Revolutionary Dreams and Terrorist Violence in the Developed World: Explaining Country Variation[*]

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Abstract

This article presents a cross-country comparison of the intensity of revolutionary terrorism in the developed world after the wave of mobilization in the late sixties and early seventies of the twentieth century. Some countries were hit much more severely than others by this type of violence. The article tries to account for this variation with a new dataset of fatalities in 23 countries that it has been built for the period 1970-2000 based on local sources in six different languages. This dataset corrects in part the problems of underreporting that Jan Oskar Engene's TWEED dataset suffers from. The dependent variable is a novel index of the intensity of terrorism that combines the number of fatalities and the number of years in which the terrorist organization has killed people. The unit of analysis is the country in the whole period. Six broad hypotheses about the influence of economic development, social change, mobilization, welfare provision, population and political factors are tested in the article. The statistical results show that three variables are almost sufficient to explain variance: past dictatorship, high population and strong Communist parties. Given that past dictatorship is the most important variable, three different mechanisms by which to understand its effect are suggested: the role of repression in countries with past political instability; dictatorship as a proxy for polarization; and past breakdowns as an indicator of the chances of overthrowing the system.

Introduction

I present in this article an analysis of revolutionary left-wing terrorism in 23 developed countries for the period 1970-2000, based on my own dataset of fatalities caused by this type of violence. There is striking variation between countries. Revolutionary terrorism was a serious challenge in Italy, Spain, Germany[1], Japan and Greece. It was milder in France, Portugal and the United States. And it was absent in many other countries, including Great Britain, Canada, Austria, Sweden and Australia. What can explain the varying degree of this kind of terrorism?

This question is particularly puzzling if we think of the 1968 movement. How is it that some of the countries where the movement was most powerful, such as France or the United States, developed so little left-wing terrorism, while it flourished in countries in which the 1968 movement had not provoked so much turmoil, such as Spain or Germany? Was the variation caused by economic, social or political factors?

The focus on revolutionary terrorism makes sense methodologically. The left-right cleavage is active everywhere and therefore all developed countries are potential candidates for this kind of terrorism. Thus, it is possible to engage in a statistical cross-country comparison.

In order to account for variations in violence, I have developed a new measure of the intensity of terrorism that combines the number of fatalities produced by terrorist organizations and the number of years in which these organizations killed at least one person. The longer the period of time a terrorist organization keeps killing people and the higher the death toll, the greater the intensity of terrorist violence.

In the analysis, the unit of observation is the country (there are 23 observations). I have calculated for each country the value of intensity of terrorism for the period 1970-2000. The independent variables measure antecedent or concurrent conditions that

may be associated with revolutionary terrorism. I test hypotheses about (i) the level of economic development, (ii) modernization (economic growth and expansion of higher education), (iii) mobilization (strikes and demonstrations), (iv) inequality and welfare, (v) population, and (vi) political conditions (past dictatorship and the strength of Communist parties).

Quantitative comparative work on terrorism was virtually non-existent before 2000. This article adds to a burgeoning literature that is trying to fill this gap (Burgoon, 2006; Engene, 2004; Eubank & Weinberg, 2001; Kurrild-Klitgaard, Justesen & Klemmensen, 2006; Li & Schaub, 2004; Li, 2005; Pape, 2005.) Most of this literature, however, focuses on transnational terrorist incidents, simply because the existing datasets do no cover domestic attacks. Yet, we know that domestic terrorism occurs much more frequently and produces many more fatalities than transnational terrorism does.

The only comparative dataset on domestic terrorism is TWEED (Engene, 2007). It is based on newspaper information and includes all terrorist incidents, lethal or non-lethal, in Western European countries for the period 1950-2004. My dataset is more limited. It only covers fatalities of revolutionary terrorism for the period 1970-2000 in Engene's 18 European countries plus Canada, the United States, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. However, it is more precise and exhaustive, based on a long list of primary and secondary local sources in six different languages. Engene's dataset, being more comprehensive, is less detailed and suffers problems of under-reporting.

Although much has been written on the various revolutionary terrorist groups that acted in developed countries in the 1970s and 1980s[2], the only systematic comparative work is that of Engene (2004). One problem with Engene's analysis is that

it is based exclusively on bivariate correlations. I have employed regression analysis to control for other variables and to check the robustness of some of the key findings.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section contains a short overview of the aims and strategies of revolutionary terrorism, and presents the hypotheses about variation in the intensity of this type of terrorism. The second section discusses the sample, measurement issues, and the statistical analysis of the 23 countries. The third section investigates the mechanisms that could explain the main association found between intensity of violence and past political instability. Conclusions close the article.

Hypotheses about revolutionary terrorism

In this article, I focus on the actor-sense of terrorism. According to this, terrorism is political violence carried out by underground organizations that do not control part of the territory of the State in which they act. Guerrilla insurgencies, unlike terrorist organizations, liberate territory, normally in the jungle or in the mountains, and rule in this area. This definitional criterion is simple and convenient, since it fits nicely the kind of terrorist violence that is observed in developed countries. Moreover, it affords us to avoid the conceptual quarrels that are pervasive in the literature on terrorism (see Schmid & Jongman, 1988; Weinberg, Pedahzur & Hirsch-Hoefler, 2004).

I am only interested in revolutionary terrorism, whose ultimate aim is regime change. The goal is to seize political power through a popular uprising (Crenshaw, 1972). While it is true that many national liberation terrorist organizations, such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army or Basque Homeland and Freedom (ETA), adopted revolutionary jargon in their ideological statements, they differ in various important ways from the typical left wing terrorist group. National liberation groups always make

a territorial claim that is negotiable (from greater autonomy to independence). It is also often the case that these groups announce some conditions that if met by the State will lead to the cessation of violence. And in order to extract concessions, they engage in a war of attrition with the State (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2007). By contrast, revolutionary groups do not have concrete claims and do not aspire to negotiate with the State. Their aim is more grandiose: the destruction of capitalism and bourgeois values. Moreover, the main function of revolutionary violence is not to induce the State to behave in a particular way, but to mobilize followers. The distinction between revolutionary and national liberation groups boils down to the territorial claim. None of terrorist organizations considered in this study made a territorial claim.

In the written materials of revolutionary groups, violence is justified, in the convoluted Marxist vocabulary of the time, as a means to mobilize passive followers.[3] The following mechanisms are often mentioned: (i) violence polarizes conflict, (ii) violence raises class consciousness, (iii) violence sets a path that others will follow, (iv) violence shows the vulnerability of the system, and (iv) violence forces the State to reveal its true repressive face. The general theme is nicely summarized in the slogan adopted by the Weather Underground: ‘a single spark can start a prairie fire.’

The vast majority of developed countries had revolutionary organizations that supported armed struggle but fell short of killing anyone. For instance, there was the Angry Brigade in Great Britain, an underground organization responsible for about 25 bombings between 1970 and 1972. As they explained in a communiqué, ‘we attack property, not people’ (Vague, 1997: 40).

In the United States, the Weather Underground decided not to kill anyone after the death of three of their own activists who were manipulating an explosive device in New York in 1970. Bill Ayers, a historical Weatherman, wrote in his memoirs that ‘we

simply didn't have it in us to harm others, especially innocents, no matter how tough we talked.' (2001: 207) With the exception of the somewhat strange Symbionise Liberation Army, which killed two people, all the other killings by minor organizations (the Venceremos organization, the Tuller family, the New Year's Gang, or the United Freedom Front) were produced either in bank robberies or in fortuitous fights with members of police forces.

In France, despite the impressive mobilization during 1968, no group went seriously into full terrorist violence until the emergence of Action Directe (AD) in 1980.[4] Gauche Prolétarianne, a Maoist group that attracted the most radical members after May 1968, refused to kill anyone, renouncing armed struggle in 1973. There were other groups in the seventies, such as the Groupes d'Action Révolutionaire Internationaliste or the Noyaux Armés pour l'Autonomie Populaire (NAPAP), the antecedents of AD, or the Brigades Internationales. NAPAP killed one person and the Brigades two, but they were very weak organizations and were decimated by police arrests.

It is also possible to detect non-lethal groups in smaller countries. In Belgium, the Communist Combatant Cells, a small, violent revolutionary group that acted in the eighties, did not want to kill anyone either (though in 1985, they killed two firemen accidentally) (Laufer, 1988). In the Netherlands, there were several ultra leftist groups such as the Red Youth or its successor the Red Resistance Front that had radical views and supported armed struggle, but they did not evolve into lethal terrorism (Schmid 1988).

Only in a handful of countries did radical leftist organizations make the momentous step of killing people on a systematic basis. In Germany, the Red Army Faction killed its first victim in 1971 and its last in 1993: the death toll was 34 fatalities.

In Spain, the GRAPO (First October Revolutionary Antifascist Groups) killed 84 people during the period 1975-2000. In Italy, lethal revolutionary terrorist groups were as fragmented as the party system. The best-known group, the Red Brigades and its various splits, killed 72 people during the period 1974-88, out of 150 total victims. The remaining 78 fatalities were killed by more than 25 different radical groups.

How can we explain this variation? Why did some countries have more revolutionary terrorism than others? I propose six broad hypotheses to find an answer. I have relied on the emerging literature on the causes of terrorism (Bjørgo, 2005; Crenshaw, 1981; Engene, 2004; Richardson, 2006; Ross, 1993), the most important findings in the literature on civil wars (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Hegre & Sambanis, 2006; Lacina, 2006), and my own familiarity with the cases of study and their historical context.

The hypotheses can be classified in several blocks: (i) level of economic development, (ii) modernization, (iii) mobilization, (iv) welfare and inequality, (v) population, and (vi) political conditions.

Regarding the level of economic development, the literature on civil wars has shown that GDP per capita is the most powerful predictor of this kind of conflicts. The standard interpretation of this association is that GDP per capita is a proxy of State strength. The richer a country is, the more able the State is to neutralize a violent challenge. Applying this finding to terrorism, we obtain the first hypothesis:

> H1: The higher the level of economic development, the less intense revolutionary terrorism.

The second hypothesis has to do with social change. The literature on terrorism has contemplated the possibility that terrorism is associated with a too rapid process of modernization (Bjørgo, 2005: 258; Engene, 2004: 86-87). This is rooted in a longstanding discussion about the impact of modernization on social instability and political violence (Olson, 1963; Tilly, 1973). The basic idea is that the strains of modernization might lead to violence if the social transformation brought about by this process occurs too quickly. This argument sounds slightly functionalist, for violence is understood as the escape valve of the tensions to which the system is subject during the modernization process.

Two indicators of modernization have been chosen. The first indicator is the rate of economic growth, taken as an indicator of the speed of modernization: [5]

H2a: The higher the mean of GDP growth, the more intense revolutionary terrorism.

The second indicator is the expansion of higher education. A recurrent argument in the literature on the 1968 wave of mobilization establishes that the rapid expansion of higher education, and the incapacity of the system to integrate the masses of new students who went to university, fuelled political radicalism (e.g. Marwick, 1998: Ch.11; Suri, 2003: 88-94). Historians have shown that the overcrowding of the universities played a large role in the radicalization of students in both Italy (Ginsborg, 2003: 298-299) and France (Seidman, 2004: Ch.2). The hypothesis is therefore:

H2b: The greater the growth of university enrolment, the greater the intensity of revolutionary terrorism.

It could be argued that both economic growth and the expansion of higher education reduce the likelihood of revolutionary terrorism, since they generate welfare and economic opportunities respectively. But what the argument says is that too rapid change generates failed expectations (e.g. students with a university degree that cannot find a job in the labour market.) As this is ultimately an empirical question, the statistical analysis will decide which interpretation, if any, is the correct one.

The third hypothesis refers to mobilization. The big wave of student and worker mobilization that exploded in 1968 continued until the mid seventies and in some countries even until the late seventies. The argument here says that greater mobilization is associated to more intense terrorism. Greater mobilization implies contestation and radicalism, two conditions which make violent conflict more likely. I test two claims:

H3a: The greater the labour unrest, the more intense revolutionary terrorism.

H3b: The higher the rate of participation in demonstrations, the more intense revolutionary terrorism.

Neither of these variables, strikes and demonstrations, correlates significantly with rapid economic growth or the expansion of higher education, casting some doubt on theories that interpret mobilization as a consequence of deeper structural changes. On the other hand, the correlation between strikes and demonstrations is not significant either. This implies that each variable separately is a potential explanatory factor over and above underlying processes of modernization.

The fourth hypothesis refers to inequality (Engene, 2004: 87-88). Since revolutionary terrorists tried to redress what in their view was the exploitation and

injustice of the capitalist system, it makes sense to check the effect of inequality. Moreover, more unequal countries are more likely to have polarized conflicts, creating more favourable conditions for the emergence of armed groups. I have used two indicators. The first one is a straight measurement of inequality. The second one is State revenue as a percentage of the GDP, taken as a proxy of the size of the Welfare State. The idea is that countries with more developed welfare systems will have less intense terrorism (this is actually the case regarding international terrorism, see Burgoon 2006). Both indicators, inequality and State revenue, are highly correlated. I have opted for State revenue simply because it is defined for 22 countries of the sample, whereas the index of inequality is only available for 21 countries.

H4: The lower the State revenue, the more intense revolutionary terrorism.

The fifth hypothesis is about the role of population. Population is a standard control in quantitative studies on civil wars. Whereas it seems to play an important role in civil war onset (Hegre & Sambanis, 2006), it is not so relevant when accounting for levels of violence in civil war (Lacina, 2006). The presumption here is that higher populated countries are more likely to suffer terrorism. Two mechanisms are conceivable. On the one hand, the State may have greater difficulty in controlling the population in highly populated countries. On the other hand, the tails of the distribution of ideological preferences have more people in more populated countries: hence, the number of radicals is higher and terrorism is more likely to emerge, all other things remaining equal.

H5: The greater the size of the population, the more intense revolutionary terrorism.

It could be that the relevant variable in understanding terrorism is not population size, but population density. I have tried this different specification, but density does not have any relationship at all with the intensity of terrorism.

Finally, the sixth hypothesis incorporates political factors. First, the presence of strong Communist parties may be a signal about the strength of the radical left and the political polarization of the country. Even if a Communist party is committed to democracy (as in Italy or Spain), the fact that a certain proportion of people prefer to vote for Communist rather than for Socialist parties tells us something about how widespread radicalism and rejection of capitalism are. The hypothesis is simply:

H6a: The stronger Communist parties are, the more intense revolutionary terrorism.

It could be thought that the presence of a strong Communist party has the opposite effect, since radicalism may be integrated into the system thanks to a party that plays politics institutionally. This possibility cannot be ruled out. However, the very fact that a Communist party has a considerable number of followers is crucial for the expectations of radical revolutionaries. For the latter, it is a signal about how likely revolution is. My point here is that, for the terrorists, revolution is more likely if there is a Communist party than if there is not.

Several authors have pointed out that there is some connection between past dictatorship and terrorist violence (Cerny, 1981; Engene, 2004; Fritzsche 1989;

Katzenstein, 1998). In the literature on civil wars, past political instability is an important factor too (Hegre & Sambanis, 2006). More generally, Przeworski et al. (2000: 127) have shown that past instability is a powerful predictor of the survival of a regime. Regimes that have suffered several political transitions in the past are more likely to be challenged by anti-system groups.

H6b: Countries with past periods of dictatorship are more prone to suffer intense revolutionary terrorism.

The association between past dictatorship and terrorism can respond to three different mechanisms. First, the fact that a country went through an authoritarian period could be understood as a proxy of social conflict and polarization. As these conflicts became less pronounced in the seventies, thanks to economic development, its manifestation was in the form of terrorism (in its revolutionary or fascist vein) rather than in the form of revolution, civil war or a coup.

Secondly, in countries with past political instability people might learn from history that the regime can be overthrown. The collapse of the regime is not a utopian dream and therefore some people organize in armed groups. Terrorists in countries with past dictatorship thought it was possible to break the system because this had happened before, whereas in countries with a long democratic tradition they concluded that regime breakdown was not really a feasible option.

The third mechanism is related to repression. It could be that countries with an authoritarian past have more repressive security forces and conflicts therefore escalate quickly into violent ones. Or, that repression is associated with the authoritarian past and it is interpreted by the challengers as a return to hard times (Frtizsche 1989). The

famous editor Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, the founder of the first Italian revolutionary terrorist organization, Grupo d'Azione Partigiana, was persuaded that an authoritarian coup was about to happen (Feltrinelli, 2002). He was certain that he was fighting against an authoritarian regime with a democratic facade.

Hypothesis 6b assumes a relationship between revolutionary violence and past political regime. To test this hypothesis, I have added two controls. First, the political regime at the time of the onset of violence. The literature shows that the type of political regime is strongly associated (in a non-monotonic way) with political violence (for a comprehensive review, see Gleditsch, Hegre and Strand, in press). In the small sample of countries used for this article, I have not found evidence of a non-linear relationship. Thus, I simply posit that the weaker democracy is, the more intense revolutionary terrorism will be.

The second control has to do with the length of the regime since the last transition. It could be that past instability matters, but only when it is sufficiently close to the onset moment. Thus, the more remote in time the last transition, the less intense revolutionary terrorism.

Analysis

Sample

The sample is composed of 23 OECD developed countries.[6] The problem of expanding the sample further, apart from the availability of data regarding some of the independent variables, is that in less developed countries we find guerrilla insurgencies rather than clandestine, terrorist groups. Revolutionary terrorism is a well-delimited and rather homogenous phenomenon if we restrict ourselves to the developed world. An example may be illustrative here. Both the Shining Path in Peru and the GRAPO in Spain were

Maoist revolutionary groups. However, their violence was altogether different. The Shining Path controlled at some point 25 per cent of Peruvian municipalities (McClintock, 1991). The estimate of the Peruvian Truth Commission is that the Shining Path killed almost 32,000 people, most of them peasants living in the region of Ayacucho.[7] The vast majority of the killings had to do with imposing order and extracting rents from peasants in the rural areas that the insurgents had liberated from the State. By contrast, the GRAPO was an underground group, fully isolated from society, that killed less than 100 people, most of them members of security forces. The type of violence in guerrilla conflicts is so different to that of terrorism in developed countries that I decided to exclude all guerrilla conflicts from the analysis. Hence the limitation of the sample to developed countries.

Dependent variable

The unit of observation in this article is the country. I have constructed an index of terrorist intensity for the period 1970-2000. One possible way of measuring the intensity of terrorist violence is simply to sum all the deaths brought about by revolutionary terrorist organizations within each country. However, this measurement would not take into account the temporal dimension. Terrorist violence is more intense if it occurs over a long period of time than if it is concentrated in a single point in time. The persistence of violence is particularly frightening and reveals the incapacity of the State to end with the challenge posed by the terrorists. Only powerful terrorist organizations can sustain violence for long periods of time.

I have focused on deaths and not on incidents in general. Two reasons justify this decision. First, there is country-based detailed information about killings, but not about terrorist incidents in general. The under-reporting problem (Drakos & Gofas,

2006) is probably more serious for incidents than for killings. Secondly, incidents have high internal variation (from attacks against symbols to massive attacks against property, from slight injuries to serious injuries), whereas killings represent a more homogenous type of event (Frey, 2004: 11).

Based on these considerations, I propose the following index. We define first a variable $year_j$ that measures whether in any given year in a country there was at least one death by a revolutionary terrorist organization:

$$year_j = \begin{cases} 0 \; no \; death \\ 1 \; at \; least \; one \; death \end{cases}$$

The sum $\sum_{j=1}^{J} year_j$ is the number of (not necessarily consecutive) years in a given country in which there was at least one death caused by revolutionary terrorist organizations. If we define the number of deaths by any revolutionary terrorist organization *i* in a country as $death_i$, then the total number of this kind of death in a country is simply $\sum_{i=1}^{I} death_i$. We can now define an index *TI* of terrorist intensity as:

$$TI = \ln\left(\sum_{i=1}^{I} death_i * \sum_{j=1}^{J} year_j + 0.5 \right)$$

As many countries have zero killings and the log of zero is not defined, it was necessary to add 0.5 to the product of years and killings. Thus, if 30 deaths occurred in a country in 10 years, the intensity of violence in this country would be the natural logarithm of 300.5 (i.e., *TI* = 5.7). Note that this index does not take into account how

fragmented terrorist violence is, that is, how many terrorist organizations acted in each country. In Italy there were 150 deaths caused by no less than 25 groups, whereas in Spain there were 90 deaths and 84 of them correspond to a single organization, GRAPO. This information is not captured by the index: only the total number of deaths matter.

Table I summarizes the data of the dependent variable. Italy is at the top, with 150 fatalities (*TI* = 7.90), followed by Spain (*TI* = 7.33), Germany (*TI* = 6.23) and Japan (6.01). The most problematic case is the United States, due to the presence of the Black Liberation Army (BLA). It is not clear whether the BLA should be counted as revolutionary terrorism or rather as ethnic/nationalist terrorism. Despite many ideological points in common with the revolutionary left, Hewitt (2003) classifies black terrorism as a group on its own. In the statistical analysis I have excluded the killings of the BLA, but I have repeated the whole analysis including the BLA: the results are basically the same.

TABLE I

For the construction of the index, I have used my own dataset of killings by revolutionary organizations, in which the unit of observation is the person killed. Given that the total number of deaths of revolutionary terrorism is not so high (409 people killed), I have made a systematic search, tracking each of these killings and collecting as much information as possible about each death: the name and status of the victim, the circumstances of the killing, the method used, the location and the authorship.

As is explained in the codebook of the dataset in much greater detail, many primary and secondary sources have been checked in each country (studies on terrorist

organizations, country datasets, data offered by terrorist organizations or victim associations, newspapers and chronologies.) In Engene's (2007) TWEED dataset, information about terrorist incidents is extracted from *Keesing's Record of World Events*, an invaluable source based on press coverage of international news. Comparing the last two columns in Table I, it is obvious that the use of local sources unearths many killings that were ignored in *Keesing's* archive. This should not be understood as a criticism of the TWEED dataset, which is much wider both in the time period it covers and in the events that are recorded (all terrorist incidents). The comparison reflects rather the inevitable trade-off between scope and accuracy. Given the limited scope of this research, I have opted for maximum accuracy.

Independent variables

Since the dependent variable is a single measurement of terrorist intensity in each country for a long period of time, 1970-2000, I have tried, in order to avoid problems of endogeneity, to measure the independent variables before 1970. This was feasible in most cases. The level of economic development is measured (in constant 1985 dollars) as the log of per capita income in 1965 (data from the Penn World Tables.) Economic growth is the mean growth rate for the period 1965-70 (again, from Penn World Tables.) The expansion of higher education is the difference between the percentage of population in higher education in 1970 and the corresponding percentage in 1965 (data from OECD *Educational Statistics*.) Inequality is measured as the mean for the period 1965-70 (data from Estimated Household Income Inequality Data Set, which is part of the Texas Inequality Project, see Table II for further details.) State revenue is measured as a percentage of GDP in 1965 (Lane, McKay & Newton, 1997: Table 5.1.) Population is the log of population in 1970 (data from the United Nations, see Table II for details.)

Past dictatorship is a dummy variable that measures whether the country had an authoritarian spell during the twentieth century.[8] Regarding the two political controls associated to past dictatorship, I have used the following variables: one the one hand, age of democracy in 1970, that is, the number of years the country has lived under democracy since the last transition (Alvarez et al., 1996); on the other hand, the political regime in 1970, measured with two different indicators, a dichotomous variable (Alvarez et al., 1996) and the continuous Scalar Index of Polities (SIP) developed by Gates et al. (2006).

In three cases, labour unrest, participation in demonstrations and strength of Communist parties, I have opted for measuring the variables in the 1970-80 period for a mixture of substantive and pragmatic reasons. In the case of the mobilization variables (strikes and demonstrations), it is important to bear in mind that mobilization was severely restricted in three key countries, Greece, Portugal and Spain, before the mid-seventies. Thus, it is more convenient to choose a period with at least some years in which all countries had the same political regime. Moreover, it is dubious that past mobilization is more relevant for terrorist groups than present mobilization. It can be argued that revolutionary groups will act with greater intensity when they observe popular mobilization in the streets and in factories, since their aim is to bring about a mass uprising. But this is a simultaneous relationship, not an antecedent one.

Labour unrest is operationalized as strike volume (days lost per one thousand workers). Data come from the International Labour Office's *Year Book of Labour Statistics* (several years). Demonstrations are measured, according to a complex procedure, as the rate of participation per one thousand citizens. [9] The raw data come from the *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators*.

In the case of strength of Communist parties, the variable could not be measured in three key countries (Greece, Portugal and Spain) before the arrival of democracy in the mid-seventies. In this case, I took the period 1975-79, the earliest period for which there is information about all the countries in the sample. Data come from Lane, McKay & Newton (1997: Table 7.4.)

With the exception of these three variables (Communist strength, labour unrest and demonstrations), all the other variables can be taken as antecedent conditions. Table II summarizes the hypotheses, the operationalization of the independent variables, and the sources of information for the construction of the variables.

TABLE II

I have replicated the whole analysis using only the independent variables for the period 1970-80: the results were stronger in general, but the main findings are basically the same. This shows that the timing of the variables is a minor issue for the statistical analysis.[10]

Statistical analysis

As Table III shows, the correlation between the sum of all deaths and the index of intensity is .79, implying that they are not measuring exactly the same thing. In the statistical analysis I have run all the regressions using both measures, the total sum of deaths in each country and the index of intensity: the results are similar, but the independent variables have in almost every case a stronger impact on intensity of violence than on number of fatalities.[11]

TABLE III

Given the small number of cases in the sample, just 23 observations, we have to be careful about degrees of freedom and potential problems of multicollinearity. Table III shows that there are strong relationships among many of the independent variables. More concretely, countries with an authoritarian past are also countries with a lower GDP per capita, greater economic growth, greater participation in demonstrations, and lower State revenues (or greater inequality). There is, therefore, a serious overlap between the hypothesis about past political instability and the hypotheses about economic development, economic growth, mobilization and levels of welfare provision.

I have tested each hypothesis twice: first without controls and second controlling for past dictatorship. In this way, we can check whether what matters is past dictatorship or the economic and social features that are associated with countries with past dictatorships.

Table IV presents OLS estimations with robust standard errors. Hypothesis 1 about economic development seems to hold when GDP per capita is introduced (Model 1): richer countries suffer less intense revolutionary terrorism. But when past dictatorship is added (Model 2), GDP per capita loses all statistical significance. Poorer countries are also the countries with past dictatorships.

TABLE IV

Something similar occurs with Hypothesis 2 about social change. In Model 3 the rate of economic growth and expansion of higher education are introduced. Both have positive signs, showing that more rapid social change is associated with more intense

terrorism. Economic growth is highly significant, whereas expansion of higher education is not. The effect of past dictatorship here is strange. In Model 4 it neutralizes completely the effect of the rate of economic growth (the countries that grew faster in the late sixties were Italy, Japan, Portugal and Spain, countries with past dictatorships), but it makes expansion of higher education significant. This, however, is not a systematic effect. Expansion of higher education is not significant once we control for population, either with or without past dictatorship (result not shown in Table IV.)

The same pattern is repeated for Hypotheses 3 and 4. Hypothesis 3 posits a relationship between mobilization and terrorism. Strike volume (days lost per 1,000 workers) is not significant at all. It is political protest rather than labour protest that is associated with terrorism (Model 5). However, participation in demonstrations in the 1970s is strongly related to the processes of transition from dictatorship to democracy in three Southern European countries, Greece, Portugal and Spain. These countries have the highest rate of participation in the sample. Thus, when in Model 6 past dictatorship is incorporated, the effect of demonstrations simply vanishes.

Regarding Hypothesis 4, about inequality or welfare provision, Model 7 shows that welfare provision, measured indirectly by State revenue, has the expected negative sign and is highly significant. In Model 8, the variable stops being significant due to the introduction of past dictatorship. Countries with an authoritarian past have weaker States and less developed welfare provision. The same results are obtained if inequality is used instead of State revenue (not shown in Table IV.)

Hypothesis 6 about the role of political factors is tested in Model 9. The coefficient of the strength of Communist parties is positive, as expected, but not significant when it is entered with past dictatorship.

Past dictatorship is a remarkably strong variable, regardless of the other variables introduced in the analysis. The countries that went through authoritarian periods during the twentieth century are Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Spain and Portugal. Except Austria, all the other countries are the ones that suffered the most intense revolutionary terrorism. Among the countries that were democracies throughout the whole of the twentieth century, we only find some revolutionary terrorism in France and the United States.

The introduction of other political indicators does not weaken the association between the intensity of terrorism and past political instability. Neither the age of democracy nor the nature of the regime in 1970 (measured either with the ACLP dichotomous indicator or the SIP continuous indicator) is significant when past dictatorship is included.[12] This means that what matters is history (past instability), not the political regime at the time of onset. The comparison between Italy and Spain is illuminating. They are the two countries with the highest value in the index of terrorist intensity: while Italy had been a democracy since 1948, the first democratic elections in Spain after the death of Franco took place in 1977. What unifies Italy and Spain is a turbulent political past.

The association between past dictatorship and revolutionary terrorism is only weakened when the size of population is controlled for. As can be seen in Model 10, population has a strongly positive and significant effect. Revolutionary terrorism tends to occur in highly populated countries, confirming Hypothesis 5. Interestingly, once population enters into the analysis, the strength of Communist parties becomes highly significant (due to the fact that some small countries such as Iceland, Finland and Luxembourg have large Communist parties and do not have terrorism).

Model 10 is by far the best model, both in terms of the F-statistic and the degree of fit as measured by R^2. I have tried many combinations of three independent variables and none is as powerful as that of Model 10. Moreover, once we introduce the three variables of Model 10, no fourth variable is significant and in every case the three original variables remain significant at the 10 per cent level regardless of the nature of the fourth variable. This reassures us somewhat about the robustness of the results.

Discussion

The three key variables that explain variation in the intensity of terrorism are population, strength of Communist parties and past dictatorship. Perhaps the most intriguing finding is the powerful and robust influence of past dictatorship. It is the variable most strongly associated with revolutionary terrorism. Why is past dictatorship so important? The question is particularly puzzling in cases like Germany, Japan or Italy, where the dictatorship was over by around 1945. Why would such a remote event exert an influence thirty years later?

The previous statistical analysis shows that past dictatorship is not a proxy of level of development, economic growth, expansion of higher education, mobilization, or welfare provision. When we control for past dictatorship, none of these variables maintains its statistical significance. This seems to suggest that past dictatorship is important for political reasons. In fact, memoirs and interviews with terrorists confirm that history played an important role in their decision to become a terrorist.

In Germany, Italy and Spain, leftist radicals were obsessed with the true nature of the regime. They thought that democracy was only the façade of an authoritarian regime. A violent challenge to the system would reveal to the masses that the State was

still nazi (in Germany), that fascists controlled power (in Italy), or that the new democratic regime was a farce (in Spain).

One of the founders of the RAF, Gudrun Ensslin, drew the following conclusion from the killing of a protestor by the police in a demonstration in Berlin in 1967: 'This fascist state means to kill us all… Violence is the only way to answer violence' (quoted in Varon, 2004: 39). In Italy, Alberto Franceschini, one of the three founders of the RB (the other two being Renato Curcio and Margarita Cargol), went through a similar experience. In a book-interview he talks about the profound personal and political impact produced by the killing of five youngsters by the police during a demonstration in Reggio Emilia on 7 July 1960. Franceschini was only thirteen years old and was acquainted with one of the youngsters. After that event, he became convinced that the system was a farce, that democracy was not real. He described his political stance seven years later, in 1967, in these terms: 'You could not trust the bourgeoisie and its institutions, democracy was a fake. If you did not bother the system, you were left alone; but if you really wanted to change things, they shot you mercilessly.' (Fasanella & Franceschini, 2004: 27)

In countries with a stronger democratic tradition, left wing radicals were not convinced that killing people was the most effective method to change the system. For instance, Ann Hansen (2002), a member of the Vancouver five (aka Direct Action), a small terrorist cell that operated in Canada, relates that they did not want to kill anyone because potential followers would not understand lethal attacks, increasing the distance between the terrorists and the movement.

What these statements reveal is that terrorists may have been strongly influenced by the political history of their countries. In countries with an authoritarian past, terrorists thought that democracy was concealing the true face of the system from

workers. They did not believe that their States could process their demands. The only available path for them was that of hitting the system with full violence, hoping that the masses would be shocked by this violence and would join the revolutionary movement.

In the presentation of the hypotheses, I mentioned three mechanisms which could make political sense of the strong association between past dictatorship and revolutionary terrorism. The first one is that a history of political instability is associated with harsher political conflicts that make a violent strategy more likely. The second one is that past instability is a cue about the fragility of the State, persuading radicals that regime change is feasible. If the regime collapsed in the past, it could collapse again. The third mechanism focuses on repression. In countries with an authoritarian past, security forces may repress too much, producing an escalation of conflict.

It is not possible to discriminate between theses mechanisms using the quantitative approach adopted in this article. The statistical analysis has discovered the crucial importance of dictatorship, but we would need a more thorough historical and qualitative analysis of the cases to understand which of the proposed mechanisms was operating in these countries when revolutionary terrorism emerged.

Conclusions

With the notable exception of Engene (2004), quantitative cross-country comparative studies in the field of terrorism have been restricted to international terrorism, simply due to the lack of datasets of domestic terrorism. I have built a dataset with all the killings of revolutionary terrorist organizations in 23 developed countries for the period 1970-2000. The dataset is not based on international press coverage, which has serious problems of underreporting, but on domestic sources (including primary and secondary

sources). Terrorism is revolutionary when it aims at regime change through a popular uprising and the revolutionaries do not have territorial claims.

Based on a novel index of intensity of terrorist violence (the logarithm of the product of total deaths in a country times the number of years in which there were killings), I have conducted a statistical analysis trying to account for cross-country variation in the intensity of violence. There are some interesting negative and positive results. Although level of economic development, the rate of economic growth, participation in demonstrations, and State revenue are strongly associated with the intensity of revolutionary terrorism, once we control for past dictatorship the influence of all these variables vanishes. The most robust and important variables are population and past dictatorship. The strength of Communist parties is also an important variable, although it is not as robust as the two previous ones. According to the best model, revolutionary terrorism is more intense in highly populated countries, with strong Communist parties, and past dictatorship. This model explains over 80 per cent of total variance.

The overwhelming influence of past dictatorship is perhaps the most surprising result of the analysis. With the exception of Austria, all the countries in the sample that went through an authoritarian period during the twentieth century suffered revolutionary terrorism in the period 1970-2000. I have argued that the effect of past political instability on revolutionary violence is direct and political. It is not that past instability is associated with other economic and social variables (such as level of development, economic growth, or inequality) that in turn have an impact on violence; rather, past dictatorship has political consequences that make revolutionary terrorism more likely.

I have discussed three mechanisms that might account for this strong association. This first one is about the polarization of political conflicts in these

countries. The second one refers to the fragility or vulnerability of countries that have suffered political transitions in the past: the weakness of the system may encourage violent challenge. The third one is related to repression. Violence escalates in countries with an authoritarian span because excessive State repression produces a backlash.

So far, the lack of datasets on domestic terrorism has hindered comparative, quantitative analysis. The present article, which exploits a new dataset of fatalities, is an attempt to overcome this regrettable state of affairs in the research on terrorism. Even with a small sample of 23 countries, it is possible to shed considerable light on the political, economic and social determinants of terrorism.

Table I. Revolutionary killings and the intensity of revolutionary terrorism in the developed world, 1970-2000.

Country	TI (index of terrorist intensity)	Number of deaths in my dataset of killings	Number of deaths in the TWEED dataset*
Australia	-.69	0	---
Austria	-.69	0	0
Belgium	.92	2	3
Canada	-.69	0	---
Denmark	.40	1	0
Finland	-.69	0	0
France	5.01	15	7
Germany	6.23	39	34
Greece	5.85	25	23
Iceland	-.69	0	0
Ireland	-.69	0	0
Italy	7.90	150	68
Japan	6.02	41	---
Luxembourg	-.69	0	0
Netherlands	-.69	0	0
New Zealand	-.69	0	---
Norway	-.69	0	0
Portugal	5.24	21	10
Spain	7.33	90	54
Sweden	-.69	0	0
Switzerland	-.69	0	0
United Kingdom	-.69	0	0
USA without Black terrorism	4.18	13	---
USA with Black terrorism	5.01	25	---

* I have counted all the fatalities that TWEED attributes to concrete Leftist terrorist groups (see Engene, 2004: Appendix).

Table II. Hypotheses, sources and operationalization.

H1: The higher GDP per capita in 1965, the less intense revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: Heston et al. (1995). *Operationalization*: natural log of GDP per capita measured in 1986 dollars.
H2a: The higher the mean of GDP growth (1965-70), the more intense revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: Heston et al. (1995).
H2b: The greater the expansion of higher education (1965-70), the more intense revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: OECD (1981: Table 18). *Operationalization*: calculated as percentage of population enrolled in higher education, difference between percentage in 1970 and 1965.
H3a: The greater labour unrest (1970-80), the more intense revolutionary terrorism.	*Sources*: ILO (various years), OECD (various years). *Operationalization*: mean for the whole period of strike volume (number of days lost per one thousand workers).
H3b: The higher the rate of participation in demonstrations (1970-80), the more intense revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: Taylor & Jodice (2000). *Operationalization*: the mean rate per thousand people of participation for the period 1970-1980. For details, see fn. 9.
H4: The greater the State revenue (1965), the more intense revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: Lane, McKay & Newton (1997: Table 5.1). *Operationalization*: State revenue as percentage of GDP in 1965. *Alternative specification*: inequality. *Source*: UTIP (2001) and Deininger & Squire (1996). *Operationalization*: mean index for the period 1965-70. When data were not available, supplemented by Deininger and Squire's Gini index.
H5: The more populated a country is (1970), the more intense revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: United Nations (2007). *Operationalization*: Log of population in 1970. *Alternative specification*: Population density in 1970 (same source.)
H6a: The greater the electoral strength of Communist parties (1975-79), the more intense revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: Lane, McKay & Newton (1997: Table 7.4). *Operationalization*: mean electoral share of Communist parties in the period 1975-79.
H6b: Countries with past periods of dictatorship have more intense revolutionary terrorism.	Countries with a dictatorial past during the twentieth century: Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Portugal, and Spain. *Controls*: Age of democracy in 1970. *Source*: Alvarez et al. (1996). Type of regime: dichotomous regime (Alvarez et al., 1996) and the SIP measure (Gates et al., 2006).

Table III. Correlations for dependent and independent variables.

	Terrorist intensity (TI)	Total deaths	GDP per capita	Economic growth	Expansion of higher education	Strike volume	Participation in demonstrations	State revenue	Strength of Communist Parties	Past dictatorship
Total deaths	.79***									
GDP per capita	-.43**	-.34								
Economic growth	.64***	.42**	-.73***							
Expansion of higher education	.25	.23	.29	.02						
Strike volume	.04	.35	-.09	-.15	.15					
Participation in demonstrations	.50**	.37*	-.56***	.41**	.08	.02				
State revenue	-.45**	-.28	.43**	-.53**	.19	-.18	-.45**			
Strength of Communist Parties	.51**	.59***	-.46**	.45**	.14	.41*	.32	-.14		
Past dictatorship	.76***	.66***	-.63***	.68***	-.11	-.09	.50**	-.43**	.34	
Population	.60***	.43**	.06	.29	.49**	-.18	.10	-.15	-.04	.36*

***: significant at 1%; ** significant at 5%; * significant at 10%

Table IV. Regression analysis. Dependent variable: index of terrorism intensity.

	Economic development		*Social change*		*Mobilization*		*Welfare*		*Political factors*	
	M1	*M2*	*M3*	*M4*	*M5*	*M6*	*M7*	*M8*	*M9*	*M10*
Constant	36.37***	-2.23	-4.27***	-2.64*	.64	-.34	9.13***	2.82	-.41	-14.28***
	(11.98)	(12.61)	(1.09)	(1.36)	(1.10)	(.82)	(2.75)	(3.45)	(.48)	(3.61)
PIB per capita	-3.93***	.26								
	(1.36)	(1.42)								
Economic growth			1.16***	.29						
			(.23)	(.34)						
Expansion of higher education			.43	.59*						
			(.30)	(.29)						
Strike volume					.0003	.001				
					(.002)	(.001)				
Participation in demonstrations					.19***	.06				
					(.06)	(.07)				
State revenue							-.24**	-.08		
							(.09)	(.11)		
Communist parties									.11	.14***
									(.07)	(.04)
Past dictatorship		5.42***		4.78***		4.77***		4.77***	4.60***	3.28**
		(1.70)		(1.60)		(1.56)		(1.55)	(1.32)	(1.18)
Population										.87***
										(.23)
R^2	.22	.58	.46	.71	.24	.60	.20	.59	.65	.82
F value	8.43***	13.64***	14.98***	45.46***	5.02**	21.93***	6.96**	21.12***	33.10***	62.14***
N	23	23	23	23	22	22	22	22	23	23

Robust standard errors in brackets.
*** significant at 1%; ** significant at 5%; * significant at 10%.

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NOTES

[1] Germany refers always to former West Germany.

[2] On the Red Brigades in Italy, see Moss (1989) and Weinberg & Eubank (1987); on the Baader-Meinhoff gang in Germany, see Varon (2004); on Direct Action in France, see Dartnell (1995); on the Revolutionary Organization 17 November in Greece, see Kassimeris (2001); on the Weather Underground in the United States, see Jacobs (1997) and Varon (2004); on the Japanese Red Army, see Farrell (1990). For comparative analysis, see Alexander & Pluchinsky (1992), Della Porta (1995), Jongman (1992), Katzenstein (1998) and Zimmerman (1989).

[3] For a rational choice analysis of how violence mobilizes people, see De Nardo (1985), Ginkel & Smith (1999), and McCormick & Owen (1996).

[4] On France, see Cerny (1981), Dartnell (1995), Moxon-Browne (1988) and Phillips (1993: Ch.4).

[5] Note that this hypothesis is not necessarily incompatible with the finding that terrorism tends to occur in periods of economic weakness (Blomberg, Hess &Weerapana, 2004). It could be that terrorism emerges in countries with high economic growth when a recession occurs.

[6] Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

[7] See Appendix 2 of the Final Report at http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/index.php.

[8] I have also tried to control for past political violence using the Armed Conflict dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002), but there were too few positive instances of past violence in the developed countries.

[9] I have calculated the rate per thousand of participation in demonstrations. In doing so, several problematic decisions had to be made. Information comes from the "daily events" version of the *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, III. 1948-1982*. I selected three types of events: (i) protest demonstrations, (ii) demonstrations met by police violence, and (iii) demonstrations that turned into riots. This means that I did not take into account regime support demonstrations. The first problem is that in the 23 countries chosen for this article, around 50 per cent of all cases have missing values in the number of participants variable. To deal with this problem, I proceeded as follows: I calculated the median value for each country, and I imputed this median value of participation to all missing values. Then I multiplied each event by the mean value of the intervals (for instance, the mean value of the interval 21-100 participants is 60 participants). I added these products and I aggregated them by year and country. Then I calculated the mean value of participants for each country for the period 1970-80 and I calculated the rate per thousand of participation by dividing among the total population in 1975. I also tried other specifications. For instance, I counted the number of demonstrations in each country, regardless of their size, but the resulting figures did not have any association with the variables of terrorist violence.

[10] See the replication datasets.

[11] See the replication datasets.

[12] See the replication datasets.