Terrorism: A Study in Scarlet

QLR: Quasi Literature Review
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What causes terrorism? This seems to be one of the greatest answered questions of our time—yes, *answered*. The answers fill the literature on terrorism—yes, *answers*. But, which factors are *most* important in determining when a group, any group, will decide to begin using terrorism? Does it really matter if a group is in a democratic state, or does it only matter if that democratic state is weak? Does it really matter if a group is being culturally repressed, or does it only matter if that repression includes economic repression? The answers are important; they allow us to fine-tune our understanding of terrorism and terrorists so that we can begin creating policies that successfully reduce the chance of a group resorting to terrorism.

The Assignment

This assignment allows you to focus on the effects of one factor (a.k.a. independent variable, cause, or correlate) on terrorism. This quasi literature review differs from a genuine one only in its emphasis on a single factor. In a full literature review, you would not only focus on the effects of one factor, you would also examine all other known correlates.

The structure of the quasi literature review is very important. Please follow the structure below closely, including the actual names for each of the (first-level) sections. Use second-level headings as you see fit to organize your 'Detailed description'.

For the first QLR (due February 22), I provided a list of possible factors from which you choose yours. For the second QLR (due April 11), you will need to find a factor yourself. By that time, however, you will have done enough reading in the discipline that you will be able to list off a dozen possible factors.

When you have written the QLR, please turn in a hard copy during class and an electronic copy through email. The filename should be your username, followed by 'qlr', followed by the qlr number. Thus, my first QLR would be `ojf38491qlr1.doc`.

Structure

- Brief overview

  o Think of this as an overarching summary of the body of literature

  o This should be a paragraph or two

  o Personally, I would wait until the end and write this section last

- Detailed description

  o This is where you discuss what researchers have discovered about the effects of this factor on terrorism

  o The assertion is that the factor affects terrorism; what logical reasons exist for that connection? Sometimes, there is only one logic path (theory) discussed in the literature; sometimes, there are two or three

  o Organize this section in terms of themes and theories, not in terms of authors

- Indicators

  o How do you measure this factor?

- Empirical support

  o What empirical evidence exists that this factor actually affects terrorism?

  o The answer here may very well be 'none'

- Criticisms

  o Now that you have examined this factor from the point of view of a supporter, what do non-supporters say about the factor?

  o Not everyone believes that your factor is useful in the study of terrorism, what arguments do they give?

- Level of analysis

  o Under which of the four levels of analysis does your factor fit?

- Related concepts

  o What other factors, variables, concepts are similar to your chosen factor?

  o This section is added to allow interested others to further explore your factor and its (supposed) effects

  o You already have these concepts written down in the above sections: Detailed description and Criticisms

- Major contributors
  - Who are the researchers who focus on this factor?
- References
  - Of course there is a need for a reference list
  - Make sure you format it appropriately

Available Topics for QLR1

Level: Individual
- Despair; Pathology; Unemployment

Level: Group
- Diaspora; Ethnic Competition; Ethnic Segregation; Group Funding; Relative Deprivation

Level: State
- Electoral System; Media Freedom; Number of Ethnic Out-Groups in the State; Regime Stability; Regime Type; Urbanization

Level: System
- Globalization; Mass Media; Modernization; North-South Divide

Examples

Three examples follow. I suggest that you read through each of the three and determine what is good and what is bad in each one. None of the three is perfect. However, there is good in each. One of the first steps in becoming a stronger student is to be able to look at someone's work and critique it. Consider this practice in criticism.

Terror Management Theory

Theoretical Foundations

The original Terror Management Theory (TMT), proposed by Greenberg, Pyszczynski and Solomon (1986), starts with the basic premise that, in the animal kingdom, humans are the only species who have the capacity to recognize their own mortality. The thought that one's life is subject to sometimes sudden and unpredictable, and always uncontrollable and undesirable end, is simply overwhelming. Individuals affected by this realization cannot function normally, at least temporarily, as their defenses are incapacitated and they are vulnerable to many dangers from the outside (Becker 1973).

According to TMT (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, and Solomon 1999), because death anxiety is so debilitating, it renders those affected by it less evolutionary fit (in that they are more likely to die victims of their vulnerability and thereby limit their chances to reproduce and care for their offspring). As a result, individuals employing psychological defenses that allow them to deal with "the existential terror" are favored in the evolutionary selection over those who fail to do so. As cultures developed, some cultural worldviews provided a way of reconciling the reality of ultimate mortality with one's desire to avoid death. Such worldviews helped individuals espousing them to manage the terror and anxiety they experienced when reminded of death. As a result, these cultures had an evolutionary advantage, and cultural evolution selected for those cultural worldviews that enabled their members to buffer the terror of death. However, this "cultural anxiety buffer" came with a price: in order to benefit from the promise of immortality a culture gives, one must fully endorse the culture by living up to its standards of value.

According to TMT, cultures can provide an escape from death anxiety in several ways. First, they can integrate individuals into something larger than themselves—something that existed long before they came to be and will continue to exist long after the individuals will seize to. In this case, even if the person actually dies, s/he symbolically lives on through her/his culture. In other words, by being a part of something immortal, like a culture, one gains immortality by association. In addition, certain cultural worldviews promise real immortality to those who live up to the

standards, i.e. religious immortality. Finally, a culture may provide a conception of the world as of a just place, where bad things (like death) cannot happen to good people (good is defined as upholding cultural standards). Within this framework, one needs only to be a good person to avoid fear of death. Any combination of these "death-defeating" strategies constitutes a cultural anxiety buffer.

Hence, the most general hypothesis of Terror Management Theory is that, when people are made aware of their mortality, they feel the need to uphold the cultural worldview that provides them with an anxiety buffer. In particular, they will try to endorse their cultural worldview by punishing those who violate it and favoring those who espouse it (Greenberg, et al. 1990).

Empirical Evidence

Empirical tests revealed that, when made to think about their own mortality (by writing about their death and what will happen to their body when they die, or being subliminally exposed to death-related words) people tend to render especially harsh judgments of those who violate the cultural standards (such as foreigners derogating the American lifestyle) and to especially favor those who uphold these standards (such as heroes or people with similar worldviews) (e.g. Rosenblatt, et al. 1989; McGregor, et al. 1998; Goldenberg, et al. 2000). This effect is not observed when participants are made to think about other anxiety-producing or unpleasant events (i.e. exam, dentist visit, public speech or intense physical pain, or failing an intelligence test) (Greenberg, et al. 1994; Greenberg, et al. 1995). The effect is also specific to violators of moral (cultural) and not legal standards. So, for example, where an average subject reminded of mortality would impose a higher fine upon a prostitute (a moral transgressor), a traffic violator (a legal but not moral transgressor) would not elicit a similar increase in punishment (Rosenblatt, et al. 1989).

More subtle forms of upholding the cultural standards of value are also affected by mortality salience. Thus, people reminded of death tend to overestimate the percent of people sharing their views on cultural standards (Pyszczynski, Wicklund, Floresku, and Koch 1996) and to have higher feelings of guilt about own transgressions of cultural norms (having to use cultural icons inappropriately, i.e. using the American flag to clean

up dye) than mortality non-salient subjects (Greenberg, Porteus, Simon, Pyszczynski, and Solomon 1995). Behaviorally, mortality salience manipulation led to a similar increase in the adherence to cultural standards. For example, individuals made aware of death are more likely to monitor their appearance in accordance with the norms of self-presentation (Goldenberg, McCoy, Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg 2000; Greenberg, Simon, Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Chatel 1992).

At the same time, the negative feelings toward the out-group resulting from mortality salience are also evident in behavioral measures. Thus, there is an increase in behavioral avoidance of out-group members: mortality-salient subjects sit closer to fellow white individuals relative to Turkish-looking ones (Ochsmann and Mathay 1994). Similarly, there is an increase in aggression toward out-group members: under the disguise of a food testing study, mortality salient subjects administer more hot sauce to those who express culturally different worldviews than to those who express similar worldviews (McGregor, et al. 1998). Therefore, when made to think about their death (relative to the mentioned anxiety-producing and unpleasant thoughts) individuals tend to show in-group favoritism and out-group rejection on both self-report and behavioral measures.

The effects of mortality salience manipulations are not specific to a particular cultural worldview. In fact, the tendency to view positively those of similar worldview and negatively those of dissimilar worldview was demonstrated across a variety of cultural groups, such as nationalistic and religious (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, Simon, and Breus 1994; Nelson, Moore, Olivetti, and Scott 1997), ethnic (Schimel, et al. 1999), political (McGregor, et al. 1998) and youth (Janssen, Deschesne, and Van Knippenberg 1999). In addition, providing some evidence to the cross-cultural validity, the terror management phenomenon was demonstrated in the United States (e.g. Greenberg, et al. 1995), Canada (Baldwin and Wesley 1996), Israel (Florian and Miculincer 1997), Germany (Ochsmann and Mathy 1994), and the Netherlands (Dechesne, Greenberg, Arndt, and Schmiel 2000).

Related Theoretical Concepts

Consciousness

In as far as the anxiety buffer is effective in managing the existential terror, the theory predicts that individuals need not be conscious of death thoughts: it is sufficient that awareness of death is "on the fringes of consciousness" (Pyszczynski, et al. 1997). According to the dual-process model of defense against conscious and unconscious death thoughts (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, and Solomon 1999), the proximal defense system, which deals with thoughts directly in the focus of one's attention, acts by either convincing oneself that one is not in an immediate danger, or by pushing the threatening cognitions out of the consciousness into the "preconsciousness". The distal defense system, on the other hand, deals with the thoughts of death that are not in the current focus of attention. The latter is said to be superior in handling fear of death for two reasons. First, the fear of death is so strong that, most of the time, people are unable to handle it directly, and thus push it into the fringes of consciousness (and into the domain of the distal system). Second, the distal system had evolved earlier than the proximal system, and is more experiential; thus, it is more efficient in defending against the existential anxiety. As a result, making death thoughts explicit (by asking people to think about death, relative to exposing them to death-related words subliminally) decreases the likelihood of employing the cultural anxiety buffer. Presumably, this is because explicit thoughts of death trigger emotional distancing, and the cognitive, rather than the experiential, mechanisms take on the function of reducing the anxiety (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, Simon, and Breus 1994). At the same time, providing a distracting time lag between the presentation of a mortality salience manipulation and the assessment of the predicted terror management system produced an increase in the adherence to cultural anxiety buffer. This is, presumably, because such a distraction moves death awareness from the explicit cognitive system to the implicit experiential (Greenberg, et al. 1994). In either case, the anxiety itself is neither predicted nor observed: it is said to be managed by either the experiential system (evolutionarily selected, crude and emotional) or the rational system (deliberate and cognitive). Similarly, emotional state is unaffected by subliminal exposure to death stimuli (Simon, et al. 1997). In short, not being aware of one's own awareness of death does not mean

that one is not aware of death. In the same way, not feeling any anxiety about death does not mean that one is not anxious about it. In fact, the less anxious or aware one is of death on the conscious level, the more he/she is likely to produce the effects of death anxiety and awareness predicted by the TMT.

The lack of actual awareness of death thoughts or of the anxiety associated with them can make one suspicious of the usefulness or prevalence of terror management in an average individual's daily life. The authors caution against such a denial. They suggest that reminders of death are more common than one might imagine, as we are made to think of our mortality daily by the news and ads on the streets, in the papers and on TV (Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski 2000). Consequently, death awareness, or, rather, the drive to escape this awareness, is a powerful motive that underlies many social phenomena. In fact, the authors claim that "…most, (but not all) of the motives studied by social psychologists are symbolic means of managing existential terror" (Pyszczynski, et al. 1997: 6).

Self-esteem

TMT states that self-esteem serves as a defense against fear of death (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon 1986). Self-esteem is described as a component of the cultural anxiety buffer in that, in order to reap the benefits of group membership against fear of death one has to be viewed by oneself and others as a worthy member of the group, or culture. Thus, only those who are worthy may enjoy the various forms of immortality offered by belonging to a group. Empirically, increasing self-esteem via false positive feedback results in smaller effects of mortality salience manipulation in that participants who are made to feel good about themselves uphold less their group's values than those who were made to feel good about themselves, or whose self-esteem was not manipulated. Similarly, those with high self-esteem are less susceptible to the mortality salience manipulation's affects than are those low on self-esteem (Harmon-Jones, et al. 1997).

Criticisms

TMT has been criticized both on theoretical and empirical grounds. Theoretically, it has been suggested that death may not be so fearful given the high rates of suicide attempts

and contemplation (Muraven and Baumeister 1997). Additionally, the postulated existential anxiety has been scrutinized because it is theorized to be overwhelming as to require a worldview defense and at the same time non-existent because of the efficiency of the worldview defense. TMT also claims that anxiety leads to paralysis, yet others showed that anxiety results in just the opposite: restlessness (Muraven and Baumeister 1997). Others have criticized the evolutionary story (Buss 1997), suggesting that inclusive fitness theory and evidence from both animal and human studies indicate that fear of death is trumped by reproductive needs.

Empirically, most problematic for TMT is the fear of death, the critical dependent variable, which cannot be measured, since it is so efficiently managed by the cultural anxiety buffer. In the absence of tests of the effects of mortality salience on fear of death, a number of researchers proposed alternative interpretations of the TNT data. Thus, Snyder (1997) has proposed that perception of lack of control is the cause of the change in ingroup identification and endorsement of the group's ideology and outgroup rejection. Heine, Proulx, and Vohs (2006) suggested that needs to find and maintain meaning in life are the culprits. Navarrete, Kurzban, Fessler, and Kirkpatrick (2004) proposed that coalitional psychology, or the need to establish and maintain group ties, is a better explanation for the mortality salience effects.

Relevance to Group Conflict and Violence

Terror Management Theory maintains that ethnocentrism results from the defensive reaction to outgroup ideologies. Awareness of others' values and beliefs that are different from those of the ingroup shakes the foundation of one's culturally constructed worldview, thus making one vulnerable to death anxiety. Because this is troubling, TMT argues, individuals are motivated to protect themselves from this existential anxiety by strengthening their faith in their own worldview. They do so by affirming their core beliefs, derogating outgroups, and, in extreme cases, aggressing against or annihilating those who do not share one's views (McGregor, et al. 1998). Specifically, TMT suggests that group conflict is borne out of constant struggles of group members to maintain their worldview in the face of undeniable fact that they are mortal.

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Construction of Threat Model

The Construction of Threat model demonstrates the process of threat perception and identity formation that bridges levels of analysis, based upon the constructivist assumption of mutually constitutive agents and structures, producing individual and collective identities that emerge throughout time. At the individual level, threat perception is a product of categorization, and the formation of stereotypes providing the individual with expectations about the future behavior of Others (Rousseau 2006: 63). While this tendency to stereotype is endemic to human nature, the content of stereotypes is derived from one's external social environment, and the individual 'learns' to form certain expectations based on stereotypes. It is the comparison of Self and Other (based on group stereotypes) and the formation of boundary mechanisms that produces perception of friendship or enmity. This applies to all group interactions including those of states. Individuals compare their collective state identity with that of an alternative, and the level of similarity determines both the strength of a perceived shared identity between the two groups and the intensity of threat perception.

The micro-level process of the model is demonstrated below. When evaluating other states (Rousseau uses the example of Jane Doe and Japan), individuals use *dimensions* of identity to determine the level of similarity or difference resulting in shared or exclusive identity (some examples of dimensions include regime type, religion, or wealth). However, only dimensions that salient are used to evaluate the Other group, and it is these observations that are used in constructing perceptions of shared identity (Rousseau 2006: 67). What makes a dimension salient at a given time is its observation in the social environment. This is called 'priming', and individual susceptibility to priming is a function of that individual's relevant knowledge and the complexity of the evaluation process, or the number of latent dimensions that compose an individual's 'repertoire' of dimensions. Increased social knowledge reduces susceptibility to priming and but also increases the complexity of a repertoire by adding dimensions, which in turn increases susceptibility. An individual who possesses more latent dimensions will be more likely to respond to any message that is relevant to those dimensions, and so new identities are more likely to emerge among individuals with more complex repertoires. Thus, a

curvilinear relationship should exist between knowledge and susceptibility, as those individuals with moderate knowledge have enough dimensions to respond to many messages but do not rely preponderantly on any single dimension.

At the domestic level of analysis, collective identities diffuse across society through social interaction and mass communication. This diffusion implies that identity is a dynamic phenomenon subject to constant change, that individuals have multiple identities which can compete with each other depending on the actions of political entrepreneurs attempting mobilization, and that "the selection or emergence of an identity...depends on social interaction" (Rousseau 2006: 73). And because agents and structures are mutually constitutive, this interaction between agents creates its own social structure "that in turn regulates and constitutes the actors" (Rousseau 2006: 74). Two phenomenon lead to this structure, interpersonal interaction (either locally or nonlocally) and mass communication. Nonlocal interaction allows for local networks to be linked together and facilitate the transfer of ideas over long distances. Mass communication also transfers ideas over long distances, but the diffusion is unidirectional and its intensity is conditional on the number of 'transmitters' of a message and the number of 'receivers' exposed to that message (Rousseau 2006: 85). Social environments with larger quantities of agents make diffusion more complex, while socioeconomic incentives structures can also condition the selection of identities, and the salience of certain dimensions. Internationally, diffusion occurs through four mechanisms: contiguous diffusion between agents at border areas, noncontiguous diffusion between agents that are geographically separated, elite cross-border diffusion between entrepreneurs, and global media diffusion as mass communication spreads ideas throughout different regions (Rousseau 2006: 91–92).

With regards to conflict and political violence, the model demonstrates how the contrasting perceptions of identity produce perceptions of threat from the Other. These threat perceptions are a direct result of the differences between identity repertoires, and socially determined dimensions of identity that are either latent or salient. If a social environment's ideational structure continually reminds agents of their differences by stressing specific dimensions that are not shared, perceptions of threat may be long-lasting and result in violent action. Sophia mentioned how small groups perceiving

negative identifications with Others contributes the radicalization of those individuals, and increases the likelihood of violent action based on that negative identification. The Construction of Threat model contributes to this understanding by demonstrating how individuals come to perceive threats that lead to negative identifications. Individuals with a shared identity will be more likely to have positive identifications with each other, as neither perceives a threat from the other agent. Of course, this perception of shared identity will be socially constructed for these agents. The opposite applies for agents who share negative identifications: because they perceive a different identity, this results in the perception of threat that makes harm to the Other agent a satisfactory outcome. If difference-producing dimensions recur in the social environment, either through interpersonal interaction or mass communication, then the perception of threat and negative identifications will persist throughout time, making radicalization persistent and violent conflict more likely.

Level of Analysis
- Individual

References

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Overview

For a variety of reasons, adolescents have a higher probability of becoming violent. These reasons include immaturity, increased stress, and increased unemployment. For these reasons, the proportion of adolescents in the state is a strong correlate of terrorism. These results apply most strongly to male adolescents, especially with the effects of testosterone changes occurring during this period of development.

Explanation

The youth, especially the males, are especially prone to violence (al-Hasan 1986; Hagan and Foster 2001).[1] This is true for a variety of reasons. Adolescent males are not fully developed, physically, emotionally, or sexually.

Furthermore, evolutionary pressures encourage adolescent males to be more violent (Kanazawa and Still 2000: 444). Adolescent males are also expected to be adult males in their behavior and duties. As such, they are under higher levels of stress, and since they lack experience dealing with stress, they tend to deal with it through violent means (van Gundy 2002). They are outside the political process, being unable to vote, so they experience despair in that realm. Finally, they are also most prone to being unemployed for a variety of reasons, including lack of work history and low skill levels (Caspi, et al. 1998).

Because of these reasons, they are much more prone to stress and to despair than are others. Thus, they are much more prone to violence. If the adolescent male is part of an additional out group, then the probability for violent actions is even higher (King 1997; Wiltfang and Scarbecz 1990). This is especially true in those traditional cultures that impose such pressures on the male.

However, females are not immune to the siren song of terrorism. Females lead terrorist organizations, are members of terrorist organizations, and are suicide bombers

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[1] This observation does not rule out the existence of female terrorists. To say that female terrorists do not exist is to ignore the historical record. While it is rare for women to actually lead terrorist organizations, they are used extensively in combat. Approximately a fifth of the combatants in Peru's Maoist *Sendero Luminoso* were female. However, the majority of terrorists (and terrorist leaders) are male.

(Pape 2005). Thus, adolescence should be a greater predictor of terrorism risk than just male adolescence.

Level of Analysis
- Individual

Related Concepts
- Unemployment

Major Contributors
- Hagan and Foster
- King
- Pape

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Overview

Certain characteristics of the state are also correlates of group violence and terrorism. This makes sense, as the groups are embedded within the milieu that is the state. One of these factors is the strength of the state.

In-Depth Explanation

From the discussion of regime type (Democracy Level), we know there are conflicting theories on the effects of regime type on group violence. This conflict seems resolved when state strength is taken into consideration. Effective autocracies are very safe from group violence, whereas weak democracies (and transitional democracies) are very susceptible to it.

State Strength

Another aspect of the regime needing exploration is the strength of the state/government. A strong government is one in which the goals of that government are carried out efficiently and the population is under control (protection) of the government.

The pacifistic benefits of autocracies only hold for as long as they are able to keep groups from forming and to turn the apparatus of the state against those groups should they form. If the autocracy is unable to do these, they do not benefit. Thus, weak autocracies—those states that do not allow for political solutions, yet do not have the ability to repress the groups sufficiently—suffer more from terrorism than strong autocracies.

Weak democracies also suffer from greater levels of terrorism than strong democracies. This is due to the nascent democratic institutions, those institutions' inability to fulfill their democratic role, and the population's unfamiliarity with the tenets of democracy—Rule of Law, protection of minority right, etc. Add to this mix the natural difficulties new democracies have.

Conclusion

Thus, we would expect the spectrum (from lowest to highest probability of terrorism) to be as follows: strong autocracies, weak autocracies, strong democracies, and weak democracies, with little distance between weak autocracies and strong democracies and a large distance between strong democracies and weak democracies. The reality reflects this expectation (at least for nationalist-separatist groups).[2]

This finding that democracies should suffer disproportionately from terrorism agrees with Crenshaw's (1981) assertion that the permissive structure of a democracy is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for terrorism (Ross 1993; Weinberg 1991). This permissive structure allows like-minded individuals to come together to form groups (freedom of assembly). It allows individuals to pass freely through the territory without being automatically subject to police search.

Level of analysis
- State Level

Related Concepts
- Democracy level

Major Contributors
- Crenshaw
- Ross
- Gurr

References

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[2] The reality does *not* reflect this spectrum for social revolutionary groups. These groups operate almost exclusively against the strong democracies (of the West). One explanation, among many, is that the Soviet Union supported these groups. Another reason is that these groups have no inherent conflict with non-Western democracies; it is only the capitalist society they wish to overturn.

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