged in political killings, kidnappings, and bank robberies. One of the victims of the RAF was Hanns-Martin Schleyer, president of the West German employers' association. In autumn 1977, he was kidnapped and later murdered after an RAF plan to exchange prisoners failed.



This photograph shows Hanns-Martin Schleyer holding a panel reading "RAF prisoner since 20 days" (source: <http://www.spiegel.de/sptv/special/0,1518,grossbild-217842-219110,00.html> [20-3-2004]).

Terrorist groups in other countries emerged from political mass protests, as was the case, for example, with the Italian Brigate Rosse (Red Brigades) and the French Action Directe. In Spain, the ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna) evolved out of a protest movement against the Franco regime and its repressive policies in the Basque region. The IRA (Irish Republican Army) experienced a revival following protest marches of catholic inhabitants of Northern Ireland, who felt threatened by protestants. In the United States, the terrorist organization The Weathermen was founded in 1969 by representatives of the anti-war and civil rights movement. As we can see, terrorism can have its roots in protest movements.

Religion and terrorism

Assassination under a religious banner is not new: 2000 years ago a Jewish sect called the Zealots, fighting against the Roman Empire, killed a Roman soldier in public with a dagger. The term "assassin" was the name given to members of a sub-sect of the Ismaili Shiite Muslims. The sect operated from the 11th to the 13th century in parts of Persia and Syria, sending killer commandos from its fortresses to enemy Sunni communities and to political and military leaders. The assassin, who saw himself as performing a religious duty, often lived with the victim for some time until the right moment for the killing came.

In the 20th century, religiously motivated terrorism is a relatively recent phenomenon. It developed in conjunction with the rise of political Islam. The idea of Jihad (often translated as "holy war") and the concept of martyrdom (someone killed during the holy war) often goes hand in hand with terrorism, with the terrorist believing that he or she is performing a religious duty. Such beliefs were revealed, for example, in the videotaped confessions of the attackers of 11 September 2001.

However, religious terrorism is not limited to the Islamic world. In 1987 a religious movement called AUM Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth) was founded in Japan by Asahara Shoko. This sect, informed by a blend of Hinduism and Buddhism, believed in an apocalyptic end of the world, and it committed a series of violent acts. In 1995, it tried to kill thousands of people by releasing nerve gas in the Tokyo subway (12 people died and 5000 were injured). Also in 1995, a building of the US Federal Government in Oklahoma City was destroyed in a bombing (168 people died and 500 were injured). A terrorist group calling itself Christian Patriots claimed responsibility. However, while the name suggests a religious motivation, members were more motivated by an obscure right-wing ideology.



This picture shows the destruction caused by a truck bomb exploding in front of Oklahoma City's Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building at 9am on 19 April 1995 (source: Washington Post, Special report on the Oklahoma bombing, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/oklahoma/oklahoma.htm>)

[3-5-2004]).

The deadliest form of terrorism in the past years has been inspired by Islamist ideology, as seen in the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, the massacre of foreign tourists in Luxor, Egypt, in 1997, the attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, and the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001.

Terrorism as a communication strategy: the role of the media

Terrorism is a strategy of the weak who lack the means for open military warfare. Terrorists want to attract a maximum of attention with relatively little force. Hence, terrorism can be understood as a communication strategy (see Waldmann 1998, Münkler 2002). The media unintentionally plays a central role in this strategy. Terrorists need press coverage of their acts to spread their message, and the more coverage, the better. A spectacular attack is likely to get more coverage than a small attack, leading to situations where the press might involuntarily push terrorists into committing more atrocious acts than they otherwise would. As a consequence, many have called on the media to restrict its coverage or have asked governments to restrict the freedom of the press. While factual coverage can influence public opinion, commentators and editorialists also have a huge influence. By calling the means and objectives of terrorists illegitimate, the media can help deprive terrorists of some of their support base. This is why some people argue that a free press strengthens a consensus against terrorism.

Terrorist attacks committed by Al-Qaeda have received enormous coverage in the international media, with many images and headlines portraying the horror of the events.



The relationship between the media and terrorism is very complex. Therefore, it is not surprising that heated discussions about the way the media report terrorism recur. The following quote shows that the debate about the responsibility of the press with regard to terrorism coverage is controversial. The

editors of the Washington Post explain their use of the word terrorism as follows:

Some readers complain regularly that Post news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle is biased against Israel. One enduring example, they say, is the description of people or organizations that carry out or sponsor suicide bombings as "militants" rather than "terrorists," the term these readers view as more accurate and descriptive. They say terrorism is distinguished from militancy in that "the aim is to spread fear and to kill, indiscriminately, men, women and children. Softening the nomenclature tends to encourage and legitimize terrorism," as one reader put it#. Here is some of what the guidelines [of the Washington Post] now say. "The language we use should be chosen for its ability to inform readers. Terrorism and terrorist can be useful words, but they are labels. Like all labels, they do not convey much hard information. We should rely first on specific facts, not characterizations. Why refer to a 'terrorist attack in Tel Aviv' when we can be more informative and precise: 'The bombing of a disco frequented by teenagers in Tel Aviv,' for example. Our first obligation to readers is to tell them what happened, as precisely as possible.

Hint: Source: Washington Post: The language of terrorism, 21 September 2003 (accessed on 1-2-2004):

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A37616-2003Sep19-Found=true>

The quote reveals the tension between the Washington Post's effort to present events in a neutral way and one reader's demands that the paper use language that denounces terrorism. The controversy shows that both sides are aware of the fact that the media has a tremendous impact on the way terrorist attacks are perceived by the public.

Question:

Do you think that the media should avoid using the term "terrorism"?

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Option 3: I cannot say

Limitations for the use of violence

Terrorists want a lot of people watching and a lot of people listening and not a lot of people dead.

Reference:

Jenkins, Brian Michael 1975: International terrorism : a new mode of conflict. Los Angeles (CA): Crescent Publications, p. 15.

This already famous observation was made by Brian Jenkins in 1975. It highlights the idea that terrorists often used violence primarily to draw attention to their causes, but in so doing, they also attempted to limit the impact of their acts. For example, they often limited their violence to representatives of the state, avoiding the involvement of what they considered to be, by contrast, innocent civilians. It is crucial that terrorists did not appear too brutal or irrational.

Yet while this was true for most political terrorism of the 19th and 20th century, it is no longer true for the religious terrorism we have witnessed since the 1990s. Religious terrorists are often not primarily driven by concrete political motives but by more transcendental goals. Traditional limits to the use of violence that were respected by terrorists with political goals are obviously not respected by religious terrorists, who feel no need to justify their actions to a group of sympathizers or to the public, or to

obtain legitimacy for their action. Rather, religious terrorists derive legitimacy for their actions from an external divine authority. The lack of limitations to their use of violence and the terrorists' expectation that they will achieve salvation through their actions have led some commentators to refer to "apocalyptic" terrorism. Immediately after the 9-11 attacks, Bruce Hoffman said in a testimony before the US Subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security:

We also had long consoled ourselves — and had only recently began to question and debate the notion — that terrorists were more interested in publicity than killing and therefore had neither the need nor interest in annihilating large numbers of people. For decades, there was widespread acceptance of the observation made famous by Brian Jenkins in 1975 that, 'Terrorists want a lot of people watching and a lot of people listening and not a lot of people dead.'

Reference:

Hoffman, Bruce 2001: Re-Thinking Terrorism in Light of a War on Terrorism. Testimony before the Subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. US House of Representatives, 6 September 2001, p. 3-4.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.welt.de/data/2004/03/16/251729.html?prx=1>

Terrorism and the spread of fear

Herfried Münkler, who for decades defended the notion of terrorism as a mode of communication, wrote after the atrocious attacks in Madrid on 11 March 2004: "Spreading fear is the only message of the new terrorism." If you read German, click on the balloon to download his article "Verwüstung statt Propaganda" (destruction and not propaganda), published in the German newspaper Die Welt on 16 March 2004.

Constructing goals and intentions

I do not think any of us has a definitive understanding of the causes and the consequences of the terrorist attacks of September 11. #we have little general knowledge to draw on because our grasp of terrorism is even less secure than it is on other important social phenomena such as poverty, ethnic conflict, and wars.

Reference:

Jervis, Robert 2002: An Interim Assessment of September 11: What Has Changed and What Has Not? *Political Science Quarterly* 117 (1): 37-54, here p. 37.

Two years after the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, political scientist Robert Jervis refers to the main problem in discussing the causes of terrorism: a lack of information. Adding to this, cultural barriers are an impediment to understanding why and under what conditions people turn to terrorism and what they actually hope to achieve. Even though terrorists might publish communiqués, they often do not clarify these issues. Al-Qaeda is a case in point. Only after several months did Al-Qaeda leaders take responsibility for the 9-11 attacks. Statements issued by Al-Qaeda often contain only limited information as to what the organization wants, leading to three different views about its objectives.

A first group

argues that with the 9-11 attacks Al-Qaeda pursued clear strategic goals. But while some adherents of this view argue that Al-Qaeda wanted to provoke the US into unleashing a major war, others argue that Al-Qaeda hoped to bring about a US withdrawal from the Middle East.

A second group

focuses on the symbolical meaning of the attacks. Some say it was an attack on the symbols of

capitalism (the World Trade Center) and US military might (the Pentagon), while others see it as an attack on the "symbols of the infidel".

A third group

would argue that Al-Qaeda does not have political goals at all but that it was only inspired by hate, seeking a metaphysical revenge.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.fpri.org/enotes/americanwar.20020423.radu.futilesearchforrootcauses.html>

The root causes of terrorism

Click on the balloon to see an article written by terrorism researcher Michael Radu. Radu argues that searching for the root causes of terrorism is futile.

Question:

After reading the article, do you agree with Radu that poverty is not a root cause of terrorism?

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Option 3: I cannot say

Conclusion

Identifying the causes of terrorism is important for finding effective strategies against terrorism. However, as this lesson has shown, identifying the "real" causes is difficult. Terrorism is primarily an option for the weak, who employ it strategically in an ongoing conflict or who resort to it at the end of an escalated protest movement. Religious terrorists pose particular problems, since they do not impose limits on the damage they cause and since their religious objectives are impervious to political solutions.

This lesson has also shown that the media plays a central role in terrorism: Terrorists want to spread their messages through the media. However, journalists can help build a consensus against political violence by presenting terrorist attacks as brutal and illegitimate. Identifying the causes of terrorism is difficult, due, frequently, to a lack of information about the terrorists, their goals, and the means at their disposal, as well as the cultural barriers that make it difficult to understand religious extremism. Consequently, we have to construct the causes of terrorism. These constructions can vary to a great extent, as the various explanations for Al-Qaeda's attacks on New York and Washington in 2001 illustrate.

External Document:

Printable file The file includes the full text of this learning object in a printer-friendly format.

External Document:

References Download and print out a list with recommended literature.

Consequences of terrorism

Author

Jan Bittner; Free University of Berlin

Instructional Designer

Cornelius Friesendorf; International Relations and Security Network (ISN)

Publisher

International Relations and Security Network (ISN); ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich)

Learning Object Description:

This lesson deals with the consequences of terrorism. It distinguishes between direct and indirect consequences, with a focus on the latter. By describing the impact of terrorism on the tourism, assurance, and aviation industries, the lesson shows that the indirect, economic consequences are less visible but nevertheless important. That the attacks of 11 September 2001 did not lead to a major financial crisis was mainly a result of the quick and effective response by governments, central banks, and supervisory agencies.

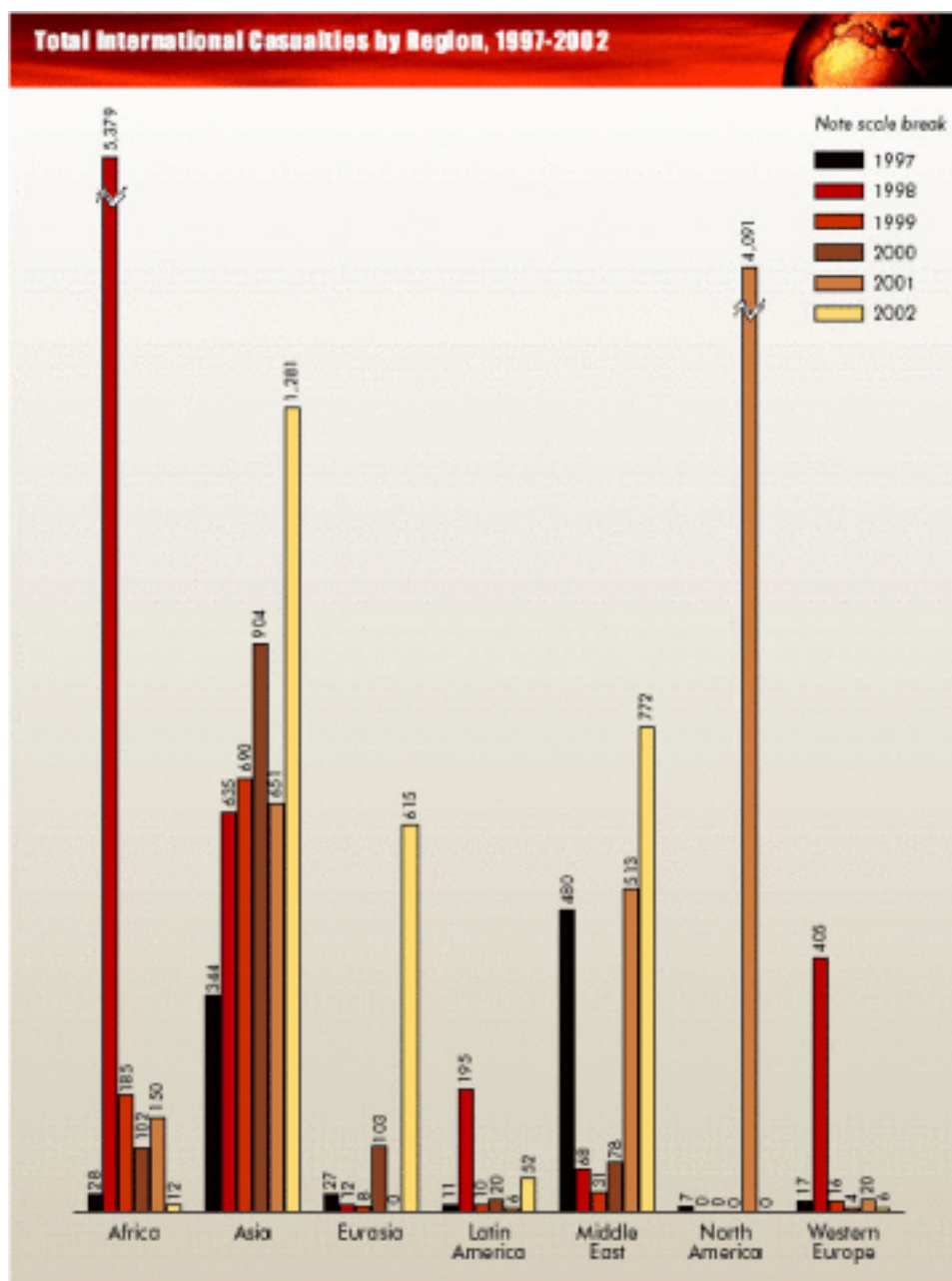
Learning Object Objectives:

To define the direct consequences of terrorism (human deaths and the destruction of property) and the indirect consequences (changes in the assessment of the future by consumers and businesses, resulting in a reduction in economic activity); to illustrate the impact of the attacks on New York and Washington on the tourism, assurance, and aviation industries; and to explain why the attacks did not lead to a major financial crisis.

The consequences of terrorism become most visible when television cameras show dead or injured victims of terrorist attacks. However, human deaths are not the only consequences of terrorism. We find it useful to distinguish between direct and indirect consequences of terrorism. Human deaths and the destruction of property are direct consequences. Indirect consequences are mainly caused by communities changing their behavior in the aftermath of an attack and by state counter-terrorism measures.

Direct consequences

Terrorist incidents often result in loss of life or serious injuries. Whereas in the past, terrorists with political goals have tended to limit their violence to some extent, religious terrorists have tended not to. For terrorists with political goals it is important that they are not perceived as wanting only to kill people and destroy property in an arbitrary and irrational manner, since this would deprive them of some of the support base on which they depend. Religious terrorists, however, do not seek public approval. Particularly Al-Qaeda and like-minded groups seem to want to kill great numbers of civilians, as the attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001, and the attacks on three train stations in Madrid in 2004 have shown.



This chart shows the number of casualties of terrorism around the world. Two points are important to remember when looking at the chart. First, spectacular attacks like 11 September 2001 and the embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, which are very visible in the chart, are exceptional. Second, despite the tendency of many Western commentators to focus on terrorism in Europe and the US, other regions, notably Asia and the Middle East, are more severely affected.

Hyperlink to:

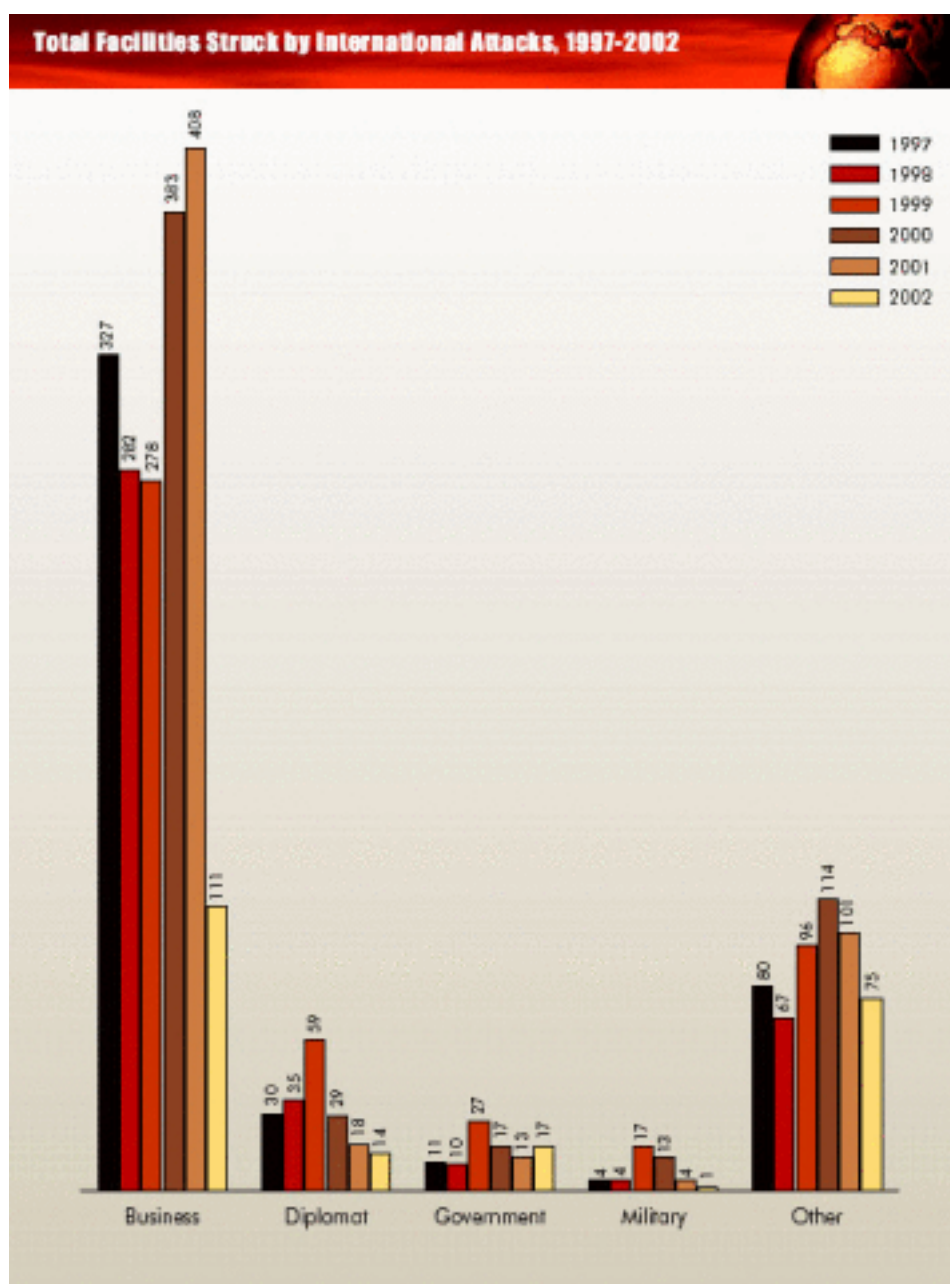
<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2002/html/19997.htm>

Source

The image was taken from the website of the US Department of State (2-4-2004). Click on the balloon to see the website.

Loss of property

Besides the killing and kidnapping of individuals, terrorists often damage property. Most of the facilities damaged or destroyed by terrorists are business facilities, or so-called soft targets. Attacks on these targets have a symbolic value: The perpetrators want to change the existing political order. The Israeli airline El Al, for example, is often targeted by terrorists who want to harm Israel. Similarly, the Kurdish PKK attacked Turkish business facilities during its campaign in the 1980s and 1990s. US-based multinational companies and their representatives are frequent objects of anti-US terrorist attacks.



The chart shows that business facilities are far more often attacked by terrorists than

other facilities, whether these are military, diplomatic, or government facilities. Terrorists might attack business facilities because these are often less well protected and easier to attack than government buildings. If we interpret the reason for the frequent attacks on business targets, then it is safe to assume that terrorists are not as powerful as we might think and therefore focus on soft targets. According to a slightly different reading, terrorists attack business facilities in the hope that these attacks are the most effective. Attacks on businesses have indirect consequences that from a terrorist's point of view can be positive.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2002/html/19997.htm>

Source

The image was taken from the website of the US Department of State (2-4-2004).

In addition to human deaths and the destruction of property, terrorism can have political consequences, as shown by Al-Qaeda attacks on Spanish commuter trains in March 2004. These attacks had a significant impact on the outcome of the Spanish federal elections, replacing a conservative with a socialist Prime Minister. Once in power, the new administration rapidly withdrew Spanish troops from Iraq. Thus, the attacks were clearly linked to the troop withdrawal. However, it is important to note that this causal link was indirect. Already before the attacks, the majority of the Spanish public and the Socialist party wanted the troops to be withdrawn. Hence, the attacks changed the outcome of the elections, but not the public view of the Spanish engagement in Iraq and the position of the Socialist party.

Indirect consequences

An huge and unexpected event like 11 September leads consumers and businesses to change their assessments of the future. Fear and uncertainty lead to a reduction in economic activity. Consumers prefer to save money rather than spend it, and companies hesitate to expand their production facilities. Financial investors prefer safer investments - government bonds, instead of stocks (see International Monetary Fund: World Economic Outlook 2001, December 2001).

The economic consequences of the attacks on New York and Washington were felt in three main sectors, the assurance industry, tourism, and the aviation industry.

The assurance industry

suffered severely under the attacks, mainly because the industry had fed a catastrophe of this scale into their risk models. Assurance companies and reinsurance companies, which are mainly based in Europe, thus had to pay for the damage. Their share prices fell on the stock market, and so did the share prices of the companies in which they had invested.

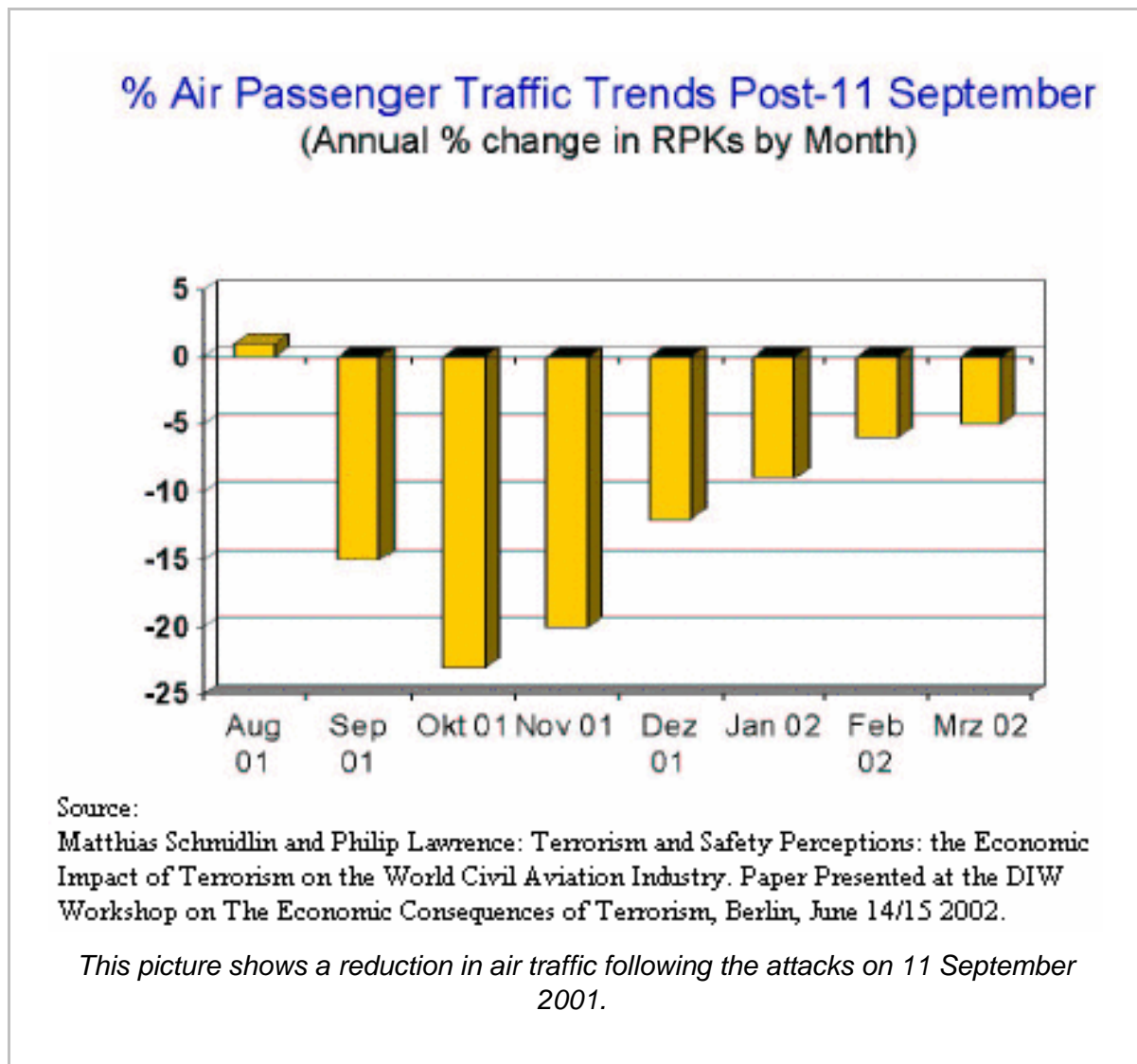
The tourism industry

is highly sensitive to security risks. Tourism declines almost immediately when natural catastrophes and terrorist attacks occur. Following the 9-11 attacks, the number of trips to the US and to Muslim countries decreased. Economically, the reduction in the number of tourists traveling to the US was compensated by American tourists spending their vacations in North America instead of traveling overseas. The decline in international tourism posed particular problems for the aviation industry.

The aviation industry

was in a critical state even before 11 September. Immediately after the attacks, many flights to North

America were cancelled, passengers around the world cancelled their tickets, and tighter security measures were implemented, leading to long delays at airports. The significant decrease in air passenger traffic shown in the graph aggravated the crisis in the aviation industry. In the months after the 9-11 attacks, several companies went bankrupt.



State responses

In retrospect, it is surprising that that attacks did not lead to a major financial crisis. That this did not happen is due to quick and effective responses by governments, central banks, and supervisory agencies, all of which provided extra liquidity and temporarily relaxed equity provisions. The expansive fiscal policy of the US government at the time offset some of the decrease in private spending. Only three days after the attacks, the US Congress approved an emergency package of US\$ 40 billion. Additionally, the federal budget for defense was increased by 14 per cent. In total, the increase in US public spending was the equivalent of 1.8 per cent of the US gross domestic product. Of course, the extensive fiscal policy could not be sustained for long, and the US government soon tried to restore economic stability and investor confidence.

Question:

Which of the following statements is correct?

Option 1: From 1997 to 2002, diplomatic facilities were the main targets of terrorist attacks.

Option 2: **From 1997 to 2002, the number of terrorist casualties was much higher in Africa and Asia than in Europe and the US.**

Option 3: Despite the fact that the US government did not increase its spending following the 2001 attacks, a major financial crisis did not occur.

Conclusion

This lesson has made a distinction between direct and indirect consequences of terrorism. Human deaths and the destruction of property are direct consequences. These are the most visible ones. People around the world have seen television images showing the collapsing World Trade Center or the destroyed embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Indirect consequences are less visible. It is important to note that mainly business facilities are attacked, and not military, diplomatic, and government facilities. This may be explained by the fact that business facilities are less well protected or that terrorists see attacks on these as causing the highest damage. The attacks on New York and Washington caused substantial economic damage. They created a climate of fear and uncertainty, which led to a reduction in economic activity. The aviation, tourism, and assurance industries were most affected by the attacks, and the effect was felt around the world. However, governments, central banks, and financial supervisory agencies provided extra liquidity and temporarily relaxed equity provisions, which proved an effective means of averting a major international economic crisis.

External Document:

Printable file The file includes the full text of this learning object in a printer-friendly format.

External Document:

Risk Download a printable file with a definition of risk.

External Document:

References Download and print out a list with recommended literature.

Interdependencies: Terrorism and Globalization

Author

Jan Bittner; Free University of Berlin

Instructional Designer

Cornelius Friesendorf; International Relations and Security Network (ISN)

Publisher

International Relations and Security Network (ISN); ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich)

Learning Object Description:

In this lesson, we look at the interdependencies of terrorism and globalization. The lesson focuses on a central paradox of contemporary terrorism: Al-Qaeda opposes globalization, but it also benefits from it by making use of modern technologies. The lesson describes the shift from international terrorism to global terrorism and then looks at Al-Qaeda's organizational structure, ideology, and scope of activities. In addition, the lesson explains how Al-Qaeda is benefiting from technological innovations and global financial transactions. Last, it shows that critical infrastructures such as global transport systems are vulnerable to terrorism.

Learning Object Objectives:

To explain the shift from international terrorism to global terrorism; to elaborate on Al-Qaeda's organizational structure, ideology, and scope of activities; to describe how Al-Qaeda benefits from technological innovations and global financial transactions; and to illustrate the damage inflicted by terrorism on global transport and trade.

Al-Qaeda seems to support an anti-rationalist and anti-technological ideology. Some commentators believe that its leaders and followers hope to return to pre-modernity. Al-Qaeda's alliance with the Afghan Taliban therefore makes sense. However, were it not for globalization, Al-Qaeda would not be able to operate in the way it does. For this reason, contemporary terrorism is sometimes seen as the dark side of globalization, and the fight against al-Qaeda as globalization's first war.

Reference:

Campbell, Kurt M. 2002: Globalization's First War? *The Washington Quarterly* 25 (1): 7-14.

From international terrorism to global terrorism

In the late 1960s, terrorist groups started hijacking airplanes. They conducted their campaigns internationally, often involving foreign citizens and attacking state symbols such as airlines or embassy buildings. This was done in the hope of reaching a large international audience that then would hear the terrorists' message. Mainly ethno-nationalist or separatist groups pursued this strategy, as Palestinian plane hijackings and Kurdish attacks against Turkish facilities abroad illustrate. As a consequence of this internationalization of terrorism, states increasingly coordinated the fight against terrorism within international organizations. Moreover, cooperation among law enforcement agencies

was continually improved.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2002/html/19977.htm>

Definition of terrorism by the US Department of State

The US Department of State defines international terrorism as "terrorism involving the citizens or territory of more than one country." (Website of the Department of State: Pattern of Global Terrorism 2002 [25-3-2004]. To see the website, click on the balloon.)

Terrorism also assumed an international dimension when terrorist groups began to cooperate with each other. In the 1970s, for example, members of the revolutionary German RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion) received training from the Palestinian Fatah. The link between Palestinian and RAF terrorists later led Palestinians, who had kidnapped an airplane of the Deutsche Lufthansa airline, to demand the release of imprisoned RAF terrorists. Other terrorist organizations also cooperated with each other, despite their sometimes very different ideologies.

Al-Qaeda is different in several respects. It not only seeks to draw attention to a specific conflict by staging spectacular international operations, but it also appears to want to incite conflict on a global scale. As a response to Al-Qaeda, the US has forged a coalition of many countries against terrorism and has intervened in Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban regime, which has hosted Al-Qaeda. State security forces around the world now collect information on terrorist activities or are more directly engaged in the fight against terrorism. We seem to be living in an age of global terrorism.



This picture shows a member of US special forces in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar in December 2001 (source: BBC News (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1710089.stm [4-5-2004])).



This aerial picture shows a site in Eastern Afghanistan near the city of Jalalabad that according to the US government was a training camp for Al-Qaeda fighters. It supposedly consisted of buildings, training areas, and gun emplacements. The building shows the site after it was bombed by US forces (source: http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/library/imint/jalalabad_terror-post.htm [4-5-2004]).

Al-Qaeda - a global actor

A multi-national, decentralized organization with several thousand members and associates from many countries with a worldwide presence... This is a typical description of Al-Qaeda, although a multinational company or an international non-government organization could be similarly described. In contrast to other terrorist groups, it is presumed, Al-Qaeda has a network structure: Operations are carried out by cells operating independently from one another. The attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, for example, were carried out by several cells that did not know each other. Al-Qaeda is also a focal point or umbrella organization for a worldwide network that includes many Sunni Islamic extremist groups, some members of al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and the Harakat ul-Mujahidin.

In past statements, Al-Qaeda has declared a jihad (often translated as holy war) against the "crusaders". In 1998, bin Laden issued a fatwah (an authoritative ruling on a religious matter), which was published in Al-Quds al-'Arabi (February 23, 1998) and which called for a jihad (often translated as holy war) against the United States:

We - with God's help - call on every Muslim who believes in God and wishes to be rewarded to comply with God's order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it. We also call on Muslim ulema [spiritual teachers], leaders, youths, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan's U.S. troops and the devil's supporters allying with them, and to displace those who are behind them so that they may learn a lesson.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.mideastweb.org/osamabinladen1.htm>

Source

This quote was taken from the mideastweb website (10-4-2004).

Al-Qaeda's intentions are not entirely clear, but the organization seems keen on establishing a pan-Islamic Caliphate. This would require the toppling of "un-Islamic" regimes and the expelling of Westerners and non-Muslims from Muslim countries, particularly from Saudi Arabia. Moreover, a pan-Islamic Caliphate would transcend the existing structure of nation states and create some sort of supranational entity. Al-Qaeda does not include only Muslims in Arab countries in its pan-Islamism but Muslims around the world. The global dimension Al-Qaeda's ideology is illustrated by the 1996 fatwah, ("Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places") in which bin Laden calls on "my Muslim brothers of the world." (Source: <http://www.aaronfreeman.com/ubl/TMP-1080560356.htm> [10-4-2004]).

Question:

Do you agree that the terrorism for which Al-Qaeda stands is something new, as compared to earlier forms of terrorism?

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Option 3: I cannot say

Al-Qaeda and globalization

Al-Qaeda's transnational network structure and its multinational constituency are just two features that transcend the state structure of the international system and that make the organization part and parcel of globalization. That Al-Qaeda benefits from globalization becomes clear when we look at two factors that are crucial to its operations: technological innovations and global financial transactions.

Technological innovations

In Al-Qaeda's international activities, its members use modern telecommunication technology. When Al-Qaeda had its headquarters in Afghanistan, its members communicated via email and satellite telephones with each other and with outsiders. Al-Qaeda fighters even complained about Afghanistan's technological backwardness, as the Wall Street Journal reported in a story based on information stored on a computer found in Kabul in 2001. "This place is worse than a tomb," an Egyptian militant had written to his friends back home. He added that the country was "not suitable for work" (quoted in: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2168792.stm> [10-2-2004]). Al-Qaeda also uses communication tools in a sophisticated way for its propaganda efforts. It sends videotapes and audio file messages to the media and also uses CD-ROMs and the Internet. To create a climate of fear, it relies on mass media, which played a crucial role in the 11 September attacks: The time lag between the first and the second airplanes crashing into the World Trade Center made extensive media coverage possible, and the buildings' collapse was broadcast live, generating worldwide publicity for Al-Qaeda. No text was needed; the images spoke for themselves.

Global financial transactions

Terror cells that conduct worldwide operations are not only dependent on advanced technology but

also on financial resources. Al-Qaeda has two main mechanisms: the official banking system and the Hawala banking system. Financial sanctions against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban have been in force since 1999 (Security Council Resolution 1267), but it is extremely difficult to reveal the financial flows of terrorist organizations and to know where their money is. Terrorists need only relative small sums to finance their activities and often receive revenues from legal sources. Al-Qaeda, for example, receives most of its funds from Osama bin Laden's personal fortune and from Islamic charities. Hawala banking is a trust-based method of sending money across borders, without money moving physically between locations. Hawala dealers transfer funds by telephone or fax. As no legal contracts are involved and no receipts issued, financial flows remain undocumented. The Hawala money-transferring system is cheap, fast, and clandestine. It enables Al-Qaeda to sideline the official banking system and remain relatively unharmed by international financial sanctions against its financial transactions.

Interdependency and new vulnerabilities

Globalization has created complex interdependencies. Global trade, media, and transportation and communication technologies are linking states, companies, and individuals around the globe. Liberals welcome the growing interdependencies, saying they are a prerequisite for a more peaceful world, since wars have become too costly for states. Interdependencies are not unproblematic, however. Terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda can create substantial damage by targeting critical infrastructures, as the following example shows.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/crn/research/riskmodeling.cfm>

Modelling risk interdependencies

See the Risk/Interdependency Modeling Project at the Zurich-based Comprehensive Risk Analysis and Management Network.

Terrorism and global transport

In past years, the volume and extent of mass transport has increased considerably. The attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, as well as the attacks on Madrid in March 2004, have revealed that public transport is vulnerable to terrorism. Airplanes and buses can become targets of terrorist attacks or can be transformed into deadly missiles. Ships can also be attacked.



This picture shows the aftermath of the attacks on a Spanish commuter train on 11 March 2004 (source: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/dossiers/terrorism/index.cfm> [4-5-2004]).

Another scenario is if a "dirty" bomb hidden in a container were to explode in a major city. A dirty bomb is a conventional explosive packed with radioactive material. Besides the damage from the initial blast of the conventional explosive, dirty bombs cause nuclear radiation. The risk of terrorism attacks on the global transportation system is relatively high, since these potential targets are difficult to protect and since the loss of life and property can be tremendous. The hijacking of airplanes has been a terrorist strategy since the 1960s, but in the years before 11 September 2001, terrorist attacks on planes had become rare. No US aircraft had been bombed or hijacked for more than a decade before the attacks on New York and Washington. Further, until recently, ships and boats were rarely targets of terrorism. Attacks were carried out only sporadically, for instance, by Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. In past years, however, terrorists have increasingly expanded their operations to include attacks at sea. In 2000, suicide attackers detonated a bomb alongside the USS Cole, killing 17 sailors. In June 2002, Moroccan authorities arrested three men who planned to attack US, British, and Israeli merchant and navy vessels in the Straits of Gibraltar.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.benadorassociates.com/article/636>

Danger at sea

See also Ijaz, Mansoor "The Maritime Threat From Al Qaeda", Financial Times, 19 October 2003 (accessed 10-4-2004).

Terrorism and global trade

The global economy depends on a well-functioning international transportation system, which is highly vulnerable to terrorism. Global trade suffers when shipping links become unreliable and when transport costs rise. Transport costs can rise, for example, as a consequence of stricter security

measures. For example, after 11 September 2001, US authorities introduced tighter controls along the US-Canadian border, increasing delays for trucks from a few minutes to several hours. This had a dramatic impact on the automobile industry in the Great Lakes region, which until then produced cars "just in time". In the aftermath, commentators ironically spoke of a shift from "just in time" to "just in case". A rise in transport costs is particularly problematic for companies and countries that produce goods that are very price-elastic. High price elasticity means that consumers react quickly to price changes, in other words, the goods are price sensitive. Any price increase leads to a decrease in demand.

In general, the rise in transport costs and time is problematic for goods with high price elasticity. It is also problematic for goods that are perishable or that come from insecure regions. This means that products from developing countries suffer most from increased security measures. Thus, the consequences of 11 September have been significant for all regions of the world.

Question:

Which of the following statements is correct?

Option 1: The perpetrators of the 11 September 2001 attacks all knew each other.

Option 2: Members of Al-Qaeda refuse to use modern technology.

Option 3: **Al-Qaeda finances itself through the official banking system and the Hawala banking system.**

Conclusion

A multi-national, decentralized organization with several thousand members and associates from many countries with a worldwide presence... This description of Al-Qaeda illustrates global terrorism in the early 21st century. The organization, which is structured like a network, hopes to establish a pan-Islamic Caliphate, in contrast to the current international system composed of formally sovereign states. To carry out its worldwide operations, Al-Qaeda is making use of advanced telecommunication technologies and has found ways to finance itself through relatively secure means. Al-Qaeda thus benefits from globalization, while at the same time it opposes it. Al-Qaeda seems to operate around the globe, and interventions to prevent it from carrying out its attacks, including US intervention in Afghanistan and a variety of measures adopted by international organizations, seem to confirm that we are witnessing globalization's first war

External Document:

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Risk Download a printable file with a definition of risk.

External Document:

References Download and print out a list with recommended literature.

Policies against terrorism

Author

Jan Bittner; Free University of Berlin

Instructional Designer

Cornelius Friesendorf; International Relations and Security Network (ISN)

Publisher

International Relations and Security Network (ISN); ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich)

Learning Object Description:

This lesson deals with policies that can help to counteract terrorism. The most important policy goals are conflict prevention and conflict management; prevention through development; building a consensus against political violence; intelligence and law enforcement; measures against terrorist financing; military force; multilateral cooperation; and crisis response. The use of military force is discussed with reference to the strategies of US President George W. Bush's administration. To demonstrate multilateral cooperation, the lesson briefly describes UN actions against Libya and Afghanistan.

Learning Object Objectives:

To list the most important policy options against terrorism; and to show how policies focused on military force and multilateral cooperation work by referring to the strategies of George W. Bush's administration and to UN action against Libya and Afghanistan, respectively.

These policy options could be categorized. We could, for example, distinguish between preventive and coercive measures. With preventive measures, governments attempt to change a political context that they consider to be favorable to terrorists. By contrast, with coercive measures governments aim to reduce the likelihood of terrorist attacks. However, this distinction implies that prevention is non-coercive, which it not necessarily is. Successful intelligence, law enforcement, and military operations against terrorists are coercive and preventive, since they help prevent attacks from occurring. It might therefore be better simply to list the various policy options.

Conflict prevention and crisis management

One way to address the problem of terrorism is through conflict prevention and crisis management. Political conflicts, particularly violent ones, can give rise to terrorism, either because conflict parties adopt terrorist strategies or because external actors attempt to benefit from the maltreatment of a particular conflict party. In the Israel-Palestinian conflict, for example, both parties commit terrorist acts, and external groups, notably Al-Qaeda, are able to benefit by pointing to the plight of many Palestinians. Hence, addressing the problems underlying the Middle East conflict might help reduce terrorism. Indeed, this is the belief of many European governments, who claim that cooperative prevention is better than a reaction after the event.

A comprehensive strategy against terrorism must concentrate primarily on prevention. Developing such a strategy means no less than drafting a policy for a cooperative world order for the twenty-first century, a policy which no longer tolerates areas characterized by a breakdown of order, which has as

its goal a world order under which all peoples can claim their full and equitable share.

Hyperlink to:

http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/ausgabe_archiv?archiv_id=2953

Source

Joseph Fischer, German Foreign Minister. Speech at the 56th General Assembly. Nov. 12 2001. To read the whole speech, click on the balloon.

The Geneva Accord is an alternative peace plan for the Middle East. For over 2 years, representatives of the Palestinian and Israeli peace camp conducted secret negotiations with the support of Swiss mediators. The initiative was officially launched in Geneva on 1 December 2003. The Sharon administration and the Palestinian Legislative Council did not endorse the initiative. The map shows how the authors of the accord envisage the administration of Jerusalem (source: <http://www.mideastweb.org/swissaccords.htm> [4-5-2004]).

Prevention through development

Many commentators have suggested that underdevelopment and poverty lead to terrorism. However, a correlation between underdevelopment and terrorism has never been empirically proven. Terrorist attacks do not occur mainly in the world's poorest countries, and most terrorists are not poor. Still, terrorists sometimes use conflicts over resources to justify their actions. Thus, an unequal distribution of wealth is conducive to terrorism.

Question:

Do you think that development aid can help reduce terrorism?

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Option 3: Maybe

Building a consensus against political violence

In addition to implementing measures for reducing underdevelopment, states can also prevent terrorism by strengthening a consensus against terrorist acts. Since 11 September 2001, much effort has been invested in this, and de-legitimizing the use of terrorism has become a cornerstone in the dialog with the Islamic world. Naming suspected terrorists and terrorist groups is an important element in marginalizing terrorists. The US has maintained a list of foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) since October 1997, when the first 30 groups were listed. Recently, the European Union has also published a list of groups suspected of involvement in terrorist activities. These lists are not used as merely naming (and shaming) devices; rather, if an organization is named an FTO, coercive measures, for example, the freezing of its assets, can be used against it.

Some groups with origins in the Middle East or with an Islamist ideology are on the US list but not on the EU list. This can lead to heated debates, as shown in relation to the question about whether or not the Palestinian HAMAS (Islamic Resistance Movement) should be considered a terrorist organization. Until 2002, the Europeans argued that it was important to differentiate between a military and a civilian branch of HAMAS. There was consensus on both sides of the Atlantic that the military branch of HAMAS was involved in terrorist activities against Israel, but the Europeans explicitly approved of the social work in the Palestinian territories undertaken by the civilian branch of HAMAS. In December 2002, the EU decided to no longer distinguish between a military and civilian branch and listed HAMAS as a terrorist organization.

Intelligence and law enforcement

In the fight against terrorism, intelligence and numerous law enforcement agencies play a prominent role. Cooperation among these agencies is crucial but difficult, due to legal restrictions and inter-agency battles over competences and resources. Moreover, the collection, processing, and dissemination of information about terrorism is a daunting task. Before hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, US intelligence agencies possessed important bits of information about planned attacks, but the various pieces of information were not properly put together.

Measures against terrorist financing

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1373 calls upon countries to report individual terrorists and terrorist organizations and to block their financial assets. Moreover, the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which acts against money laundering and publishes recommendations to this end, and the Washington-based International Monetary Fund (IMF) work together to detect loopholes in the international financial system. Worldwide, more than US\$130

million were blocked in the two years after the 9-11 attacks. This is a considerable sum, but the question remains whether Al-Qaeda and other groups have been severely affected so far. The problem is that terrorists do not need much money to cover the costs of their operations. The Economist magazine estimates that the attacks on the US navy vessel USS Cole in 2000 cost about US\$50'000 and the 11 September 2001 attacks US\$500'000, at most. (Source: The Economist: Al-Qaeda operations are rather cheap. 2 October 2003, p. 32.)

Military force

States can also use military force against terrorism. This policy option is highly controversial, however, as the debate over the US response to the attacks of 11 September 2001 illustrates. A year after the attacks, the Bush administration presented its new security strategy, which argues that preemptive military strikes are an important element in the fight against global terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and "rogue states" against which deterrence is ineffective. This understanding of preemption has aroused the concern of other governments who fear a breakdown of the distinction between preemption and prevention and, consequently, a more frequent use of military force. Whereas preventive war is forbidden by international law, article 51 of the UN charter allows states to defend themselves preemptively against an imminent armed attack.

It is important to note that governments did not deny the US the right to defend itself against non-state actors, even though international law mainly regulates the use of force by states and not force by non-state actors such as Al-Qaeda. The US thus had UN support when it went to war against the Afghan Taliban who had hosted Al-Qaeda. With regard to Iraq, however, the Bush administration did not get the support of the UN Security Council. The US war against Iraq was seen neither as preemptive self-defense nor as an action covered by earlier UN resolutions against the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>

The US National Security Strategy

Read the National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002 (20-5-2004).

Hyperlink to:

http://www.fsk.ethz.ch/about/about_mdsk/documents/Wenger.omz.pdf

An analysis of US security policy

Also read an article by Professor Andreas Wenger from the ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) on the US security strategy, terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, "rogue states", and the US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (25-5-2004).

Multilateral cooperation: the example of the United Nations

Since the late 1960s, states have been cooperating at the United Nations in the fight against terrorism. However, until today governments have not been able to agree on a definition of terrorism. Attempts at definition have been opposed mainly by developing countries, who, informed by their colonial pasts, have wanted to maintain the right to use political violence under certain circumstances. For

many of these countries, the anti-colonial struggle is a kind of founding myth. This resulting paralysis at the UN ended with the 11 September attacks. On 28 September 2001, UNSC Resolution 1373 established the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC).

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/committees/1373/mandate.html>

CTC website

For information about the CTC refer to the website of the committee.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.un.org/ga/57/sixth/index.html>

A definition of terrorism

For information about the definition of terrorism refer to the website of the Sixth Committee.

Anti-terrorist measures were coordinated under the auspices of the UN even before the attacks on New York and Washington, mainly in the form of declarations that called terrorism a threat to peace. The examples of Libya and Afghanistan are important in this respect:

Libya

In 1986, after the bombing of a Pan-Am flight over the Scottish village of Lockerbie, the Libyan government refused to extradite those suspected of having carried out the attack. The UNSC considered this refusal a threat to peace and imposed a travel and arms embargo on the country.

Afghanistan

In 1999, UNSC Resolution 1267 demanded that the Taliban in Afghanistan turn over Osama bin Laden "without further delay to appropriate authorities in a country where he has been indicted, or to appropriate authorities in a country where he will be returned to such a country, or to appropriate authorities in a country where he will be arrested and effectively brought to justice". The resolution also imposed air travel and financial sanctions on the country, which were justified by the Taliban's harboring and training terrorists seen as a threat to international peace. With Resolution 1333 (2000), the UNSC also stated that the Taliban's refusal to extradite Osama bin Laden was a threat to international peace. One day after the attacks on New York and Washington, the UNSC condemned the attacks with Resolution 1368, defining them "as all international terrorist acts", a threat to international peace. The same resolution acknowledged the right of the US to "self-defense". Elsewhere, the attacks were defined as contravening international law.



The image shows the wreckage of Pan Am Flight 103 (Greg Bos, Reuters, source: http://www.meib.org/articles/0006_me1.htm [4-5-2004]).

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.un.org/aboutun/chapter/chapter7.htm>

The UNSC resolutions referred to Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. See the relevant UN website by clicking on the balloon.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.un.org/terrorism/sc.htm>

The UNSC resolutions calling for a blocking of the funds of terrorist organizations are UNSC resolutions 1267, 1333 and 1390.

Hyperlink to:

<http://www.iie.com/research/topics/sanctions/sanctions-timeline.htm>

This website has more information on economic sanctions.

Beside the UNSC resolutions and the UN Charter, 12 UN conventions and protocols have been signed against kidnapping, bombings, and terrorist financing. A comprehensive convention against terrorism, however, has not been agreed upon as a consequence of resistance among the member states of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Hyperlink to:

<http://untreaty.un.org/English/Terrorism.asp>

An overview of the 12 UN conventions and several regional conventions can be found at this UN website.

Question:

What are the anti-terrorism measures discussed in this lesson?

- Option 1: **Measures against terrorist financing**
- Option 2: **Law enforcement**
- Option 3: Military intervention
- Option 4: **Intelligence gathering**
- Option 5: **Prevention through development**
- Option 6: **Building a consensus against political violence**
- Option 7: Protection of human rights
- Option 8: **Conflict prevention and crisis management**
- Option 9: **Multilateral cooperation**

Crisis response

Ideally, states prevent terrorist attacks from occurring. But they also have to prepare themselves for the consequences of an attack, which can be disastrous. One has only to imagine an attack on a nuclear power plant. Preparing for such eventualities might reduce the number of victims and the damage to critical infrastructures. Hospitals must have enough blood, police forces must have several communication channels in case one or more cease to function, and dams must not be controlled by one computer only. Preparing for the consequences of an attack is a huge logistical challenge, as the example of the US Department of Homeland Security shows. This department was created in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks. Its task is, among other things, to coordinate the work of the numerous US departments and agencies working in public health, law enforcement, civil

emergency, and other fields.

Conclusion

Since 11 September 2001, international terrorism is again one of the top priorities on the international security agenda. Governments cooperate against terrorism under the leadership of the US and through multilateral organizations such as NATO, the G-8, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Multilateral cooperation against terrorism is essential, since terrorism does not respect borders. However, cooperation against terrorism is difficult, since the actions of many governments and state agencies must be coordinated. Hence, because terrorism is such a complex problem, anti-terrorist measures are also complex. Moreover, although smooth cooperation between governments and state agencies might alleviate the problem of terrorism, a clear victory against terrorism is unlikely.

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Risk Download a printable file with a definition of risk.

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References Download and print out a list with recommended literature.