

# **The Origin of Terrorist Threats: Religious, Separatist, or Something Else?**

Running Head: Origin of Terrorist Threats

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## Abstract

Recent studies indicate that the number of terrorist incidents is declining while their lethality is increasing. This trend in casualty rates has raised the rhetoric on terrorism leading to claims that a new form of terrorism has emerged over the last thirty years. The “new terrorism” is defined by a tendency towards maximum destruction and a pronounced religious motivation. The question is whether or not the new terrorism is actually driving current trends in terrorist violence? This study examines casualty rates by terrorist groups categorized by their ideologies and finds that trends in terrorist violence are not being driven by the new terrorism per se. Instead, all forms of terrorism are more violent generally, and variations of ethno-national terrorism are the most violent specifically.

**Keywords** terrorist threats, new terrorism, right-wing/religious terrorism, ethno-national terrorism, casualty rates, mass casualty terrorism

## NOTE

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## **Introduction:**

What type of terrorist group accounts for the greatest variation in casualty rates? Are mass casualty terrorist events attributable to terrorist groups of a particular ideological orientation (for example, religious, ethno-national, or mixed religious and ethno-national)? What are the trends over time? Are some terrorist groups becoming more violent while the activities of others abate? Before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11 hereafter), scholarship indicated a shift in the general trends of terrorist activity. The most notable change is the number of terrorist incidents is declining while the lethality per incident is rising.<sup>1</sup> From the observed trends have come claims that events like 9/11 reflect a new era of terrorism. The new era of terrorism is defined by a higher likelihood of mass casualty terrorist events (or at least higher overall casualty rates). Moreover, the new terrorism is defined by a predominance of religiously motivated terrorist groups (seeking the establishment of a religiously guided state or empire).<sup>2</sup>

At the same time an emerging line of study on suicide terrorism has revealed a more nuanced view of terrorist activity. Robert Pape (2005) suggests that suicide terrorism is linked more directly to ethno-national terrorist movements embedded within inter-communal conflict zones defined by religiously distinct communities.<sup>3</sup> The terrorist movements are ethno-national in their *dominant* socio-political goal. Overlaying the ethno-national motivation is a religious distinction between the communities that terrorist entrepreneurs tap to emphasize the necessary values that support suicide missions. Hence, religious distinction is a necessary factor in motivating suicide terrorist behavior, but not sufficient in and of itself to account for suicide terrorist campaigns. The question this raises is: what is the exact nature of the current terrorist threat? Is the dominant terrorist threat from unconstrained religious terrorist groups, or is it ethno-national movements that have abandoned a classical secular orientation in order to draw

upon religious symbolism to recruit for and sustain their movements. Are Pape's findings restrictive to suicide terrorism exclusively, or is the finding broader to include all types of terrorist activity? More precisely, are the academic and policy communities over-attributing current trends in terrorism to Islamic fundamentalism, and under-attributing the importance of unresolved ethno-national conflicts around the world?

This study attempts to answer these questions in the following way. First I will review the literature on current trends in terrorist activity and the perception that terrorism today is of a new variety and that it is religiously motivated. The second part of this study briefly outlines the content of a mixed ethno-national/religious form of terrorism (as described by Pape) that is distinct from other forms of terrorism, especially the new terrorism. Part three describes a classification system for terrorist groups including pure and mixed ideological categories. Finally, this study analyzes terrorist incidents and casualty rates corresponding to the ideological categories.

### **The New Terrorism: Discussion and Critique**

The assertion that current trends in terrorism are directly attributable to a rise in religious terrorism, and specifically Islamic Fundamentalism, emerges from a few core empirical findings. These findings are best illustrated by Enders and Sandler (2000) who note a seventeen percent increase in the lethality of terrorist incidents per quarter during the post-Cold War era as compared to the proceeding two decades.<sup>4</sup> Enders and Sandler (2006) also demonstrate that terrorist activity is emanating more from the Middle East and Asia, where Islamic religious communities are more concentrated.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Bruce Hoffman (1998) notes that in 1995, groups with a religious characterization or motivation grew in number from one-third to 46

percent of active international terrorist groups, and these groups are responsible for 25 percent of terrorist attacks and 58 percent of terrorist fatalities.<sup>6</sup> The increasing lethality of terrorist attacks is located within a specifically defined historical period that begins with the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979).<sup>7</sup> All evidence combined leads David Rapoport to conclude that in the late 1970s and early 1980s the “Third Wave” of terrorism is superseded by a “Fourth Wave”.<sup>8</sup> This Fourth Wave of terrorism is akin what other scholars refer to today as a “New Terrorism”.

The fourth wave of terrorism is characterized by several noticeable features. First, terrorism in the third wave is defined by a predominance of ethno-national terrorism where the group seeks secularly defined goals of national autonomy or independence without a qualifying condition (for instance, that any new state be religiously ruled). Meanwhile, the fourth wave of terrorism is characterized by a predominance of terrorist groups that draw more significantly on religious interpretations and goals as the core justifications for terrorist action.<sup>9</sup> Take note, that Rapoport’s characterization of waves of terrorism does not suggest that all terrorist activity is exclusively ethno-national (3<sup>rd</sup> wave) or religious (4<sup>th</sup> wave), but that in these periods one form is more dominant than others. Second, Islamic religious groups dominate, but they are not the exclusive threat; racially motivated groups (Neo-Nazi groups) and cult terrorist (like Aum Shinrikyo) groups share the stage.<sup>10</sup> Third, the fourth wave of terrorism is ushered in by the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the beginning of the new Muslim Century that is believed to bring forth a redeemer.<sup>11</sup>

Looking further into the nature of the Fourth Wave of terrorism, we note that the characterization of terrorism is particularly ominous regarding the terrorists and their intentions. For instance:

“Destroying even a large portion of a group may not ameliorate the dangers for long, because remaining fanatical members may attack with even greater resolve and vengeance. Because some religious terrorist organizations are associated with extreme elements that splinter off, the threat posed by such groups may grow over time unless the group is neutralized.”<sup>12</sup>

“The consequent scale of victimization achievable and achieved by such methods, combined with the threat of obtaining and using methods that would wreak even greater indiscriminant carnage on civilian populations; and last the escalating dangers of the social, economic, political, and even psychological impacts on the continuing viability of the capitalist system and way of life, implied by the failure to prevent such attacks.”<sup>13</sup>

Such characterizations are common when referring to the new terrorism. Scholars and policy makers alike, are quick to condemn and cast the new terrorism in the most negative light possible. While such treatment of terrorism is not uncommon, what is uncommon is how these characterizations have become part of the way in which the new terrorism is defined and distinguished from terrorism in other eras. Kumar Ramakrishna and Andrew Tan state that Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda are defined in part by tendencies to ignore the counter-productive limits of violence and remove all constraints on terrorist activity.<sup>14</sup> The new terrorism, by the sheer lethality of terrorist acts, is defined by its tendency towards mass casualty incidents.

In addition to the lethality of the new terrorism, there is a tendency to further define it by its exclusively religious dimensions.<sup>15</sup> The treatment of religion is very different than in the past. Terrorist groups in the past did not emphasize millenarian ideals and goals of bringing forth a messiah. Today that religious distinction is elevated to ever important levels on par with the Huntington-like “Clash of Civilizations.” The ideas of martyrdom are deeply infused within the new terrorism erasing any potential to articulate and diplomatically address a political program. In simple terms, the new terrorism is defined by its vision of the world that Islam and the West are culturally incompatible and cannot coexist within the same geographic space.

The other defining characteristics of the new terrorism are fairly simple: (i) its networked nature, and (ii) its reliance on asymmetric methods of engagement. The networked nature of the new terrorism means the organization(s) are rather independent of a core or central command. Independence does not imply complete autonomy, or lack of coordination. Rather, as in Bruce Hoffman’s characterization, the al-Qaeda leadership (Osama bin Laden) serves as a “venture capitalist of terrorism” or a CEO that moves available resources to independent cells conducting operations that are consistent with al-Qaeda’s long-term strategic plans.<sup>16</sup> The terrorist cells are interconnected through networks of communication, but technically each cell is its own operational unit, and is encouraged to raise its own money and fund its own operations.<sup>17</sup> The new terrorism is not a single organization that is directing all its energies at the United States and the West. The new terrorism is more accurately a loose association of groups with like-minded interests and targets. Finally, the asymmetric engagement does not distinguish the new terrorism from other forms of terrorism as much as it demonstrates that, tactically, the new terrorism will operate as other generations of terrorism, by attacking its target indirectly. This is the hallmark of terrorist action that groups cannot stand toe-to-toe with their opponents so they attack at points of

vulnerability and attempt to create socio-political pressure on the target government in order to force capitulation to the terrorist demands.

Overall, the new terrorism is seen as more threatening than terrorism in previous eras.

Part of this threat flows from the belief that terrorism today fundamentally violates the ‘implicit rules of the game’ articulated by Jeanne Knutson.<sup>18</sup> In her argument Knutson states that terrorists face a dilemma in organizing and employing violence. Too little threat invokes no reaction, and the terrorists are not taken seriously. Too high a threat and terrorists are dismissed as criminal or fanatical and the group loses any leverage to impose its demands.<sup>19</sup> If the level of violence is well calibrated, terrorists have the potential to tap into human willingness to support and applaud violence when it is perceived as justified.<sup>20</sup> However, the potential always exists to violate this rule. There are two conditions in which the violence balance may be broken. First, when the terrorist group is infiltrated by the psychotic individual. Such “loose cannons” may conduct operations that result in mass casualties. However, terrorist groups, even religious groups, carefully screen recruits and weed out those deemed unstable. Second, when the fanatical means-ends soldier psychology dominates a group.<sup>21</sup> This condition emerges through rigorous training that dehumanizes the enemy, and authorizes acts of atrocities in the name of ideology in order to advance the ends over the means. Existing evidence suggests the fanatical ends-means psychology is present within religious groups. For example, Chris Quillen’s study of mass casualty incidents notes that of 76 incidents of mass casualty terrorism committed since the end of World War II, 47 were committed by groups with a religious motivation.<sup>22</sup>

The depiction of a New Terrorism clearly suggests that terrorism today is qualitatively distinct from earlier periods of terrorism. Terrorism today displays a decidedly religious

ideology. Moreover, terrorism is becoming increasingly violent and shows few if any internal constraints.

Is this depiction of a New Terrorism entirely accurate? There are a number of substantive arguments that exist to counter the basic logic of a “New Terrorism.” Beginning with the latter argument, that religiously motivated terrorist groups demonstrate few internal constraints, we need to question the ability of any group to sustain the fanatical means-ends psychology. To create the proper conditions to support persistent mass casualty campaigns requires keeping potential combatants in a “closed world, impervious to conventional morality.”<sup>23</sup> Quillen is quick to note that the results of his study may over-attribute mass casualty incidents to religious groups as any interpretation of a group as “religious” is inherently subjective. Religious motives can be found within racial supremacy groups and deeply embedded within ethno-national groups as well.<sup>24</sup> Hence, mass casualty terrorist incidents may be attributed to a religiously motivated terrorist group, but the definition of a religious terrorist group is not fully articulated.

Moving to a deeper level we can dismiss the link between mass casualty incidents and religious groups as possibly specious. First, the religious content that characterizes the new terrorism is highly questionable. The Oklahoma City bombing technically qualifies as religious terrorism because Timothy McVeigh is associated with the Christian Identity Movement in the United States.<sup>25</sup> Such a group, though, has more in common with Neo-Nazi’s than with Christian Fundamentalism. Similarly, and perhaps more appropriately, the Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad are often labeled as religious groups when the core ideology of each group is first and foremost the liberation of Palestine from Israeli control. Pending the accomplishment of the nationalist goal the groups then believe that Palestine should be governed through Islamic legal principles.<sup>26</sup> Placing such groups within an exclusive religious category is the same as placing

the Irish National Liberation Army or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam within an exclusive Left-Wing category because they supported a liberated Northern Ireland or Eelam (Tamil homeland) ruled by Socialist or Marxist-Leninist principles. In short, to define the new terrorism by its religious content requires some qualification. Perhaps we need to specify mixed category groups and factor them in separately from other forms of right-wing/religious groups in order to accurately assess terrorist threats.

A second problem with the new terrorism designation is that the networked structures of the new terrorism somehow distinguish it from others eras of terrorism. Decentralized movements are not new to the history of terrorism. The Anarchist movements throughout Europe and North America at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were equally networked, loosely affiliated groups, that shared common goals, and very similar modes of operation. The Earth Liberation Front-Animal Liberation Front alliance (ELF-ALF) operates throughout the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. These groups are considered domestic terrorist threats. Yet they are linked by communication networks, and ideology, across several state boundaries. Networked terrorist groups are an outgrowth of communications technology, not some fundamentally new form of terrorism. The new technologies make it easier for like minded people to cooperate coordinate activities; it does not make for a new form of terrorism. If anything, a group like al-Qaeda is a return to the past, rediscovering the Anarchist traditions. It is simply the nature of the evolved “multi-centric” world.<sup>27</sup>

The only characteristic of the new terrorism that is fundamentally unimpeachable is the increasing lethality of terrorist actions. There has been a 3 fold increase in the number of mass casualty incidents since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. In addition there is a 3 fold increase in the number of terrorist incidents with at least one casualty since the Islamic Revolution. In sum

Enders and Sandler are correct to assert terrorism is becoming more threatening. The question is: what is the source of threat?<sup>28</sup>

### **A Different Perspective: Mixed Ideology Terrorist Groups**

An alternative to the “New Terrorism” characterization of terrorism threats is first present by Robert Pape in *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (2005). In this study Pape suggests that suicide terrorism comes from:

“terrorist organizations [that] command broad support within the national community which they recruit, because they are seen as pursuing legitimate nationalist goals, especially liberation from foreign occupation.”<sup>29</sup>

It is the combination of a nationalist conflict overlaid with religious distinction between communities that particularly enables suicide terrorism. The substructure of nationalist division combined with a religious divide is important for two reasons. First, the conflict circulates around identity politics and the fear that political domination of one group will lead to a situation where resources will distribute to the favor of the dominant group, and that core cultural/religious symbols of the dominated community may come under attack.<sup>30</sup> Second, religion serves an important function by offering up the psycho-linguistic supports for suicide terrorist events. More precisely, religion offers the language of martyrdom needed to support suicide terrorist campaigns. In this sense, suicide missions are not the taboo of “killing one’s self,” but are altruistic acts of self-sacrifice conducted for the defense of the ethno-national/religious community.<sup>31</sup>

Robert Pape's argument is fairly narrow as he uses it to explain *suicide* terrorism exclusively. Moreover, there is debate over the veracity of his characterizations regarding success of suicide terrorism, definitions of suicide terrorism, and the tendency to place the majority of suicide terrorism within the confines of conditions defined by foreign occupation.<sup>32</sup> The goal of this project, however, is broader: to determine if the concept of an ideologically mixed group holds any explanatory power for any of the broader trends in terrorism? In this sense Pape's argument remains relevant as it provide the basic description of the ideologically "mixed" terrorist group that is not religious, left-wing, or ethno-national exclusively; rather that terrorist groups can be left-wing *and* ethno-national or right-wing/religious *and* ethno-national.

Nationalist movements, terrorist or otherwise, typically have stable and strong bases of support in their identified constituent communities that are attractive to non ethno-national terrorist groups. Non ethno-national groups like left-wing or even right-wing/religious groups suffer a common problem in organizing their campaigns—support communities are diffuse and ill defined. Left-wing groups attempt to build support off labor or working classes, which often exert other, more dominant, identities like nationality. Similarly, right-wing and religious groups tap into religious communities, or racial groups, which are very diffuse, ill defined, and highly varied. In the face of weak support communities, left-wing and right-wing/religious groups have routinely woven ethno-national causes within their ideology as a way to expand their base of support. For example, the left-wing terrorist group the Red Army Faction claimed support for the Palestinian cause as part of a larger "anti-neocolonial" movement. Alternatively, ethno-national groups may adopt left-wing ideologies as part of larger movements to establish an independent state ordered on socialist or communist principles. In sum, it is possible that a large portion of terrorist activity is attributable to mixed ideological groups.

## A Typology of Terrorist Groups

If we accept the notion that the universe of active terrorist groups includes groups with pure ideological goals *and* groups with combined or mixed ideological goals (that is to say crossover groups), then the terrorist universe is indeed more complicated than we may have previously admitted to. To begin, the traditional view of the terrorism universe assumes a three point model: Left-Wing (LW); Ethno-National (EN); Right-Wing/Religious (RWR).<sup>33</sup> Within each category there are additional variations covered below. If to account for international terrorism within this framework the distribution of terrorism reflects figure 1. The figure represents variations of domestic and international terrorism (Left-Wing; Ethno-National; Right-Wing/Religious). The lower portion relates to domestic terrorism and is larger in comparison to the rest indicating different forms of terrorism are more common in domestic arenas than the international arena. The top portion of the figure illustrates terrorism in the international context. International terrorism is divided into two subcategories: international terrorism from groups attempting to globalize domestic issues; and international terrorism from groups motivated by global context issues. At the top level, international terrorism based on global issues, ethno-national terrorism disappears. Given that ethno-national terrorism derives from distinct local contexts, it is not likely to see it existing separately at the global level.

(Figure 1 about here)

Figure 1 provides an illustration of our classical definition of terrorism by ideological category. If to integrate mixed ideologies into this illustration we observe two additional forms of

terrorism. These include Left-Wing/Ethno National terrorism and Right Wing-Religious/Ethno-National Terrorism. Again there are subtle variations that are discussed below. Figure 2 presents a more nuanced depiction of global terrorism. The key distinction is that domestic and the bottom tier of international terrorist activity (globalizing local issues) now reflects the mixed categories. The pure Left-Wing, Ethno-National, and Right Wing-Religious categories coexist with the additional mixed categories of Left-Wing/Ethno-National and Right Wing and Religious/Ethno-National terrorism.<sup>34</sup>

(Figure 2 about here)

There are variations within each category that deserve some attention. The variations come in the form of subcategories of different the ideological forms of terrorism. These subcategories simply allow us to further refine terrorist activities from types of terrorist groups that share dominant ideological traits like a universal Left-Wing ideology or the core counter-enlightenment philosophy of Right Wing-Religious terrorism, but display significant variations in the specific articulation of goals associated with that ideology.

### **Pure Categories**

Our discussion begins with the pure categories of terrorism: Left-Wing, Ethno-National, and Right Wing-Religious terrorist groups. *Left-Wing* terrorism is based on a revolutionary philosophy with the intended purpose of fundamentally altering the governing regime of a state to conform to a different philosophy than the existing one. The left-wing philosophy advances different ways of empowering the masses, such as expanding democratic franchises, or more

commonly by promoting socialist/communist political-economic orders.<sup>35</sup> A classical example of a left-wing terrorist groups is *Sendero Luminoso* operating in Peru. A subcategory of left-wing terrorism is the *Nihilist* terrorist groups. Nihilist terrorism is a specific variation of left-wing terrorism defined by a characteristic of anti-western, anti-capitalist, and anti-government. Nihilist terrorist groups do not articulate a positive political or social program to replace the existing socio-political order; rather nihilist terrorist groups are determined to undermine what exists.<sup>36</sup>

An example of a nihilist terrorist group is *We Who Built Sweden*.

*Ethno-National* terrorist groups seek to establish, or in some cases reestablish, the political, social, and economic autonomy of a self-defined ethno-national group separate from a perceived dominant ethno-national group. Ethno-national terrorism is about (i) self-determination, and (ii) identity formation (building or reinforcing the self-image of the group as distinct, separate, and legitimate via the identity of another group).<sup>37</sup> Pure (or secular) ethno-national terrorist groups rarely specify a specific type of socio-political order that should govern a new state if it comes into existence; rather the group seeks the core goal of creating the separate state. Examples of ethno-national terrorist groups include the *Provisional Irish Republican Army* (Northern Ireland), *ETA* in Spain, and *Al-Fatah* in the Israeli Occupied Territories (until 1988).

*Right-Wing and Religious* terrorist groups express a core philosophy entrenched in counter-enlightenment ideas that society is in a general state of moral decay, and has drifted from its core values and morals that undergird all society. Action (terrorist or otherwise) will invoke some prophecy like bringing forth a messiah, or usher in a new millennium that reflects the values of the group.<sup>38</sup> Fulfilling the prophecy offers some divine sanction for the group's actions.<sup>39</sup> Often the constituent community is defined as part of the target audience as

constituents are suffering from delusions and must be awakened to fulfill their destiny. Overall, society must be herded back to the pure life.

There are three subcategories of right-wing and religious terrorism. First is the *Fundamentalist* terrorist group, which is defined largely by an anti-globalization perspective. The fundamentalist group sees globalization as a reflection of secularism over the vaunted values of traditional society.<sup>40</sup> The overall desire is to bring about a new rule (domestically, regionally, globally) that is consistent with the traditional religious values. Religiously based law should govern society over secular laws. The RWR Fundamentalist group represents the “New Terrorism” referred to in the first section above. Moreover, Islamic Fundamentalist terrorist groups operating in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia are commonly placed into this category. The most prevalent example of the fundamentalist terrorist groups is *The World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders* or *Al-Qaeda*. Second is the *Racial or Ethnic Superiority* terrorist group. Racial terrorism draws upon a variation of the counter-enlightenment ideas related to the prophecy or millenarian goals of a racially defined group that believes any change in the balance of power (especially the balance that favors the racial group) will contradict the natural order. The existence of the group in society and its place in society reflects the natural (or religiously defined) order of the universe.<sup>41</sup> Examples of racial superiority terrorism include the *Bavarian Liberation Army*, the *Ku Klux Klan*, and *Kahana Organization* (U.S.). The final subcategory of right-wing and religious terrorism is the *Cult* terrorist group. The cult terrorist group is a variation of right-wing/religious terrorism that invokes the most apparent millenarian and messianic messages. Beliefs are tightly related to religious messages and texts exclusively with all other social or political goals removed. In essence the cult group does not advocate a specific social or political message. The cult group believes that its members are

followers of the true faith, and the righteousness of this true faith will be demonstrated by some cataclysmic event that annihilates all non-group members.<sup>42</sup> In the post-apocalyptic world, members of the cult terrorist group will survive and become dominant. Dominance is assured by remaining faithful to the true religion. Examples of cult terrorist groups include *Aum Shin Rikyo*, and *The Lord's Resistance Army* (Uganda).

### ***Mixed Categories***

The two mixed category forms of terrorism are Left-Wing/Ethno-National, and Right Wing-Religious/Ethno National terrorism. The *Left-Wing/Ethno-National* (LWEN) terrorist group links the cause of ethno-nationalist grievances (separatism) to the global domination of liberal-capitalist political-economic orders. Left-Wing/Ethno-National terrorist groups advance the creation of an independent ethnic-based state, but one that must be ruled under Socialist, Marxist-Leninist, or Maoist principles. Examples of LWEN groups include the Irish National Liberation Army (Northern Ireland), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Israeli Occupied Territories), and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE in Sir Lanka). *Right Wing and Religious/Ethno-National* (RWREN) terrorist groups promote the rise of an independent state to represent the goals and aspirations of a distinct ethnic community based on religious principles. Overall, the ethno-national struggle is defined by a struggle for the defense of religious principles, survival, or purity against a dominant socio-political group from a different ethno-religious background. There are two subcategories of RWREN terrorist groups. First is the *RWREN Fundamentalist* terrorist group. For the RWREN Fundamentalist terrorist group the counter-enlightenment ideas relate to religious impurity caused by the domination of one ethno-religious group over another. Control by a different socio-religious group causes a

degradation of social conditions and threatens the inherent ethnic-identity of the group, especially the identity related to the group's religious practices. The overall goal is to create a separate ethno-national political state governed by the religious principles of the ethnic group (for example a religious state or theocracy). Common examples of the RWREN (Fundamentalist) terrorist group include Hamas and Islamic Jihad (Israeli Occupied Territories), LASHKAR Jundullah Militia (Indonesia), and Laskar-i-taiba (Pakistan). The second subcategory is the *RWREN Social Domination* terrorist group. The RWREN Social Domination terrorist group often forms as counterbalance to the activities of an ethno-national terrorist movement within a state. The RWREN Social Domination group expresses goals to maintain the existing ethno-national balance of power within a state. The group may believe they are somehow related to a chosen people. If the challenger ethno-national movement succeeds to establish a separate state, it will fundamentally alter the established balance of power, and thereby undermine the natural, even heavenly, order of society. Examples of the RWREN (Social Dominance) terrorist group include Ulster Volunteer Force (Northern Ireland), Kahana Hay (Israel), and the Southern Lebanese Army or SLA.

Together the five main ideological categories of terrorism combined with the six subcategories yields a total of nine ideological categories. Left-Wing terrorism will manifest as either classical left-wing terrorist groups or nihilist terrorist groups. Right-Wing and Religious terrorist groups will appear as Fundamentalist, Racial, or Cult terrorist groups. Finally, Right-Wing and Religious/Ethno-National terrorist groups will emerge as either RWREN Fundamentalist, or RWREN Social Domination terrorist groups.

The typology of terrorist groups presented here is not the only attempt, nor necessarily the most common categorical system used. Any effort to establish categories of terrorism have

historically been as difficult as defining terrorism.<sup>43</sup> For example, some authors have attempted to use tactical operations as a method for classification, using categories like hijacking, bombing, and assassination forms of terrorism.<sup>44</sup> Another example is to classify terrorism via tactics and targets, resulting in categories like Mass Terror, Random Terror, or Focused Random Terror.<sup>45</sup> Such systems of classification are useful as they direct attention to likely targets, events, and campaign strategies, which can then be used to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for handling terrorist situations. However, terrorists are limited only by imagination and available targets, so tactical operations do evolve over time. To rely exclusively on tactical operations to classify terrorism would require constant updating and the list could grow to include endless categories limiting the utility of this classification system and our understanding of terrorism. The utility of a typology then is determined by its ability to organize the universe of terrorist activity *and* advance some understanding of terrorism as well.

### **The Origin of Terrorist Threats: Trends and Analysis**

For the purposes of this study, the definition of terrorism conforms to the definition used by Enders and Sandler: “Terrorism is the premeditated use or threat of violence by individuals or subnational groups to obtain a political or social objective through intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims.”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, domestic terrorism is defined as acts of terrorism that begin and end within a single country with the intent of influencing the domestic audience only. Transnational terrorism (the focus of this study) includes events in one country and victims, targets, institutions, or citizens of another country.<sup>47</sup>

This study examines transnational terrorism since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 by ideological category. Previous studies suggest that terrorism has grown more violent since the

Islamic Revolution.<sup>48</sup> Evidence on the average casualty rates for all forms of terrorism from 1979-2005 further supports this conclusion to note a steady rise in average casualty rates from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, with noticeable upward spikes in the late 1990s and again in the 2000-2005 timeframe (See Figure 3). The goal now is to assess if this trend is linked more exclusively to RWR forms of terrorism (the new terrorism), to mixed RWREN or LWEN categories of terrorism, or to some other factor not yet specified.

(Figure 3 about here)

Data on terrorist incidents are drawn from *International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events* (ITERATE) (1968-2005).<sup>49</sup> The data set records approximately 40 or more variables per terrorist incident including the number of people wounded, number of people killed, and the first and second group involved in a terrorist event. Total casualty rates are calculated by adding the total number of people wounded and killed. To limit the scope of the study, and target terrorist casualties more accurately, incidents with 1 or more casualties were selected for inclusion in the study. This is consistent with the method employed by Enders and Sandler to capture incident specific measures of casualties.<sup>50</sup> This limitation also reflects stark reality about terrorism; that being there are casualties in only 27percent of all terrorist attacks. While limiting to the scope of the study, the potential sample still includes 3316 cases.

To capture mass casualty terrorist incidents, the data are limited only to incidents with 32 or more casualties. The goal was to follow the pattern set out by Quillen to capture: “[a] number...high enough to genuinely reflect the devastation wrought by such attacks, but low enough to yield a useful sample given the traditional terrorist tendency to scare rather than kill.”<sup>51</sup> At the same time I decided to avoid the arbitrary nature of Quillen, to simply choose a

number. Instead the number (32) is a reflection of the average mean for all terrorist incidents with one or more casualties (11.77) plus one half standard deviation above the mean:

$$\sigma=40.07891$$

$$.5(\sigma)=20.039455$$

$$.5(\sigma) + 11.77=31.809455 \text{ (or 32)}$$

The outcome of 32 casualties is actually consistent with Quillen's arbitrary choice of +25 casualties. From this measure of mass casualty incidents the analysis will potentially include 233 cases.

A quick note is required regarding the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania. These events are certainly rare in the normal distribution of casualty rates per terrorist attack. Being rare does not mean that such events should be ignored or quickly dismissed. A body of research has emerged to suggest that events like 9/11, though rare, do not deviate so much from what we observe in terrorist events that they should not be dismissed exclusively as outliers.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, practicality prevents a *complete* inclusion of the 9/11 events in this study. In the ITERATE dataset the 9/11 attacks are listed as four separate events. The first two events—the World Trade Center—lists total casualties as *unknown*. Trying to determine the number of people on each plane, plus the number of people in each building that were casualties is impossible. The other two events (Pentagon and Pennsylvania) do have known casualty rates (189 and 56 respectively) and are included in the data analysis provided below. This is a limitation in the data.

Terrorist groups are placed into ideological categories by a code from 1-9 in the following manner: 1=Left Wing; 2=Nihilist; 3=LWEN; 4=EN; 5=RWREN (FUND); 6=RWREN

(SD); 7=RWR (Cult); 8=RWR (Racial); 9=RWR (Fundamentalist). Groups are categorized from the ITERATE list of terrorist groups. About 24 percent of the terrorist incidents listed in ITERATE are committed by unknown groups.<sup>53</sup> An Additional number of cases are committed by indeterminate extremists, guerrillas, tribal groups, etc. Furthermore, another 113 cases are attributed to unspecified student groups, state security or intelligence, government agents, or criminal groups. It is possible and likely that unknown and/or indeterminate groups may fit within some of the ideological categories. However, unless the title of the perpetrator was presented in some indicative manner (for example, indeterminate Sikh extremists or indeterminate Kashmiri nationalists) it was excluded from the study. This does have the potential to introduce bias into the study. While unfortunate, the lack of information to date means this potential for bias must be accepted. Information on a terrorist group's ideology is derived from multiple sources including: National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) "The MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base."<sup>54</sup>; *Patterns of Global Terrorism*<sup>55</sup>; and Information Project: Database of Terrorist Organizations & Activity "Organizations by Name."<sup>56</sup> After excluding the missing cases a total of 1308 cases are included in the final study for +1 casualty incidents and 165 for mass casualty incidents.

A Difference of Means test is employed to provide an average casualty rate per terrorist incident per category for all terrorist incidents (+1). In addition an ANOVA test is applied to determine the significance of Difference of Means for the ideological categories. The Difference of Means test and ANOVA ( $F= 3.233$ , sig. .0001) suggest the ideological categories (including the mixed categories) do account for the variation observed in casualty rates per terrorist incident (for +1 casualties) (See Table 1and Figure 4). In reference to the kind of groups most responsible for terrorist incidents at the +1 level, pure Ethno-National groups account for 31 percent of all

incidents, Left-Wing terrorist groups account for 28 percent of all incidents, and all RWR groups account for 22 percent of all incidents. We observe that, all ethno-national forms of terrorism (EN, LWEN, and RWREN (FUND) & (SD) accounts for 49percent of all +1 casualty terrorist incidents in the Post Islamic Revolution Period. Such a finding indicates that EN terrorism continues to outpace all other categories in producing incidents with a casualty. When comparing the average number of casualties per incident by ideological group RWREN (FUND) is first with a Mean of 38.90 (n=128), followed by LWEN (27.49, n=55), RWR (Fundamentalist) (20.12, n=233); EN (17.23, n=412). In sum, the mixed category of Ethno-National/Religious groups account for the highest average casualty rate (for +1 casualties) consistent with Pape's more narrow assertion that mixed RWREN (Fundamentalist) groups are most responsible for suicide terrorism. Thus, Ethno-National/Religious terrorist groups may lie at the center of suicide terrorism specifically, but it also accounts for the highest casualty rates for terrorist incidents with a +1 casualty generally. Overall, Ethno-national terrorism remains the most dominant form of terrorism and, in combination with the emergence of religiously oriented ethno-national groups; it is now the dominant form of casualty producing terrorism. Meanwhile, more pure RWR groups cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. Individually RWR (Fundamentalist), RWR (Racial) and RWR (Cult) rank third, fifth and eighth respectively.

(Table 1 and Figure 4 about here)

Moving to mass casualty incidents, the findings are not significant to suggest the ideological categories account for the variations observed (ANOVA [F=.294, sig. .967]) (See table 2). The data do indicate that again the mixed category RWREN (Fundamentalist) form of terrorism is dominant with an average of 123.91 casualties per incident for exclusively mass casualty incidents (+32). Consistent with the findings above, ethno-national terrorism accounts

for the highest percentage of mass casualty incidents (27percent, n=45), while RWREN (Fundamentalist) and RWR (Fund) tie for second with is next (21percent, n=35), Left Wing is third with (16percent, n=26), LWEN is in a distant fourth with (8percent n=14). Meanwhile, Nihilist and RWR (Cult) groups drop from the analysis as they do not produce a score (n=0). The results are similar to those from +1 casualty incidents. However, given the insignificant results we cannot draw a reliable conclusion from this portion of the study.

(Table 2 about here)

A final line of inquiry is to analyze trends in casualty rates over time. The data presented in Table 1, Figure 4, and Table 2 provides a composite picture of casualty rates per ideological category for the entire period (1979-2005). This analysis does not evaluate mini-trends in casualty rates over time. It is possible that in the period of evaluation that Left-Wing terrorism declines, while Right Wing and Religious terrorism increases. During this time frame the Soviet Union collapses removing a financial benefactor resulting in the decline of activities in left-wing terrorist groups. Meanwhile the rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its penchant to support like minded terrorist groups to spread the Islamic Revolution across the Middle East would result in a noticeable increase in Right-Wing and Religious terrorism. Moreover, given the lasting peace agreement and ceasefire in Northern Ireland, progress in the peace process in the Israeli Occupied Territories during the 1990s (which would bring a ceasefire from groups like Fatah), and the periodic efforts at ceasefires in the Basque region of Spain should decrease ethno-national terrorism. Given these potential trends we need to evaluate the data overtime. Figure 5, presents the average casualty per year for the primary ethno-national forms of terrorism (EN, LWEN, and RWREN Fundamentalist).

(Figure 5 about here)

The trend lines do not suggest significant variation between the different categories of ethno-national terrorism. Average casualty rates for LWEN terrorism rise dramatically in the late 1980s and remain at the level of about 40-60 casualties per year until about 2001 when there is no available data on LWEN groups. The average casualty rates for RWREN Fundamentalist groups periodically spikes in the 1980s, again in the mid 1990s. There is a more definite upward trend beginning in 1997-1998 that lasts until 2004. Finally, the pure ethno-national terrorist category shows relatively low casualty rates per year from the majority of the 1980-1995 timeframe. In 1996 there is a spike in EN casualty rates and two more noticeable spikes in the 2000-2005 timeframe. Moreover, in 2000-2005 timeframe there is a noteworthy upward trend in overall casualty rates for ethno-national terrorist groups. These data suggest, if anything, that that LWEN terrorism rose and remained relatively high beginning in the late 1980s, RWREN Fundamentalist terrorism periodically spikes, with a noticeable upward trend beginning in the late 1990s until 2004, and EN terrorism experiences an upward trend only in about 2002 deviating from the relatively low casualty rates of the 1980-1995 timeframe. These data do not suggest radically different trends for the different forms of ethno-national terrorism. More simply, all forms of ethno-national terrorism are becoming more violent, not just the RWREN Fundamentalist form.

Turning attention to Right-Wing and Religious terrorism more specifically as compared to the other pure categories of terrorism (LW and EN) we observe a similar pattern to the comparison of ethno-national forms of terrorism (See Figure 6). During the period from 1980-1995 all forms of terrorism display relatively low casualty rates per year. Beginning in 1995 there is a spike in ethno-national terrorism, followed by a spike in left-wing terrorism in 1998. Beginning in 2000 we observe a distinct rise in RWR fundamentalist terrorist followed by a

smaller yet noticeable rise in casualty rates for left-wing terrorist groups, and then dramatic spikes and a general upward trend in casualty rates for ethno-national terrorism. Taken together, these data suggest a similar trend in casualty rates, that all forms of terrorism are becoming more violent over time, more specifically in the period from 2000-2005.

(Figure 6 about here)

## Conclusions

This study set out to evaluate the intersection of terrorist group ideology with general casualty rates and mass casualty rates. Studies on terrorist trends in the post-Cold War era have revealed that terrorist incidents are becoming less frequent over time, but more deadly. Early analysis of this trend quickly settled on the rise of Right-Wing Religious terrorism, and particularly Islamic terrorism as the main culprit for this disturbing trend. In the aftermath of 9/11 the rhetoric changed, framing religious and Islamic Fundamentalist terrorism as the “New Terrorism” distinguished by its decidedly religious nature (an uncompromising “clash of civilizations” brand of religious terrorism). At the same time other scholarship emerged to indicate that the new terrorism is not so new. That terrorism today is really of the same ethno-national fabric as in the past, but now instead of Left-Wing groups mixing and adopting ethno-national causes (as was common in the 1960s and 1970s). Today it is the ethno-national groups that are adopting right-wing/religious overtones.

The findings of this study confirm that mixed ideological categories, specifically RWREN (Fundamentalist) groups account for the highest average casualty rates per incident for all terrorist incidents that produce one or more casualty in the Post-Islamic Revolution period.

This finding is consistent with Pape's depiction of the conflict substructure that supports suicide terrorism.

When analyzing trends in casualty rates between the different types of terrorist groups, the data suggest that all forms of terrorism are becoming more violent. This finding applies to ethno-national forms of terrorism including the mixed category groups (LWEN and RWREN Fundamentalist), and it applies to the classical categories of terrorism (LW, EN, RWR Fundamentalist). Taken together all findings suggest that terrorism generally is becoming more violent, and that the mixed category right-wing and religious/ethno-national terrorist group is the most violent. Moreover, the findings of this study do not support the conclusion that the trends in terrorism, especially the rise in casualty rates, are driven by a new terrorism. Perhaps the better way to assess the trends is to simply note that terrorism is becoming more violent over all, ethno-national forms of terrorism are the most prevalent in the number of attacks and in casualty rates.

## Notes

1. Walter Enders and Todd Sandler, “Is Transnational Terrorism becoming more Threatening?: A Time Series Investigation,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44, no. 3 (June 2000): 307—332.
2. Kumar Ramakrishna and Andrew Tan, “The New Terrorism: Diagnosis and Prescriptions,” in Andrew Tan and Kumar Ramakrishna eds., *The New Terrorism: Anatomy, Trends and Counter-strategies* (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 2002), 3—29; Bruce Hoffman, “The Emergence of the New Terrorism,” in Andrew Tan and Kumar Ramakrishna eds., *The New Terrorism: Anatomy, Trends and Counterstrategies* (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 2002), 30—49; Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 94—95.
3. Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005).
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5. Walter Enders and Todd Sandler, “Distribution of Transnational Terrorism among Countries by Income Class and Geography After 9/11,” *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (June 2006): 367—393.
6. Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (see note 2 above), 91—93.
7. Enders and Sandler, “Is Transnational Terrorism becoming more Threatening?” (see note 1 above), 308.

8. David C. Rapoport, “The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,” in Audrey Judith Cronin and James M. Ludes eds., *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 46—73.

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10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Enders and Sandler, “Is Transnational Terrorism becoming more Threatening?” (see note 1 above), 330.

13. Carlos Pestana Borros and Isabel Pronça, “Mixed Logit Estimation of Radical Islamic Terrorism in Europe and North America,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 2 (April 2005): 298—314.

14. Ramakrishna and Tan (see note 2 above), 6.

15. Ibid.

16. Hoffman, “The Emergence of the New Terrorism” (see note 2 above).

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19. Ibid.

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21. Ronald D. Crelinsten, “Terrorism and Counterterrorism in a Multicentric World: Challenges and Opportunities,” in Max Taylor and John Horgan eds., *The Future of Terrorism* (London: Frank Cass Press, 2001), 170—196.
22. Chris Quillen, “A Historical Analysis of mass Casualty Bombers,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 25, no. 5 (September 2002): 279—292.
23. Crelinsten (see note 21 above), 183.
24. Quillen (see note 22 above), 287—288.
25. Ibid.
26. Daniel Masters, “Support and Nonsupport for Nationalist Rebellion: A Prospect Theory Approach,” *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (October 2004): 703—726.
27. Crelinsten (see note 21 above).
28. Enders and Sandler, “Is Transnational Terrorism becoming more Threatening” (see note 1 above).
29. Pape (see note 3 above), 22.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Assaf Maghadam, “Suicide Terrorism, Occupation, and Globalization of Martyrdom: A Critique of *Dying to Win*,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 8 (December 2006): 707—729.
33. In some cases international terrorism is treated as a separate category. If we look at international terrorism though it is easy to define it more as a tactical adaptation that relies on global rather than domestic theaters of operation. The motivational characteristics remain unchanged; meaning left-wing groups engage in international terrorism (e.g. Red Army Faction,

Japanese Red Army); Ethno-National Groups operate at the international level (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP); Black September); and some right-wing/religious groups operate at the international level (Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah).

34. Space limitations prevent including a complete appendix that lists all terrorist groups from the ITERATE dataset in the defined ideological categories. This appendix is available via the internet at <http://people.uncw.edu/mastersd/appendix.doc>

35. Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (see note 2 above), 17.; John Weinzierl, "Terrorism: Its Origin and History," in Akorlie A. Nyatepe-Coo and Dorothy Zeisler-Vralsted eds., *Understanding Terrorism: Threats in an Uncertain World* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004), 33.

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39. Brad Whistle, "Ideological Mutation and Millennial Belief in the American Neo-Nazi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 24, no. 2 (January 2001): 89—106.

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41. Wardlaw (see note 38 above), 54.

42. Wessinger (see note 40 above), 5.

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45. F. Gross, *Political Violence and Terror in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Russia and Eastern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
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48. Enders and Sandler, “Is Transnational Terrorism becoming more Threatening?” (see note 1 above).
49. Edward F. Mickolus, Todd Sandler, Jean M. Murdock and Peter A. Flemming, *International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events (ITERATE 1968-2005)* (Dunn Loring, VA: Vinyard Software).
50. Enders and Sandler, “Is Transnational Terrorism becoming more Threatening?” (see note 1 above), 313—314.
51. Quillen (see note 22 above), 280.
52. Aaron Clauset, Maxwell Young, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “On the Frequency of Severe Terrorist Events,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 1 (February 2007): 58—87.
53. Barros and Proen  a (see note 13 above), 306.
54. National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, “The MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base,” <http://www.tbk.org/GroupRegionModule.jsp>, accessed March 5-8, 2006.

55. U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Publication 11038, 2004).

56. Information Project: Database of Terrorist Organizations and Activity, “Organizations by Name,” <http://www.theinfomrationproject.org/orgindex.php?sort=p>, accessed March 5-9, 2006.

Figures:

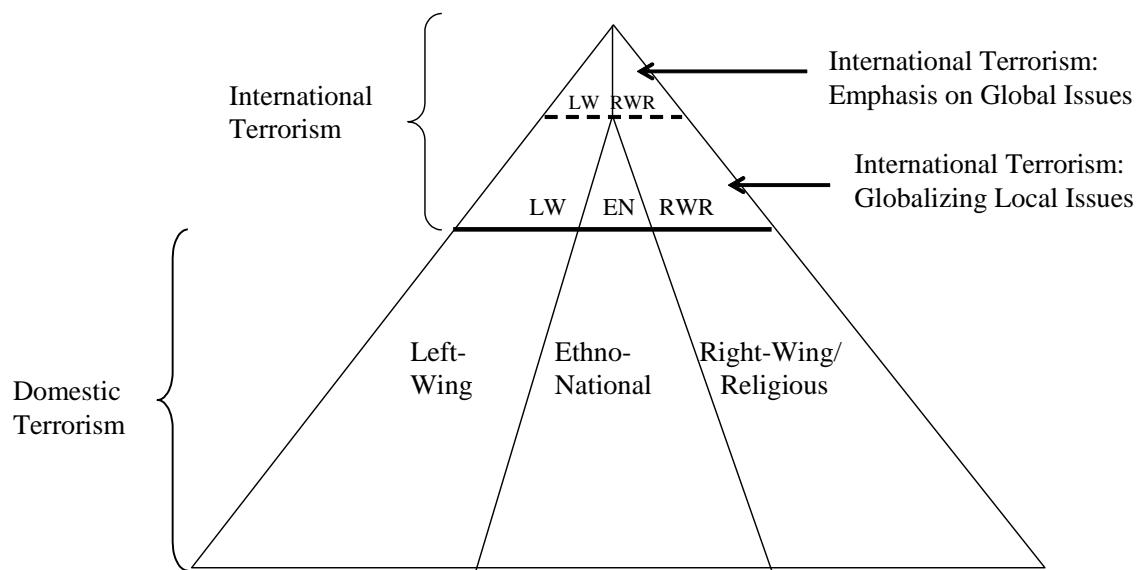


Figure 1: Forms of Terrorism

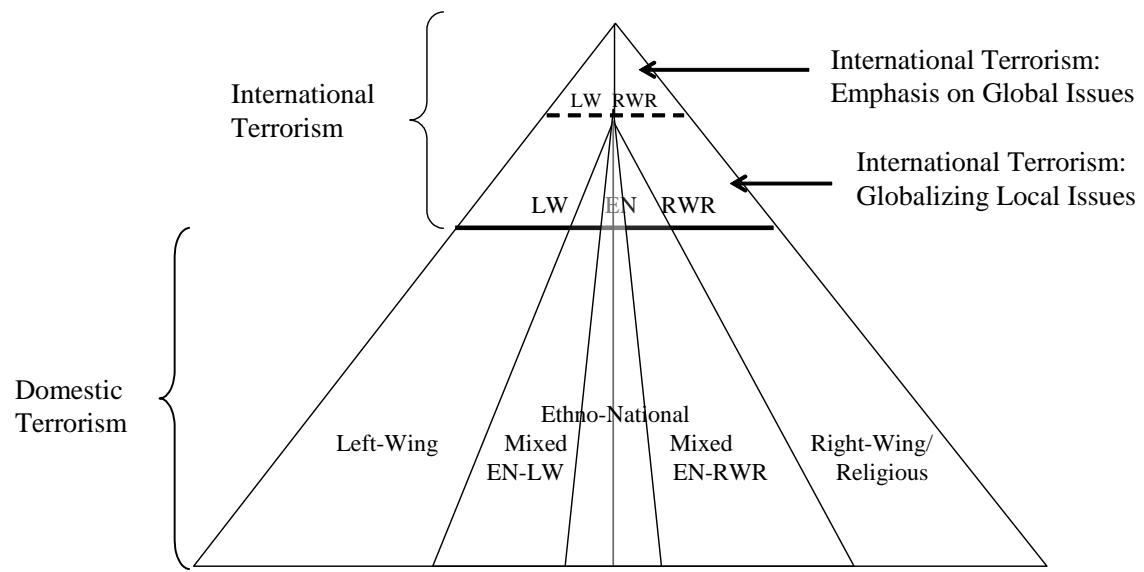


Figure 2: Mixed Categories of Terrorism

Figure 3: Terrorism Casualty Rates 1979-2005

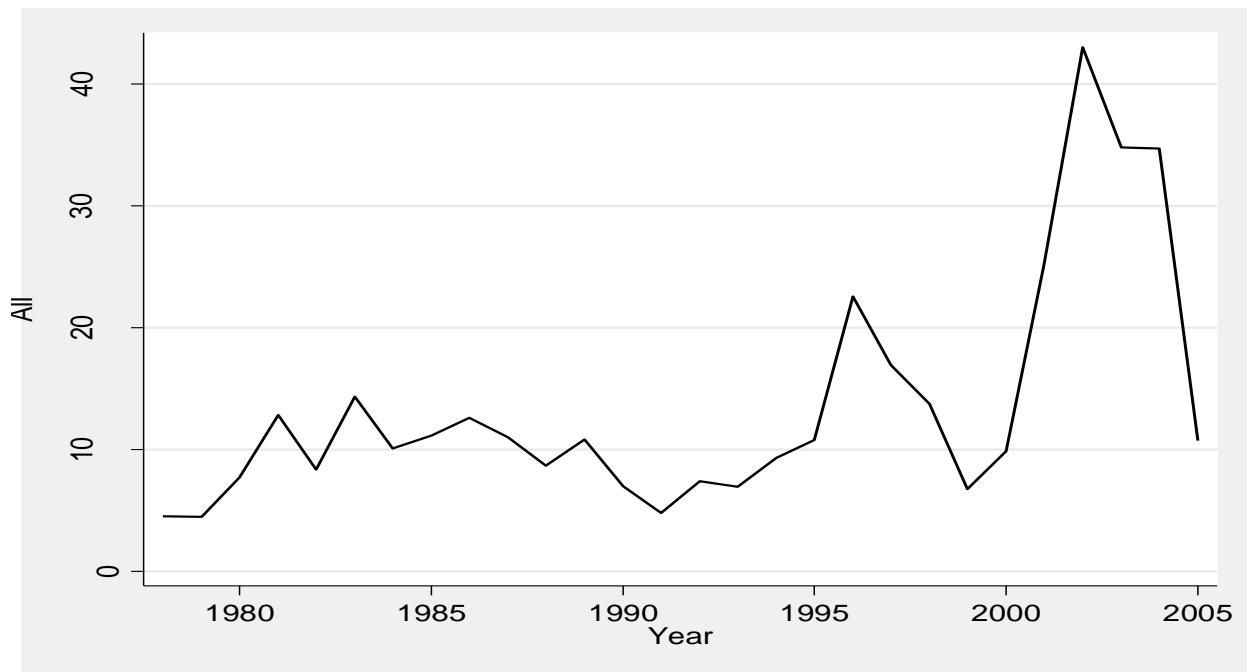


Table 1: Casualty Rates/Terrorist Incident by Ideological Category

<u>Ideological Category</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>n=</u>
Left-Wing	10.55	363
Nihilist	2.93	15
LW/Ethno-National	27.49	55
Ethno-National	17.23	412
EN/RWR (FUND)	38.90	128
EN/RWR (Racial)	14.20	50
RWR (Cult)	7.50	2
RWR (Racial Supremacy)	12.88	50
RWR (Fundamentalist)	20.12	233
Total	17.36	1308

ANOVA: F=3.437, Sig. .0001

Figure 4: Casualty Rates/Terrorist Incident by Ideological Category

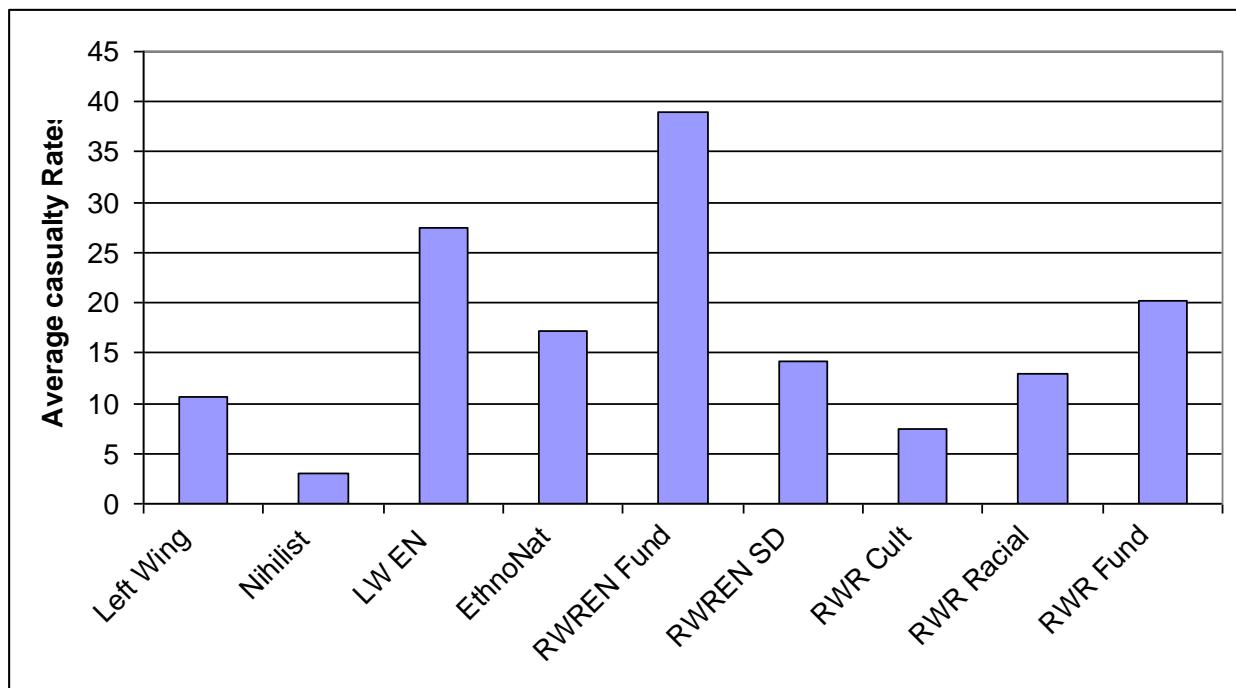


Table 2: Mass Casualty Terrorism (Casualty Rates) by Ideological Category

<u>Ideological Category</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>n=</u>
Left-Wing	93.12	26
Nihilist	0.00	0
LW/Ethno-National	85.93	14
EN-Post Colonial	117.22	45
EN/RWR (FUND)	123.91	35
EN/RWR (Racial)	97.40	5
RWR (Cult)	0.00	0
RWR (Racial Supremacy)	92.20	5
RWR (Fundamentalist)	105.06	35
Total	107.53	165

ANOVA: F=.294, Sig. .967

Figure 5: Casualty Rates for Ethno-National Forms of Terrorism (1979-2005)

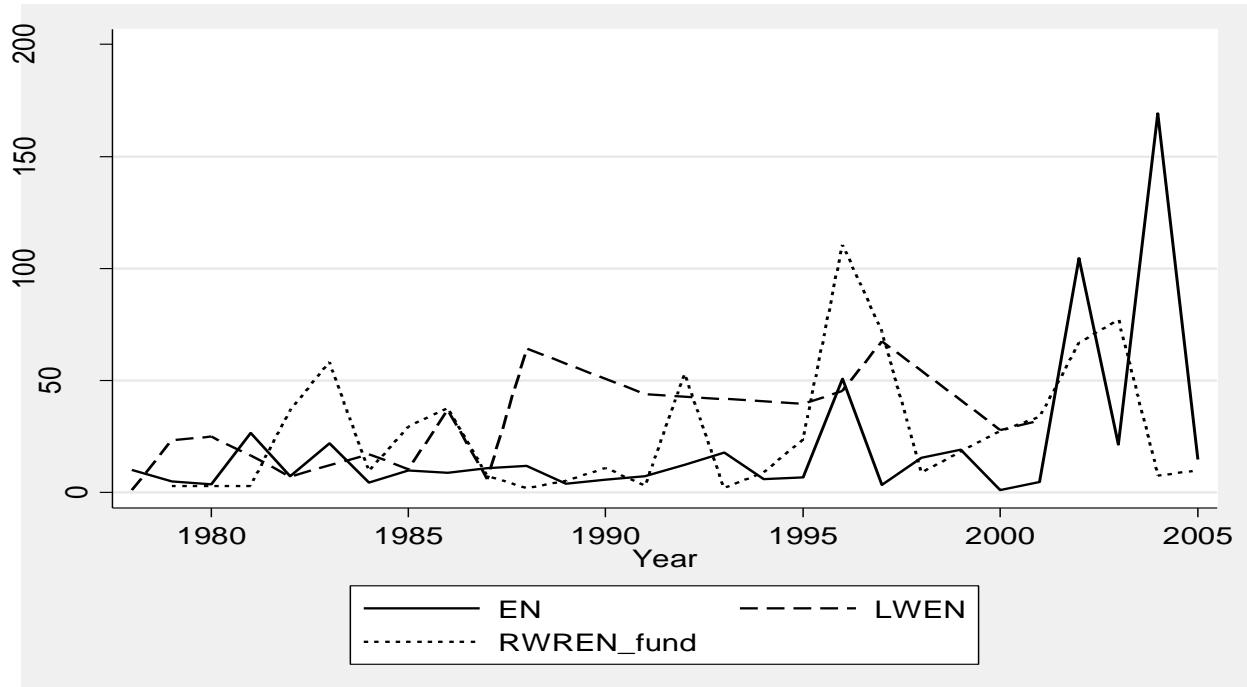


Figure 6: Casualty Rates for Left-Wing Ethno-National, and Right-Wing/Religious Fundamentalist Terrorism (1979-2005)

