

The Politics of Terrorism

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Course Description

Terrorism and insurgency dominate the headlines today, but how much do we really know about these forms of political violence? Are they inventions from the modern era, or do they have a deeper past? What drives an individual to join an armed group? Why do some groups choose to employ violence, while others do not? Are terrorism and insurgency effective political tactics? Just how significant is the threat of terrorism? This course will address these and other questions, while introducing students to relevant analytical frameworks, theories, and cases concerning terrorism, insurgency, and related forms of political violence. Students will learn the potential and pitfalls of theories of political violence through constant analysis and engagement with the history of terrorism and insurgency. By the conclusion of the course, students will emerge not only with a far richer understanding of these issues, but also as more sophisticated consumers, analysts, and producers of knowledge.

Course Requirements

Course grades will be based on:

Class Participation (50%)

Students are required to take an active role in the class. This means completing the assigned readings for each class, showing up to class regularly and on time, and participating consistently in class discussion and debates with quality contributions. It cannot be stressed enough that you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that session. This class will never be 160 minutes of lecture. Every class will include significant amounts of time for a variety of different guided, engaged discussions and debates of the readings and the relevant issues they address. All students are expected to engage in class discussion; those who do not do so on their own initiative will be regularly invited to do so by me. You should plan to speak in every class meeting. If you regularly prepare and engage with your reading outside of class, and with the lectures and discussions in class meetings, you will be pleasantly surprised at how much information you can analyze on a sophisticated level in no time.

Absence from class will lead to a significant reduction in a student's participation grade. If you have to miss class for a justifiable reason—religious observance, serious illness, etc.—notify me *before you will miss class*, not after the fact. Cell phones must be turned off during class. Laptops are not permitted in class. Bring hard copies of all readings to class. The participation grade includes the completion of smaller assignments throughout the course, although the majority of your participation grade will be based on the quality and quantity of your verbal participation in class meetings.

Policy Memo (50%): Due **December 1** by 12pm. All students will write a 5-page policy memo on some aspect of terrorism related to course content. Students will consult with me for their choice of topic during the class and then submit the final copy after the class meetings have ended. Students should start thinking about possible memo topics from the first day of class.

Aims and Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge about terrorism: Students will be introduced to relevant analytical frameworks, theories, and cases concerning terrorism, insurgency, and related forms of political violence; they will learn about the potential and pitfalls of theories of political violence through constant analysis and engagement with the history of terrorism and insurgency.
- Historical context: Students will explore changes and continuities in history of terrorism and the relationship of terrorism to other forms of violence. They will explore the pursuit of non-violence and responses to fear.
- Violence in the world: Students will learn to reflect on the meaning of violence in their own lives and in the world more generally. They will come to a clearer understanding of their own relationship to terrorism and be able to explain the positions they hold.
- Interpretation: Students will be able to make interpretive arguments about the legitimacy, justification, and rationalization of violence.
- Research Methods: Students will be able to understand and explain similarities, differences, strengths, and limitations of the disciplines of political science and history. They will apply the methods of these scholarly fields to the complex problem of terrorism.
- Learning How to Think: Students will become more sophisticated consumers, analysts, and producers of knowledge, developing skills that will continue to serve them as undergraduate students and in life beyond Charles University.

News Sources

This is not a current events class; however, students are encouraged to engage with ongoing news stories related to terrorism, insurgency, and political violence throughout the course (e.g. the civil war in Syria, the ongoing struggle with ISIS and its affiliates, and recent attacks around the world) and make connections with course readings and historical cases. Students' time should be focused on the required course readings, but checking a few news sources on a regular basis will significantly enhance students' knowledge of terrorism, insurgency, and political violence as well as the impact of this course. Online scholarly magazines like *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy* offer short, sharp articles that provide more depth to supplement general news media.

Readings and Class Schedule

Before Classes Begin

By November 4 at noon (the day before the first class meeting), you must email Professor Krause your own 1-2 sentence definition of "terrorism" without consulting any sources. Please send your definition to peter.krause.2@bc.edu with the subject heading.

Class 1-2: Definitions and Causes of Terrorism

Key Questions

How do scholars, governments, the media, and the public define terrorism and insurgency?

Is terrorism a new or old phenomenon?

What are the levels of analysis for examining terrorism and insurgency?

Do mental illness, poverty, or a lack of education cause terrorism?

How can an individual become radicalized? Is 'radicalization' necessary to commit terrorism?

Skills Introduced

Defining and comparing concepts

How to read as a scholar and analyst: Identifying and critiquing arguments

Part 1: Defining Terrorism: A New or Old Phenomenon?*Required Readings*

- Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Ch. 1, pp. 1-41
- John Gerring, "What Makes a Concept Good? A Critical Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences," *Polity*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (1999), Table 1, pp. 367
- David Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 78, No. 3 (1984) pp. 658-677

Part 2: The Causes of Terrorism*Required Readings*

- "You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows," "A Declaration of War," and "Headquarters" in Bernadine Dorhn, Bill Ayers, and Jeff Jones, eds., *Sing a Battle Song: The Revolutionary Poetry, Statements, and Communiqués of the Weather Underground 1970-1974* (New York: Seven Stories, 2006)
- Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog, "Why Are There So Many Engineers Among Islamic Radicals?" *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (2009) pp. 201-230
- Mark Juergensmeyer, "Soldiers for Christ," in *Terror in the Mind of God*, 3rd Edition, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) pp. 19-43
- Mia Bloom and Hilary Matfess, "Women as Symbols and Swords in Boko Haram's Terror," *PRISM* Vol. 6, No 1 (March 2016)

Class 3-4: Methods and Mechanisms: Strategies of Terrorism and Insurgency*Key Questions*

What are the main strategies of terrorism and insurgency?

What is the causal logic of each strategy?

Under what conditions is each strategy most likely to succeed or fail?

How does the media impact the causes, mechanisms, and effects of terrorism?

How should the media balance profit, the public's 'need to know,' and responsibility to society?

Skills Introduced

Identifying and explaining causal mechanisms

Linking theory and practice

Part 1: Strategies of Terrorism and Insurgency- Academics and Practitioners*Required Readings*

- Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* Vol. 31, No. 1 (2006) pp. 56-80
- Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3 (2003) pp. 343-361
- Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (New York: Nash, 1977) pp. 47-58, 76-96
- Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi Letter, February 2004
- Ayman Al-Zawahiri letter to Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, July 9, 2005
- ISIS, "The Extinction of the Grayzone," *Dabiq* Issue 7

Part 2: Morality, Emotions, and the Media in Terrorism*Required Readings*

- Bruce Hoffman, “The Old Media, Terrorism, and Public Opinion,” and “The New Media, Terrorism, and the Shaping of Global Opinion,” in Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Ch. 6 and 7, pp. 173-228
- Gadi Wolfsfeld et al., “Covering Death in Conflicts: Coverage of the Second Intifada on Israeli and Palestinian Television,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2008) pp. 401-417
- Anne-Sylvaine Chassany, “Decision to Withhold Jihadis’ Details Sparks Debate in France,” *Financial Times* (July 28, 2016)
- Brian Phillips, “This Is Why The Paris Attacks Have Gotten More News Coverage Than Other Terrorist Attacks,” *The Washington Post* (November 16, 2015)

Class 5-6: Counterterrorism

Key Questions

How many people are killed and wounded by terrorist and insurgent attacks?

Do terrorism and insurgency generate political concessions? Do they win wars?

When, why, and how do terrorism and insurgency end?

What are the objectives and strategies of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency?

Do counterterrorism and counterinsurgency work? Do they have unintended consequences?

Skills Introduced

Conceptualizing and measuring effects

Generating and analyzing competing arguments

Part 1: The Effects of Terrorism

Required Readings

- Peter Krause, “When Terrorism Works: Explaining Success and Failure Across Varying Targets and Objectives,” in *When Does Terrorism Work?*, Diego Muro (ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2016)
- “The Human Toll of Terror,” *The New York Times* (July 26, 2016)
- “An Eerie Calm in Bangladesh,” *AJ+* (April 27, 2016)
- Jennifer Lerner et al, “Effects of Fear and Anger on Perceived Risks of Terrorism: A National Field Experiment,” *Psychological Science* Vol. 14 No. 2 (2003) pp. 144-150

Part 2: How Terrorism and Insurgency End

Required Readings

- Audrey Kurth Cronin, “How Al Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups,” *International Security* Vol. 31, No. 1 (Summer 2006) pp. 7-48
- John Mueller, “Six Rather Unusual Propositions about Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* Vol. 17, No. 4 (2005) pp. 487-505
- David Goldman, “Twitter Goes To War Against ISIS,” *CNN* (February 5, 2016)
- Dylan Matthews, “Everything You Need to Know About the Drone Debate, in One FAQ,” *The Washington Post* (March 8, 2013)
- Adrian Chen, “Unfollow: How A Prized Daughter Of The Westboro Baptist Church Came To Question Its Beliefs,” *The New Yorker*, November 23, 2015