Liberal versus Conservative: Do Terrorist Groups Care which Party is in Power?

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Abstract:

The Basque ETA proclaimed a unilateral, permanent ceasefire while the Spanish Prime Minister was socialist Zapatero, but not while the prime minister was conservative Aznar. This story repeats itself, raising an important question: Just how much do terrorist organizations take into account the political ideology of the government in power when deciding strategies?

Examining terrorism in light of the crossroads of audience costs and signaling literature for democracies, this work looks at extent to which the political orientation of the government in power affects either the number of attacks by the group or the violence of those attacks. According to the prevalent theories, government leaders must signal to the terrorist organizations what to expect from them.

Here, in this study, I examine the Western parliamentary democracies for evidence that ethnonationalist terrorist groups adjust their violence to take into account the political leaning of the government in power.

These findings indicate that these terrorist groups are less active and violent during liberal regimes than during conservative regimes. The fundamental results of this study are that the tendency of conservative governments to be hawkish with respect to dealing with the terrorists is counter-productive to eliminating the effects of those terrorist groups.

Conservative governments are almost universally seen as being better able to deal with defending the state and its people from violence. Budge and Farlie (1983) concluded that this view arises from the public's belief that hard-line policies are more effective in dealing with terrorism than is conciliation. Perhaps because of this, Sri Lankans elected hard-line Mahinda Rajapaksa in November 2005 to be their president to deal with the nationalist/separatist Tamils in the northeast of their small state (Rosenberg, 2005). Furthermore, there appears to be a belief that terrorists need to be punished, even at the expense of continuing the state's war on the group. The marches in Spain in response to President Zapatero's decision to negotiate with the ETA demonstrate this, as did the political fallout felt by British Prime Minister Thatcher when she decided to negotiate with the IRA (Lelyveld, 1985; Rodríguez, 2006). This is the conventional wisdom. But, is it correct? Do conservative governments handle terrorist organizations better than left-wing governments? And, if so, do the terrorists respond differently to right-wing than to left-wing governments?

Founded in 1976, the National Liberation Front of Corsica (FNLC) has been responsible for more than 200 deaths in its quest for independence from France. On July 10, 2000, French Prime Minister Jospin, a member of *Parti Socialiste*, offered greater autonomy to Corsica in exchange for an end to this terrorism (Daley, 2000). His offer was vociferously fought by members of the parliament, especially by the members of the rightist *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR). The opposition feared that this offer would encourage other geographic regions of France, like Brittany and the Pays Basque, to agitate for their own autonomy (Walt, 2000).

The Provisional Irish Republican Army was directly responsible for over 1,700 deaths during the course of the Irish Troubles (Sutton, 2001).[1] This averages out to approximately one IRA-responsible death each week between 1969 and 2002. However, this average is far from uniform. During the 12 years of Labour governments, the average was one IRA-responsible death every nine days, whereas during the 22 years of Conservative governments, the average was one death every 6.36 days.[2] This statistically significant difference forces us to revisit that previous question: Is there a real difference between liberal and conservative governments on how terrorist groups behave?

Is there a difference in how right-wing and left-wing governments treat the terrorist groups? If history is a judge, and reputation theory asserts that it is, then yes there is a difference in how different government parties deal with terrorist groups. This is not to say, of course, that conservative parliaments and prime ministers refuse to negotiate with terrorist groups. November 1986 saw Conservative British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Fine Gael (also conservative) Irish Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald sign the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Unfortunately, the benefits of that agreement were short-lived—merely a brief pause in the killing and the latent creation of an IRA splinter group, the Continuity IRA. The question once again arises when one realizes that the second attempt at stemming the flow of blood in Northern Ireland, this time finalized by Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair, resulted in the current permanent ceasefire with the Provisional IRA.

Former Spanish President José María Aznar held talks with the ETA in 1999, but little came of them (Goodman, 1999). There were talks, but no agreements. However, the ETA had promised a permanent ceasefire with the Zapatero government (a socialist government) on March 22, 2006 (Bustamante, 2006).[3] Again, why the difference in terrorist group behavior, and was it due in part to the political orientation of the government in power? This paper examines this question in greater detail: Does the party in power affect the virulence of terrorism in that state? In other words, do terrorist groups take into consideration the party in power when deciding which tactics to use? Deterrence theory would suggest they do, but do they?

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[1] This does not include the deaths due to the Unionist and Loyalist terrorist groups, nor to the other Republican terrorist groups.

[2] There were 1706 deaths attributed to direct Provisional IRA action during the 12 053 days, for an average of one IRA death every 7.07 days. For all sides of the conflict, there was an average of one death every 3.42 days. For the 4126 days of Labour rule, there were 459 IRA-responsible deaths (8.99 days per death). For the 7927 days of Conservative rule, there were 1247 IRA-responsible deaths (6.36 days per death).

[3] They did, however, violate that ceasefire seven months later with a bombing of a parking structure in the Madrid Barajas International Airport, injuring four Spaniards and killing two sleeping Ecuadorian immigrants (Escriva, 2006). According to the ETA, however, they ended the ceasefire because the Zapatero government was unwilling to make concessions and meet with them (Tarvainen, 2007).

A Background in Nationalist-Separatist Terrorism

Before we can answer these questions, it behooves us to examine nationalist/separatist terrorism, its causes, and its perpetrators. Quite simply, terrorism is the purposeful targeting of civilians for political ends. This definition is not without controversy. Researchers have spent much time and ink defining terrorism (see, for example, Crenshaw, 1981; Gambill, 1998; Gibbs, 1989; Schmid, 1983; Thomas & Standley, 1988). Schmid (1983) offered one of the best early analyses of the many definitions of terrorism. Examining over 100 definitions of terrorism in use, reaching back to the League of Nations definition of 1936, he discovered they contained more than twenty-two separate elements. Synthesizing sixteen of those elements, Schmid fashioned his own definition from that list, emphasizing the five most important aspects of terrorism (Kushner, 1998). US law also fails to offer a single definition. It uses no fewer than four startlingly different ones. Each of these definitions highlights the aspect of terrorism most important to the agency using the definition.

Regardless, for the purposes of this research, the above simple definition is sufficient, for it gets to the heart of the primary purpose of terrorism: turning civilians into unwilling combatants and forcing them to deal with the terrorist's issue.

Terrorism has a political objective; this separates it from simple extortion and murder. For ethnonational groups, that objective is greater separation from the containing state. To wit: The ETA desires an independent homeland for the Basques on their historic homeland. The Bretons want greater autonomy in their homeland of Brittany. The Corsicans want complete independence from France. The Ulster Catholics want independence from the United Kingdom *and* union with the Irish Republic. The South Tyroleans want independence from Italy and union with Austria. In each of these examples, the ethnonational group wants greater levels of separation from their containing state. In short, to use the words of the Charter of the United Nations, they desire nothing more than national self-determination.

This brings up the next question: What are ethnonational groups? They are those identifiable ethnic groups tied to the land upon which they live; that is, their current home is also their historic home. Avoiding the question of whether ethnic identities are constructed or not, ethnic groups as those groups identified as being separate ethnicities by those inside the group and by those outside the group.[4] In Europe, such groups include the Basques of Spain (the Hegoalde), the Jura of Switzerland, and the South Tyroleans of Italy. In each case, when the group resorted to acts of terror, it was to further their political aim of greater autonomy from their containing state.

But, what caused these groups to use terrorism to attain their goals?

Correlates of Terrorism: What We Already Know

There is a growing body of both theoretical and empirical research examining terrorism and its causes. For the sake of order, the various studies can be categorized into three levels of analysis: group, state, and system. The group level offers much theory, both from political science and from sociology standpoints. Four broad theories of general ethnic conflict present themselves: Ethnic Competition Theory, Ethnic Segregation Theory, Uneven Development Theory and Relative Deprivation Theory. The first of the four, Ethnic Competition Theory, asserts that ethnic conflict comes from groups competing for the state's resources (Medrano, 1995). With limited resources available, the competition breaks out along ethnic lines. One result of this is that conflict between ethnic groups should occur more frequently when the groups interact than when they are separate (Bélanger & Pinard, 1991; Tilly, 1991). Ethnic competition may also result from occupational desegregation, as the ethnic groups would then be competing for the same employment positions. Olzak (1992) showed that such economic desegregation did lead to a greater level of ethnic conflict, at least in the United States between the years 1880 and 1920.

Conversely, Ethnic Segregation Theory asserts the opposite—ethnic conflict comes from one group segregating itself from the others (Medrano, 1995). This segregation can be physical (movement to ghettoes) or economic (one ethnonation inhabiting only one employment sector). In either case, both ethnic cohesion and an increased probability of ethnic conflict result from limitations on upward mobility, either real or perceived (Gellner, 1983; Hechter, 1978).

Similarly, Uneven Development Theory specifies that when an ethnonation is regionally concentrated, as are the Basque in northern Spain, then there is a greater chance for them to display ethnonational sentiment, as that

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[4] This requirement that those inside the group and those outside the group identify it as being a separate ethnicity bypasses discussion of whether the group *really is* a separate ethnicity and whether ethnicities are fundamental (Primordialist) or constructed (Instrumentalist and Constructivist) (Smith, 1988).

region will probably be either economically advanced or economically retarded when compared to the rest of the state. What may, in fact, be due to geography may be read by the ethnic group as being due to ethnic discrimination (da Silva, 1975). Economically advanced groups will see the rest of the state as pulling them down, whereas economically regressed groups will see the rest of the state as retarding their possible growth—often to the point of seeing themselves as victims of internal colonization (Medrano, 1995).

Finally, and relatedly, Gurr built on previous relative deprivation theories. He combined economic and political repression in a general explanation of why certain groups rebel against the authority of the central government—increasing levels of relative deprivation. For Gurr's theory, gap growth is vital to explaining outbreaks of violence—the gap between group expectations and reality. As long as groups do not have expectations too far above what they receive, there is no great impetus to rebel. However, when the group sees the gap grow larger, they resolve to act (Gurr, 1970).

Terrorism theories at the state level involve the effects of regime type and strength on the behavior of groups. Crenshaw (1981, 1994) concluded that democracies (and weak autocracies) should have a higher probability of experiencing domestic terrorism than should non-democracies. She bases this counter-intuitive finding on the fact that democracies are less willing and less able to exert the controls necessary to control their citizens in a way that effectively eliminates the ability of terrorist groups to operate freely. The empirical evidence overwhelmingly supports these contentions, as do current theories (Forsberg, 2006; Ross, 1993; Ross & Gurr, 1989). Moreover, free states have free media, which is an important if not necessary component of successful terror campaigns, for the knowledge of the terrorist event must be transmitted before the terror can spread amongst the citizenry (Corsi, 1981).

Finally, the system level examines the effects of the increased interactions between the states, the increased levels of media penetration, and the increased rates of change in the employment sectors. Globalization theories suggest that increased interaction between the states and lower transportation costs should result in a (sometimes) catastrophic change in employment. That is, as transportation costs drop, states tend to specialize in what they produce. As a result, those who worked in sectors not related to the specialization are at a greater risk of unemployment (Blomberg, Hess, & Weerapana, 2004; Kellner, 2002; Krugman & Venables, 1995). Furthermore, with the increased flows of information across borders, uneven development theory also applies to the economic differences between the states, not just groups within a state. This bespeaks of an interaction effect between the wealth of the state and the level of knowledge flowing into the state about the wealth of other states.

Thus, in sum, it appears as though concentration of the ethnicities, level of differences between the group and the remainder of the state (both economic and ethnic), level of democracy in the state, population of the state, wealth of the state, and level of globalization are all correlates of terrorism. But, what about the political orientation of the prime minister? Do terrorist groups react differently to the election of a left-leaning prime minister than to a right-leaning prime minister?

The Head of Government: Reputation, Credibility and Deterrence

Before asking whether the political orientation of the party in power *does* have an effect on the terrorist groups in the state, we need to ask how it *could* have an effect. The primary strain of literature dealing with this aspect of terrorism centers on deterrence. Two closely-related factors of deterrence are credibility and reputation—credibility that the government is both willing and able to act in accord with its statements and reputation that the government will follow through on threats. In other words, deterrence works if the group believes the government will actually follow through with its threat. But, how will the terrorist group know what the government will *actually* do?

According to Schelling (1960, p. 9), deterrence concerns itself with "persuading a potential enemy that he should in his own interest avoid certain courses of activity." In other words, deterrence is not action, it is merely a threat backed up by reputation. Without reputation, deterrence does not exist; it is as so much blue sky. As such, the cornerstone to sound deterrence capabilities centers on the reputation of the person, or persons, making the threat. Deterrence literature tends to treat reputation as a commodity to be grown (Guisinger & Smith 2002). States and leaders with a reputation for strong, decisive action tend to have fewer challenges to their position, as their response to a given stimulus is not in doubt. However, those states with a reputation for equivocation tend to have more challenges, as their response is not guaranteed; other actors are more willing to gamble that the state will back down (O'Neill, 1989; Schelling, 1960, 1966). Additionally, Mercer (1996) found that reputation for resolve is more easily maintained between enemies than between allies. Since terrorist groups are enemies of the state, the reputation of the head of government strongly persists in time—one way or the other.

The most important difference between the above discussion and this study is that elected officials have little true reputation upon election, as they have not been in their position previously. For instance, US President George W. Bush campaigned on a platform of neo-isolationism; Spanish President José Zapatero campaigned on the promise of withdrawing Spanish troops from Iraq; and Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi campaigned on a platform of removing Italian troops from Iraq. World events appeared to have changed Bush's neo-isolationist foreign policy into a more activist one. Zapatero followed through on his platform and removed Spanish troops in Iraq within a month of taking power on April 28, 2004 (Garea, 2004). Prodi finally removed Italian troops from Iraq on September 21, 2006 (Faddam, 2006).

In each of these three cases, the only indication of future action by the head of government was a promise to uphold election promises. Time eventually each of turned those promises into some type of reality. In other words, the reputation of the leaders were based upon what they said, not what they did, as they had not been able to do anything until after election. Had the head of government a track record as the head of government, there would be little signaling problem here. Repeated behaviors are common enough that reputation in politics is often taken as a guarantee of future action. However, for the newly-elected, there is no history; there are only expectations of future action. These expectations are based on two things: statements made during the campaign and the platform of the political party.

In a presidential democracy, the people directly elect their head of government. As such, the statements made by that candidate can be taken as an indicator of future action: not a guarantee, but an indication. In parliamentary democracies, the head of government is, first and foremost, leader of the majority party in power (or of the majority coalition). As such, personal statements usually must take a backseat to the needs and desires of the party or coalition. Thus, the signals for future actions come directly from the reputation of the party to which the head of government belongs.

Additionally, there is another factor that further encourages the prime minister to uphold the positions of the party: in a democracy, the audience costs are high. As such, parties will tend to follow through on their platform, thus strengthening their reputation—for better or worse (Fearon, 1994; Guisinger & Smith, 2002; Sartori, 2002).

Obviously, no electable party openly supports terrorism. However, there tends to be a major difference between left- and right-leaning parties: dovishness and hawkishness. Leftist political parties tend to eschew violence and follow a dovish program. Rightist parties are more willing to use violence to attain their ends and follow a hawkish program (Budge & Hofferbert, 1992; Koch, 2004). Additionally, looking at the hawk-dove argument, Schultz (2005) looked at whether hawks or doves get better cooperation from their enemies. Schultz says hawks are better able to secure cooperation in the long run because of their higher credibility in making threats, because they have fewer innate constraints on their willingness to support their threats with force. Dovish parties avoid force. This undermines their strength in the negotiating process, for their reputation is to continue negotiations instead of pulling back and resorting to violence.

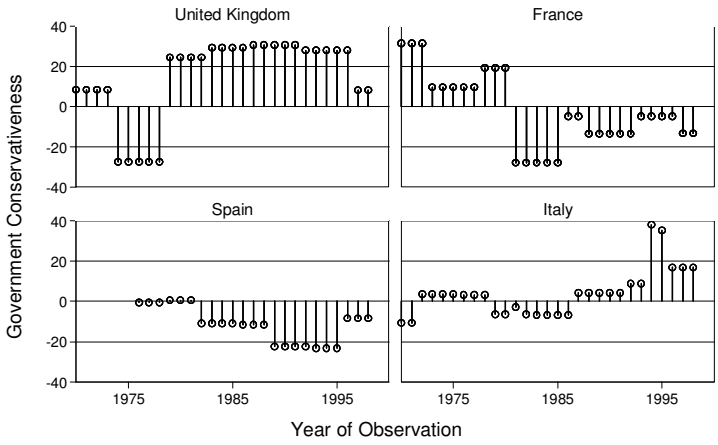
Assuming that terrorist groups are rational actors, there is one interesting conclusion to the above discussion: Terrorist groups should be less active against left-leaning governments than against right-leaning governments. Why? Under left-leaning governments, negotiations should be more productive, as the terrorist group is operating from a position of greater power than under right-leaning governments. Terrorist groups realize this. Therefore, they should act to keep rightist governments from power; they should be more violent under governments of the right than governments of the left. Of course, this does assume that rightist governments are effective in deterrence, in deterring terrorist groups from acting. Thus, the basic question underlying this study centers on the effectiveness of rightist governments in deterrence. If they are effective, terrorist groups should be more active during rightist regimes than during leftist. If they are not effective, then there should be no party ideology effects. Which happens?

Data and Methods

The above discussion offers the one fundamental question in need of answering. Unfortunately, that one question has a couple ways of being answered, depending on how one measures terrorist activity. Here, I use two different annual measures: number of terrorist events and number of civilians killed by those terrorist events. In the interest of structure, I will answer the question using each way individually. Before I move to the answers, however, it is necessary to discuss the groups investigated and the datasets used to seek the answers.

States and groups of interest

Presidential and parliamentary systems differ fundamentally, especially in terms of the power of the party's platform on the head of government. Because I am looking at the effects of party orientation on the choice by nationalist/



State	Mean Conservatism
France	2.0
Italy	1.2
Spain	-11.4
UK	6.3
Sample:	**0.7**

Figure 1: Comparison of the conservativeness for the four Western European states under consideration.

separatist groups to employ terrorism in their quest for autonomy, I will focus exclusively on parliamentary systems. Future research can examine how much the different structures affects the outcomes, but I focus solely on parliamentary systems.

Using Western European states allows for the collection of higher-quality data for a greater period of time. The specific states chosen are those with identified ethnic nationalist minorities at risk, as defined by the Minorities at Risk project (2005). Specifically, the four states and eight nationalist groups are France (Iparralde and Corsicans); Italy (Sardinians and South Tyroleans); Spain (Hegoalde and Catalans); and the United Kingdom (Ulster Catholics and Scots). In an effort to avoid confusion, I have given the Basques their specific place names: Iparralde (Northern Land) for the French Basques and Hegoalde (Southern Land) for the Spanish Basques.

Research Variable

As this research examines the effects of political ideology on the choice ethnonationalist groups make to use terrorism, the research variable must measure the political ideology of the party in power. Using policy statements from all political parties from 1945 until 1998, Budge, et al. (2001) formulated a measure of political ideology on a standard left-right scale, with values theoretically ranging from -100 to 100. Positive numbers correspond to right-wing conservative parties, whereas negative numbers correspond to lift-wing liberal parties.

Researchers have used the measure in studies of political parties to quantify the ideological position of those political parties through time. Sigelman and Buell (2004) used it to help measure issue convergence in the United States. In fact, they used it as a more stringent test of their hypotheses than the first dataset they used. Allan and Scruggs (2004) also used it to measure partisanship, but in relation to its effect on support for the welfare state. Finally, Koch (2006) used it to measure the partisanship of Israeli governments to control for partisanship in how terrorists behave in the time running up to parliamentary elections.

For the time period of this research (1961–1998), the ideology measure ranges from -27.8 (France under the left-wing *Parti Socialiste* in the early 1980s) to 37.9 (Italy under Silvio Berlusconi's conservative *Forza Italia* in 1994). Of the four states under consideration, Spain is the only one whose mean political ideology is on the left. In fact, Spain's most conservative government is left of the mean conservativeness for each of the other three (Figure 1).

Control Variables

To get at the effects of ruling party ideology, it is necessary to control for certain factors that we already know affect the propensity for a group to resort to terrorist actions. These variables come from the earlier discussion of terrorism in this paper. Controlling for the concentration of the ethnic group appears necessary; however, as each of the groups under study is spatially concentrated, it cannot be added to any of the models.

The level of differences between the ethnic group and the containing state is a correlate of terrorism (Gurr, 1970; Murshed, 2002). The Minorities at Risk (2005) variable AGGDIFXX captures this characteristic. This

variable measures the aggregate differences between the ethnic group and the majority in the containing state. It consists of four indices of differences: cultural, economic, ethnic, and political differences. For the sample under consideration, the greatest level of aggregate differences is between the Ulster Catholics and the United Kingdom, and the lowest level of differences is between the Scots and the United Kingdom.

Another variable that should be specifically controlled for is economic differences between the ethnic group and the state in general. Unfortunately, it also had to be dropped from the models due to high levels of collinearity with the measure of aggregate differences ($\rho = 0.77$).

Another known correlate of terrorism is the level of democracy in the state (Crenshaw, 1981). Specifically, higher levels of structural constraints on the government are positively correlated with higher levels of terrorism. Here, I use the DEMOC2 variable from the Polity project. The DEMOC2 variable specifically measures the level of *de jure* constraints on the government.

Next, the population of the state should be a factor. A greater population should also create a greater probability that one section of that population is disaffected. Furthermore, should terrorism need a critical mass of the disaffected, larger populations have a larger probability that the critical mass can exist and come together. Population data came from the World Bank.

Finally, a questioned correlate of terrorism is the level of wealth in the state. On the one hand, wealthier states should be better able to control its territory. Additionally, wealthier states (as measured by GDP per capita in constant dollars) tend to have wealthier citizens, who are analogous to satisfied powers in the state system, thus they would have less reason to instigate terrorist activity. On the other hand, states with higher levels of wealth also have a tendency to have higher wealth inequalities. Thus, while the actual direction of effect for state wealth is in question, the fact that there is an effect is not. GDP per capita, measured in constant 1995 US dollars, data also came from the World Bank.

Dependent variables

The two manners in which terrorist activity can be measured give rise to two models. The first manner focuses on the number of terrorist attacks that year. The second examines the number of deaths in that year. The ITERATE2 dataset served as the primary source of this information, although news reports from Lexis-Nexis searches were also culled to capture those domestic terrorist groups not covered by ITERATE2.

Additionally, failing to lag appropriate variables creates confusion as to whether the government ideology influences the terrorist activity or vice-versa—temporal precedence is confused. To solve this issue, all dependent variables used will be led one year. This has the same effect as lagging all independent variables one year.

Some Answers

Effects of Party Ideology

Now, let us examine the government's political ideology and how it affects the decisions of the terrorist group. As stated previously, the public sees conservative governments as being more likely to uphold the 'law and order' of the state. A logical conclusion of this is that the public believes conservative governments should be better able to reduce the effects of terrorist groups. On the other hand, terrorist groups know this. As such, it would be in their interest to elect those willing to negotiate with them. In other words, the deterrence effect of the conservative governments may be good enough to reduce their chance of being elected—a self-defeating condition.

In either case, assuming deterrence works, nationalist/separatist terrorist groups under regimes that are more left-leaning should be less violent overall. In other words, those groups both should perform fewer terrorist acts and should kill fewer people.[5]

Hypothesis: Number of deaths due to terrorist actions. This aspect of the research question focuses on the effects of the government's orientation on the *number of deaths* caused by terrorists the following year. There is an effect: governments that are more conservative tend to have a *greater number of its civilians die* in terrorist attacks (Table 1). However, the effect is small—in both the fixed-effects and the population-averaged models. In the fixed-effects model, the effects of a change in the government's political orientation by +200—a shift from completely left to completely right—would be completely reversed by an increase in the level of democracy by one-half of a point or

[5] While this research specifically deals with the second aspect, previous research of mine has suggested that there is no effect of political orientation of the government on the number of attacks by the terrorist group.

Table 1: Hypothesis (Poisson) — Number of deaths due to terrorist action.

	Fixed Effects	Population Averaged (1)	Population Averaged (2)
Conservativeness (Absolute)	0.004** (0.001)	0.017* (0.008)	
Conservativeness (Demeaned)			0.017* (0.008)
Democracy Level	-1.633*** (0.096)	0.841* (0.377)	0.829* (0.376)
GDP per capita (10^3 1995 USD)	-0.705*** (0.026)	-0.078 (0.059)	-0.086 (0.058)
Population (10^6 Persons)	1.703*** (0.007)	-0.161* (0.077)	-0.147* (0.074)
Aggregate Differences		0.708*** (0.154)	0.720*** (0.156)
Intercept		-1.501 (5.764)	-2.082 (5.550)
Model Wald χ^2	868.65***	32.13***	32.36***
Number of Groups	5	8	8
Total Observations	124	249	249

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are Huber-White sandwich estimates of standard errors clustered on ethnic group. Those for the population-averaged model are semi-robust. GDP per capita is measured in thousands of constant 1995 US dollars. Population is measured in millions of persons. Models run are cross-sectional, time series models. Population averaged model is population averaged generalized estimating equation, whereas the fixed effects model is subject-specific.

Significance notation: #: $p \leq 0.10$; *: $p \leq 0.05$; **: $p \leq 0.01$; and ***: $p \leq 0.001$. Due to time-invariant variables, the five groups examined by the fixed effects model are Ulster Catholics, Iparralde, Corsicans, Hegoalde, and Sardinians.

by an increase in the wealth of the state by a thousand dollars (as measured by the GDP per capita). The effect in the population-averaged model is larger by a factor of four. Changing the political ideology of the government from -30 to +30—roughly the range of political orientations in this study—is equal to increasing the aggregate differences by two points. The level of conservatism matters.

Regardless, the effects are interesting when the predicted number of deaths due to terrorist actions is calculated dependant on the level of conservatism of the government in power. With all other variables held at their means, the political shift that France underwent in the 1980 election when the Gaullist Raymond Barre (political orientation = 19.1) lost to the Socialist Pierre Mauroy (political orientation = -27.8) would have been responsible for a 39% drop in deaths due to terrorism. Furthermore, Labour party's Harold Wilson's loss (-14.8) loss in 1970 to Conservative's Edward Heath (8.2) would have been responsible for a 27% increase in terrorist deaths according to the model.

Finally, note the two different population-averaged models, one using the absolute measure of conservatism and one demeaning to the state mean. Both models are quite similar in terms of the coefficients of the variables of interest. The aggregate differences index has similar levels of statistical significance, magnitude, and direction of effect. This is true of the remaining variables as well: little change in conclusions regardless of whether the absolute measure or the relative measure is used. Thus, a one-point change in comparatively-liberal Spain would have the same effect as a one-point change in comparatively-conservative Italy. The level of absolute conservatism matters, *but so does the level of relative conservatism*. Which matters more?

To answer this question, a third population-averaged regression was performed, this time including *both* the absolute and the relative measures. While there is no expectation that either will be statistically significant,[6] the differences in their respective coefficients should provide greater insight into what is happening. If the coefficient on the absolute measure is greater, we can conclude that, while both measures are important, conservatism *itself* is the

[6] Neither coefficient is statistically significant. This should not be surprising, as the two variables are very highly correlated ($\rho = 0.946$).

important factor. Conservative governments offer deterrence, and governments that are more conservative create a greater level of deterrence. However, should the coefficient on the relative measure be greater, we can conclude that deterrence is more important than conservatism. It does not really matter how conservative the party is, what matters most is how conservative they are *in comparison to* its opposition parties.

The results are helpful: the coefficient on the absolute measure is -0.489, while the coefficient on the relative measure is +0.504. This strongly supports the contention that terrorists concern themselves more with how one party compares to another in their state as opposed to the actual conservatism of the party. This is important: the terrorist groups do not appear to concern themselves with how conservative a party is compared to others in other states. The terrorist group focuses on how conservative the party is *in relation to parties in the state*. This finding strongly supports the contention that deterrence is the underlying reason and not conservatism, *per se*.

Conclusions

One thing that the results were successful in doing was questioning the real effectiveness of conservative governments on reducing the level of terrorism in their state. In none of the modes run was the estimated coefficient on the conservativeness of the party in power negative and statistically significant. In fact, the only negative coefficients were in the original formulation of terrorist activity: any terrorist event in the year. While the calculated effects were modest at best, the fact that the coefficients were positive indicates that terrorists do seem to consider the political orientation of the government when planning strategy.

This offers support for deterrence theory with respect to terrorist groups, but in a twisted way. The right-wing parties do appear to have the reputation of being tougher on the terrorist groups than do the left-wing parties; leftist parties are more willing to negotiate with the terrorist groups. This results in less terror activity during leftist regimes than during rightist ones. It seems as though conservative governments are victims of their own hawkish strategies, creating what amounts to a Catch-22. They are elected on the platform that they will treat the terrorist organizations harshly, and they are believed to be better able to do so. As a result, the terrorist groups are more violently active during these regimes to undermine their electoral support.

June 2006 saw hundreds of thousands of Spaniards take to the streets to protest the socialist government's plan to negotiate with ETA. The protesters accused the Zapatero government of surrendering to the ETA terrorists. The Terrorism Victims Association (AVT) was able to march approximately 200,000 persons in the protest. Calls for punishment and annihilation of the ETA were heard from the marchers (Rodríguez, 2006). Both acts, quite hawkish. As of the Catalan referendum (June 18, 2006), Zapatero had not backed down from his intent to negotiate with the ETA—he also had not yet met with the group. As of September 9, 2006, he had still neither backed down from negotiating with the ETA nor had actually met with them (Tarvainen, 2007). In November 2006, the ETA announced that it would "abandon the peace process unless there was progress soon," and by the end of December, the promised discussions had not *officially* taken place (BBC, 2006). Thus, the left-winged Zapatero did not follow through on his pledge to meet and negotiate with the ETA. The result of this decision was a bombed terminal and two dead Ecuadorans.

Should Zapatero lose the presidency to the conservative *Partido Popular* in the next general election because he did not take a hard line on the ETA, how will the ETA respond? According to this study, they will re-enter the terrorist game with a greater number of attacks and a greater number of deaths than now. Perhaps, were they to know this, the Spanish people would not be so quick to march by the hundreds of thousands through downtown Madrid, carrying signs and demanding: *"¡Negociación, en mi nombre no!"* (El Mundo, 2006).

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