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Spring 2019

### Approaching Contemporary Terrorism

Jonathan Marcus

*SIT Study Abroad*

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Approaching Contemporary Terrorism:  
By Jonathan Marcus

Spring 2019

International Studies and Multilateral Diplomacy  
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## **Abstract**

This paper aims to analyze how governments of the modern era can better engage with contemporary terrorist organizations. It argues that nations and governments must alter their strategy on terrorism in light of its increasing prevalence and lethality in the modern era. Proclamations of non-negotiation, made with false perceptions that terrorists are simply irrational radical actors, are no longer viable if governments truly seek to reduce terrorist violence. In fact, it's the ambiguity of terrorism and the major differentiation in the practices of various organizations which necessitate a more flexible strategy. Simply, the one-size-fits all solution of unequivocal no-negotiation is unable to contend with terrorism of the modern era. Additionally, these proclamations may actually lead to a higher rate of violence. As shown by game theory, the bargaining model, and various studies measuring deterrence value and terrorist responses to changing situations, it is evident that modern governments must revamp their counterterrorism policy to involve increased flexibility and emphasis on negotiation.

This paper used both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources involved four formal interviews conducted in both Geneva and Paris.

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## Introduction

### Research Questions and Framework

According to the Global Terrorism Database, both the prevalence and lethality of terrorist attacks in the modern world are rapidly trending upwards (Global Terrorism Database). With over 8,500 attacks in 2012, quadruple the amount of attacks as in 2000 (Global Terrorism Database), “the current decade features a higher frequency and lethality of terrorist attacks than any prior decade since 1970” (Chenoweth & Moore, 7). Terrorism, however, is no modern phenomena. Evidence links the concept as far back as the Roman Empire, when Jewish Zealots would inspire fear upon onlookers through killing Romans in public (Chenoweth & Moore, 13). The word terrorism, however, is a much more recent conception. Popularized during the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution, terrorism was seen as a violent yet necessary means to a desired political end (Chenoweth & Moore, 14). Contemporary terrorism, though, is much different than that of terrorism during the Roman Empire and French Revolution. According to political scientist Bruce Hoffman, contemporary terrorism finds its origin in the “ethno-nationalist insurrections that followed the Second World War” (Hoffman 19). These acts, perpetrated by groups such as the Irgun, FLN, and the EOKA, laid the foundation for the “transformation of terrorism in the late 1960s from a primarily localized phenomenon into a security problem of global proportions” (Hoffman 20).

Contemporary terrorism *is* different from the terrorism of the past – Modern technology has given those who practice it greater reach and greater effectiveness. Sometimes called “new

terrorism,” contemporary terrorism is categorized by its ability to “extend beyond national borders,” its greater access to “technologies that make highly lethal terrorists acts easier to commit,” and its often “intensely religious” attributes (Hoffman 14, Chenoweth & Moore 18). Authors of *The Politics of Terror* Erica Chenoweth and Pauline Moore suggest that, as consequence of its ever increasing lethality and frequency, terrorism is becoming more of a “global strategic reality in current times.” It is important to note that these transitions are impossible pinpoint on a calendar or specific event. Rather, the evolution of terrorism is nearly as ambiguous as its definition itself. It is “constantly changing and evolving” with that of technology, politics, and society (Hoffman).

Certainly a controversial concept, the definition of terrorism has been argued and debated by scholars and political scientists throughout history. Some, like political scientist and national security expert Grant Wardlaw, even consider the “definitional quest” as the “Holy Grail” of terrorism studies (Wardlaw). As Chenoweth and Moore write, debating the definition of terrorism is in and of itself a political act. And, as is so often heard: one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter. Different political entities, including the closest of allies and the most bitter of rivals, disagree highly in their determinations of whether specific groups are or are not terroristic in nature. For example, Journalist and specialist in European and US relations Gerald Olivier points out that the European Union and the United States, despite their alliance in the war against terror, have drastically different designations of which groups are actually classified as terror organizations (Olivier). The differences, he argues, often reflect regional concerns, citing the example of the Irish Republican Army. Despite the close ties between the United States and the United Kingdom, the Irish Republican Army was never classified as a terrorist group by official US lists (although the United States did eventually add the Real Irish Republican Army,

a splinter group of the former IRA, to the list in 2001) (Olivier). On the reverse, the United States has delegated several militant Marxist organizations in South America, such as the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front and Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, as terroristic, whereas the UK and EU have not (Beck & Miner).

Despite the many perspectives, however, the field of international politics is incomplete without the presence of the contested term. This is because terrorism is increasingly real, increasingly prevalent, and increasingly disruptive (Chenoweth & Moore, 7). “As terrorist groups increase their capacity, participation, and control over territory or ideological space, they can become much more stable fixtures in the political life” (Chenoweth & Moore 10). Perhaps even more importantly, terrorism is extremely important to the public. In a 2007 Pew Research Poll conducted in 47 countries around the world, an average of 41% of respondents reported that terrorism was a “very big problem” (Pew Global Attitudes & Trends, *A Rising Tide Lifts Mood in the Developing World*, 116). Thus, despite its ambiguity, governments around the world are beholden by their people to safeguard them from terrorism. Only making it more difficult, governments must find a way to do this despite terrorism’s lack of a singular and consolidated definition.

As “new terrorism” becomes an increasingly prevalent and lethal issue, this paper argues that governments must evolve in their fight against it. They must stop treating the terrorism of the present the same as terrorism of the past. Unilateral proclamations of no negotiation and the seemingly prevailing attitude that terrorists are simply irrational political extremists are no longer satisfactory. Indeed, “the governments of many countries including Britain, Israel, and the United States, have frequently and openly declared they will never enter negotiations with terrorists” (Quackenbush 421). Because of terrorism’s modern lethality,



governments must be more willing to engage with, communicate with, and negotiate with terrorist groups. Governments must also “reject the argument of the news media that terrorists are characteristically madmen who cannot be bargained with” (Atkinson, Tschirhart, & Sandler 3). These perceptions and proclamations, while often made with deterrence in mind, “lead people to make choices that in retrospect turn out to be bad” (Quackenbush 427). Additionally, through a positive side effect of increased engagement, governments will be better suited in their quest of locating and addressing the societal grievances which spawn these actors, thus destroying the extremism at its roots (Mohamedou, Goodarzi). As the communications officer for Geneva Call (an NGO which attempts to engage and negotiate with non-state actors) Christopher Fitzsimons argues: “Negotiation is a means to the end of protecting civilians. Violence and the status quo are not working.”

Therefore, at its roots, this paper seeks to address how contemporary governments can approach the problem of “new terrorism.” First, it seeks to broadly define the term of terrorism in the context of the modern era, recognizing that terrorism and terrorist groups can differ highly in structure and practices. Through game theory and analysis, the paper will then go beyond the argument of what classifies a non-state actor as terroristic, rather arguing that the definitional ambiguity of the term is exactly why nations needs to retrofit their one-size-fits-all approach. While terrorist groups have several consistencies which can earn them such a classification, it is the differences which open them up to potential negotiation. The paper also seeks to answer if proclamations to terror groups, whether followed or not in actuality, deter or invite violence. It will also delve into the question of deterrence, and whether negotiation inspires additional groups to also seek concessions. Finally, it will take the concept of the bargaining model of war, typically reserved for conflict between a dyad of nation-states, and apply it to modern day

terrorist organizations. In conjunction, these questions will push the argument of how states can better approach modern terrorism – both through engaging with the violent actors themselves, but also through addressing and understanding the societal underpinnings which spur violence in the first place.

## Literature Review

The subjects of terrorism, negotiation, and national security have large bodies of literature surrounding them. And for good reason. Discussed more in the *Context and Definitions* section of this paper, scholars have been debating and studying these themes for decades, with no common conclusion emerging among them. Perspectives differ by eras, regions, ideologies, and more. This essay attempts to combine both theory and practical studies from a variety of experienced and respected scholars and political scientists from peer-reviewed sources.

Several of these sources aid the paper in finding a common, working definition for terrorism. A few include Erica Chenoweth & Pauline Moore's *The Politics of Terror*, and Bruce Hoffman's *The Origins of Contemporary Terrorism, Defining Terrorism, and Terrorism Today and Tomorrow*. Others, including but not limited to Stephen Quackenbush's *Principles of International Politics*, Harmonie Toros's *Legitimacy and Complexity in Terrorist Conflicts*, and Suzanne Werner and Darren Filson's *A Bargaining Model of War and Peace: Anticipating the Onset, Duration, and Outcome of War*, help inform the paper's general argument. Finally, several sources provide analytical, quantitative data in order to better support and characterize the paper's hypothesis. These include: Bryan Brophy-Baermann & John Conybeare's *Retaliating against Terrorism: Rational Expectations and the Optimality of Rules versus Discretion*; Scott Atkinson, Todd Sandler, and John Tschirhart's *Terrorism in a Bargaining Framework*; and

Harvey E. Lapan & Todd Sandler's *To Bargain or Not To Bargain: That is The Question*.

Importantly, these sources, among several others not listed above, were not used exclusively for any one task or section. Rather, each connect and combine into the general overarching theme of the paper. Each source within the body of research informs the hypothesis and is critically important to the final argument.

### **Research Methodology**

This research paper uses primary and secondary sources in the forms of personal interviews, academic journal articles, case studies, and academic studies.

Four personal interviews were conducted and included in this paper. The interviewees were selected strategically based on their experiences, expertise and backgrounds. Each of the four interviewees are experts in the field of international relations, with a diverse, yet relevant, breadth of experiences. These experts specialize in a variety of topics including but not limited to terrorism, negotiation tactics, non-state actors, and various global regions. The interviewees were initially approached via email.

A variety of scholarly articles and studies were used as sources for various aspects of the topic. Mostly drawn from the realm of terrorism and security policy, the various sources study and analyze the definition of terrorism, its global impact, the methods in which states respond, and more.

This paper considers a variety of perspectives found within the academic sources and personal interviews. It attempts to accurately assess and credit the arguments of the authors and

interviewees. In regards to the personal interviews, all were presented with their rights as interviewees, as well as what they should expect of the interviewer. Each gave verbal consent to participate in the interview process. In each case, notes were taken throughout in order to assure accuracy. Zero ethical concerns arose throughout the interviews. Further, there were zero instances of the interviewee requesting to be off-the-record or requesting the retraction of certain statements.

### **Context and Definitions**

As mentioned previously, the definition of terrorism is one that is hotly contested. However, as this research paper is not solely focused on identifying the most true definition of the term, if one even exists, it will instead enlist a fairly agreed upon working definition of the term. According to Bruce Hoffman, a political analyst who specializes in the study of terrorism and counterterrorism, and Harmonie Toros, Professor at the University of Wales in the Department of International Politics, the concept of terrorism has several consistencies throughout various groups and timeframes (Hoffman 35, Toros 409). First, a terrorist employs the “use of violence.” Second, a terrorist’s goal is “ineluctably political” (Hoffman 35-38). Third, a terrorist “affects a larger audience than its immediate target” in an effort to produce fear and intimidation (Toros 409). Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman, in their *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature*, support such constants with data. They take 109 different definitions of terrorism from various dictionaries and organizations in an effort to find “frequencies of definitional elements.” Supporting Hoffman and Toros’s definition, Schmid and Jongman find that the element of “Violence, force” shows up in 83.5% of all definitions. “Political” shows up in 65% of all definitions. “Fear, terror” shows

up in 51% of all definitions (Schmid & Jongman). Thus, while it is all but impossible to reach a consensus on the singular definition of terrorism, for the purpose of my research paper I will use the three step definition laid out by Hoffman and Toros, and supported by Schmid and Jongman, in order to distinguish terrorist actors from other non-state actors. Condensed, terrorism can be understood as “a violent means aimed at triggering political change by affecting a larger audience than its immediate target” (Toros 410).

Importantly, the working definition for the purposes of this paper will *not* include lone wolf actors nor state-sponsored terrorist entities. Understanding that terrorism has many different forms, Professor of International Affairs and expert in transnational terrorism Dr. Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou argues that actual engagement is more realistic in the context of separate, independent terrorist groups. The professor asserts that lone wolf actors, for example, offer no context for negotiations. Without being part of an organized political group or movement, it is impossible to determine, as well as highly debated, whether it is appropriate to distinguish political terror from murder founded in personal animus (Mohamedou). Dr. Mohamedou argues that these instances are often handled by separate government entities and not classified as terrorism by the state (Mohamedou). State-sponsored terror groups, on the other hand, are also “not open to actual engagement” as their actions are dictated by that of a formal political entity (Mohamedou). Any subsequent negotiation or engagement, then, would be rather conducted with that of the formal entity as opposed to that of the sponsored terror group. Thus, while the essay understands that terrorism takes a variety of forms, the paper will, for the purposes of this discussion, focus on independent terrorist organizations and tangible engagements.

## Analysis

### Perceptions and Rationality

Terrorism of the present is evolving “rapidly and consequentially” as groups adapt to new technology, methods of warfare, and communication strategies. “Technology changes the equation,” argues Christopher Fitzsimons of Geneva Call. “Groups of the past were less organized, had less access to better weapons, and had overall less capacity than they have today. They’re much more sophisticated now” (Fitzsimons). “New terrorism” does not escape the definitional fate of high variation in those accused of practicing it. However, for those who do, it grants terrorist entities a pathway to impacting the political sphere unlike any they’ve had in the past. Suddenly, terrorism has become a viable, and sometimes rational, geopolitical strategy; one capable of thrusting groups and organizations onto the global radar with a historically unique ability to carry out their political goals and ideology internationally.

New terrorism can be practiced by both rational and irrational groups. But what separates them? In the opinion of many scholars, it’s the ability for the terrorist groups to seek out realistic goals and to have the capacity to engage in real political negotiations. “We reject the argument of news media that terrorists are characteristically madmen who cannot be bargained with” (Atkinson, Sanders, & Tschirhart 3). “The madman depiction is a myth” argues University of California professor and author of *The Politics of Terrorism* Michael Stohl. “Many terrorist groups have particular goals that are sought as part of an ongoing political struggle. There are numerous instances in which careful negotiations regarding terrorist demands led to peaceful solutions” (Stohl). Stephen Quackenbush, in his *Principles of International Politics*, writes:

“Many people look at groups like Hamas or Al Qaeda and think that they and all terrorists are crazy, irrational fanatics with no sense of morality or decency. Because of this outlook, it is common for people to believe that governments should never negotiate with terrorists. Indeed, the governments of many countries, including Britain, Israel, and the United States, have frequently and openly declared that they will never enter into negotiations with terrorists. The belief that terrorists are unusual types of people with cruel and unbending inclinations is probably behind this response.”

As argued by scholars, many terrorists exhibit the rational ability to negotiate and seek realistic goals. Looking further into the issue of rationality versus irrationality, Quackenbush identifies the discrepancy through his three reasons for conflict: Uncertainty, commitment problems, and indivisibility of issues (Quackenbush 440). The first two, uncertainty and commitment problems, he argues, are able to be rectified through new information via negotiation (Quackenbush 420). When it is these issues separating terrorist groups from a peaceful political solution, Quackenbush contends that the group is rational. He further coins the terrorist groups fitting this mold as “reluctant terrorists.” Quackenbush identifies the preferences of reluctant terrorists as: Negotiation > Terrorist attack > Repression. Indivisible issues, on the other hand, block irrational groups from a peaceful solution. In the field of new terrorism these indivisible issues often manifest themselves in the form of religion. These “intensely religious” groups, as Bruce Hoffman would call them, refuse to compromise due to their indivisible issue. Thus, they are classified as “True Believers.” True believers will commit the terrorist attack whether the government is open to negotiations or not because they will always have a uncompromising reason for conflict. The priorities of true believers are: Terrorist attack > Negotiation > Repression (Quackenbush 420).

Whether the group is rational (a reluctant terrorist) or irrational (a true believer) is not always clear. With a wide variety of ideologies, practices, and ideals among various terrorist entities, governments can have an extremely difficult time determining which is which. Only to make matters more confusing, terrorist groups have a wide variety of ideologies, practices, and ideals within their own ranks (Mohamedou). There are “radicals among radicals with negotiators within,” but also “negotiators among negotiators with radicals within (Mohamedou). This, as argued by Jason Burke in his *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam*, makes terrorist organizations “dynamic and protean and profoundly difficult to characterize” (Burke 1). However, it is this very same “complexity and multiplicity,” as Toros puts it, that “offers more points of entry and contact.” Al-Qaeda is a perfect example of this. Despite most interpretations seeing the group as irrational non-negotiators, or true believers, there are several occasions in which they have inquired adversaries for peace in the past. Toros argues that “the complexity of Al Qaeda’s structure can be seen as an opening for the understanding of and an engagement with the network” (Toros 418). Despite its hard-faced ideology of pan-Islamism, advocated for by former leader Osama bin Laden, “it is conceivable to engage with these groups even though the central command or hard core of Al-Qaeda rejects any form of dialogue” (Toros 418). Despite Osama bin Laden’s 2004 declaration saying “there can be no dialogue with occupiers except through arms” (Toros 418), many locally based groups with links to Al-Qaeda have in fact engaged with governments nonviolently. Namely, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has engaged in “on-and-off peace talks” with the Filipino government despite its “international Islamist ties” with Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden himself (Toros 418).

Thus, despite terrorism’s high rate of differentiation and variation, scholars have attempted to classify them not by their traits but by their preferences. By doing so, they can



better circumvent false or misleading perceptions. They can trust that groups with indivisible issues, no matter what that issue is, will not negotiate and instead prefer to attack, while other groups without issue indivisibility have the possibility of coming to a political solution through negotiation – if the government can eliminate uncertainty and commitment problems.

**The Paradox of Proclamations**

Understanding the perceptions, we realize that some terrorists have the capacity to operate rationally. However, we also understand that no two terrorist groups are the same – like the definitional ambiguity of the concept, groups who commit terrorism differentiate massively. Thus, it can be difficult for leaders to determine who exactly they are dealing with; negotiators or radicals. Even more complex, in any given group there is a combination of hardline true believers and potentially amenable reluctant terrorists (Mohamedou). Often, “as a consequence of this uncertainty, [governments] might choose an improper response” (Quackenbush 427). As Quackenbush argues, countries, in response to lack of information, frequently lump these groups together when dictating response policy. “One common response to terrorism is to take a tough stance. . . The posture of non-negotiation is the declared policy of the United States and many other governments (Quackenbush 423). Harvey E. Lapan and Todd Sandler, in their *To Bargain or Not To Bargain: That is The Question*, concur. Applying game theory to terrorist organization’s behavior, Lapan and Sandler argue: “Accepted wisdom, heard almost daily in news-casts, maintains that one should never bargain with terrorists since such negotiations encourage more hostage taking by making it a profitable activity” (Lapan & Sandler 16). Thus, countries commonly respond to terrorism with a proclamation of non-negotiation – the classic “we do not negotiate with terrorists.” However, when put into practice, “the conventional

wisdom regarding the no-negotiation strategy does not withstand theoretical scrutiny except in a limited number of contrived cases” (Lapan & Sandler 16). Despite the intention of signaling to terrorists that the government “means business,” the adoption of declaratory policies, or proclamations, often produce an “unanticipated and undesired negative consequence for the government” (Quackenbush 420).

Proclamations, although “intended to deter terrorist threats,” may actually “increase the risk of terrorist attacks” (Quackenbush 421). And there is a simple reason for this. By declaring a firm policy stance against negotiation, countries are effectively pooling all terrorists, even those which may prefer negotiation, into a single group. In game theory terms, this would be a pooling equilibrium. Reluctant terrorists, with a lack of access to the negotiation table (whether real or perceived depending on the government’s enforcement of the proclamation), may instead turn to violence as opposed to being content with the status quo (Quackenbush). As Harmonie Toros, in her *Legitimacy and Complexity in Terrorist Conflicts*, puts it: “Indeed, it seems that more often than not all the cards in the deck are being called spades. There is no doubt there are spades there, but by recognizing only spades, participants are left with only spades to play with” (Toros 422). By pooling these terrorists through proclamation, states are limiting their responses to only that of how to handle “spades,” or true believers. Paradoxically, “being open to negotiations is the very thing that would help [governments] distinguish between true believers and reluctant terrorists” (Quackenbush 427). By not declaring a proclamation of non-negotiation, governments are in practice “separating the behavior of true believers from reluctant terrorists” along lines of willingness to negotiate – a separating equilibrium (Quackenbush 427). The radical true believers will act as they had before, but “the behavior of the reluctant terrorists will change”

(Quackenbush 427). Groups preferring political negotiation with the government will have that option and choose it over committing violence.

In a study done by Lapan and Sandler in their *To Bargain or Not To Bargain: That is the Question*, the notion of whether a “government would want to precommit itself to a no-negotiation strategy” is tested through an “economic analysis in a simple game-theory framework” (Lapan & Sandler, 16). There are just two players in this game: The government and

terrorists, with a hostage situation being the game’s setting. Their conclusion is that the “beliefs and the resolve of the terrorists are crucial in identifying the rather restrictive scenarios in which a no-negotiation strategy is desirable in the case of a credible precommitment” (Lapan & Sandler, 16). In other words, depending on if a terrorist falls into the “true believer” category, (prioritizing the act of terror over negotiation over the status quo) or the “reluctant terrorist” category (prioritizing negotiation over the act of terror over the status quo), the government will want to modify its response. However, as seen in the game, the government cannot know if the terrorist player will choose to attack or not attack (negotiate) before it must make this

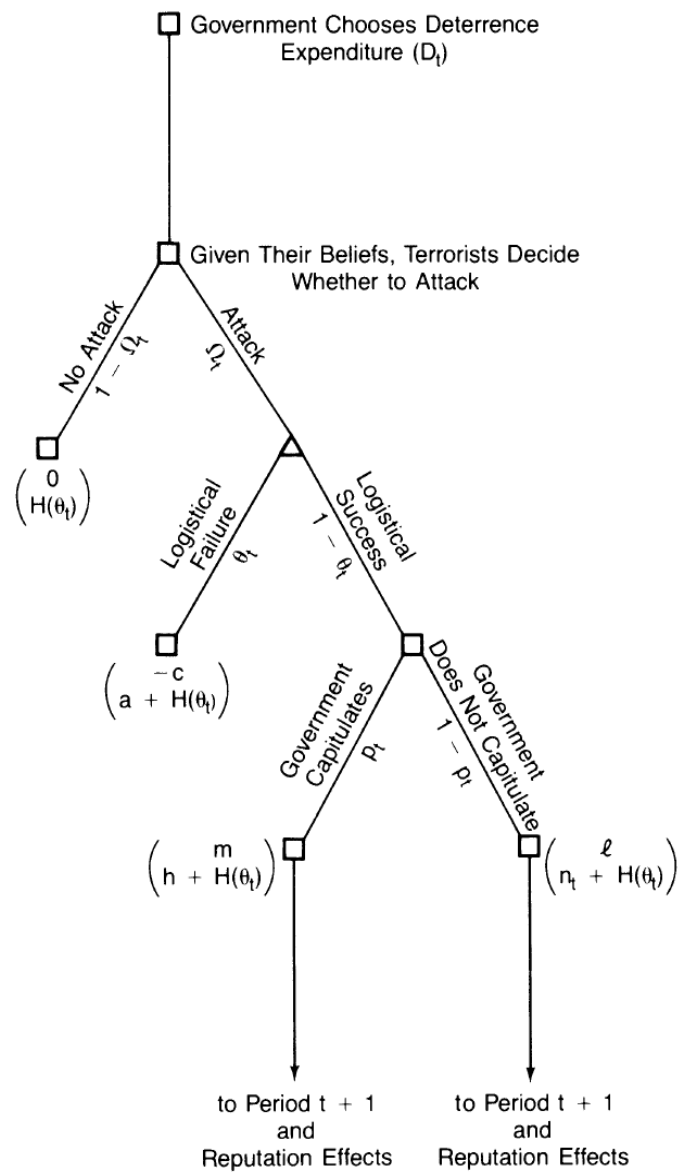


FIGURE 1. GAME TREE—PERIOD  $t$

precommitment of choosing a deterrence expenditure. Thus, based on logical predictions, they must make this decision beforehand. As shown in the figure, the ideal scenario for the government (assuming any subsequent terror attack does not result in logistical failure) is to choose the deterrence expenditure of negotiation and have the terrorists in turn choose “no attack,” or agreeing to negotiate. This would happen if the terrorist group was reluctant terrorists. If the group was true believers, however, the terrorist player would choose to attack despite the government choosing negotiation. Importantly, true believers would make this same decision no matter the government deterrence choice. They “will attack regardless of a credible precommitment strategy” (Lapan & Sandler, 18). The difference would land with the reluctant terrorists. If a precommit strategy was such that negotiations cannot occur, for example a credible proclamation, the probability of the reluctant terrorists choosing to attack is far higher. “When precommitment does not eliminate all attacks, precommitment would imply higher ex post costs from inflexibility in those incidents where costs would be minimized by [negotiating]” (Lapan & Sandler, 19). Because of this change in reluctant terrorist behavior, the actual returns of a non-negotiation strategy is a higher probability of attack. Thus, as argued by Harmonie Toros, “negotiations in terrorist conflicts are not only possible, they are potentially less destructive than most other responses to terrorism envisioned by academics and policy-makers today” (Toros 423).

As shown through game theory, governments must be weary of proclamations of non-negotiation. The common practice promulgated by uncertainty, and often done in the name of deterrence, in fact causes more harm than good. Effectively pooling the so-called reluctant terrorists (possible negotiators) and true believers (irrational radicals), proclamations alienate groups interested in negotiation and thus diminish any opportunity for peaceful resolution.

Indeed, proclamations may push some of these reluctant terrorists to commit violent acts, as opposed to maintaining the status quo, believing they have no other choice. By not signaling intentions via proclamations, governments can better focus their efforts on “fighting the true believers and looking for sensible compromises with others” (Quackenbush 427).

### **Terrorism on the Bargaining Model of War**

Keeping both proclamations and perceptions in mind, we can now look into the question of whether a government should or should not engage in negotiations with every rational “reluctant terrorist” group. Game theory suggests that negotiation is possible with rational actors, but does not paint the entire picture. Even when negotiation is an option, sometimes governments would be better off repressing or fighting terrorist groups instead of giving into negotiation demands. In order to determine whether this is so, the negotiation process should instead be brought to the bargaining model of war in order to examine whether it suits the government’s interests.

Typically, the bargaining model of war is used to compare a dyad of nation-states. However, according to a study done by Scott Atkinson, Todd Sandler, and John Tschirhart, terrorist groups as well respond to changes in the situation in real time through their perceived costs and benefits (Atkinson, Sandler & Tschirhart). Their study, which examines forty-two incidents where terrorist groups have demanded ransom for hostages, accounts for a wide variety of situational variables and measures their impact on the eventual outcome. As seen in “Table 1” on page 21, different variables (under the center definition column) lead to different probabilities of end result (Atkinson, Sandler, & Tschirhart). In cases where a hostage is wounded, for example, the outcome is 9.512 standard deviations away from that of the average ransom

situation outcome. In table 2 (page 22), then, looking at the independent variable of NUMHOSW (number of hostages wounded), it is shown in each of the three models that this will negatively impact the terrorist groups ability to obtain demanded ransom (-24.837; -23.292; -22.787). In other words, the probability for a terrorist group to receive average ransom in a situation with a wounded hostage is much lower than that of the probability for a terrorist group to receive average ransom in the average situation (Atkinson, Sandler & Tschirhart). The variables, therefore, have measured impact, representing themselves in “either increases or decreases in bargaining costs to either party” (Atkinson, Sandler & Tschirhart). Thus, with the data presented in Atkinson, Sandler, and Tschirhart’s study, we can reasonably analyze “terrorist negotiations in a bargaining framework” as the groups, much like nation-states, are conscious of and impacted

by “significant variables” within the negotiation framework. (Atkinson, Sandler & Tschirhart).

TABLE 1  
DEFINITIONS, MEANS, AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

Variables	Definition	Mean	Standard Deviation
ln(TI)	Natural log of the duration of the incident	.2626	2.329
NUMTW	Number of terrorists wounded	.2541 (.2381)	.6750 (.6555)
HIPWRW	1 if terrorists used high-powered weapons; 0 otherwise	.5410 (.4762)	.5004 (.5055)
NUMHOS	Number of hostages taken	38.34 (37.50)	53.37 (60.49)
TASR	1 if terrorists allowed sequential release of hostages; 0 otherwise	.3934 (.3333)	.4950 (.4771)
KIDNAP	1 if incident was a kidnapping; 0 otherwise	.3771 (.5714)	.4867 (.5009)
NUMHOSW	Number of hostages wounded	3.405 (2.143)	9.512 (7.087)
ASUBHOS	1 if terrorists allowed hostage substitution; 0 otherwise	.0984 (.0476)	.2990 (.2155)
USVICT	1 if one or more hostages were U.S. victims; 0 otherwise	.3689 (.4286)	.4845 (.5009)
SHOOT	1 if incident ended in a shoot-out; 0 otherwise	.2131	.4122
NNATH	Number of nationalities of hostages	2.377 (2.667)	2.734 (3.900)
SKYJACK	1 if incident was a skyjacking; 0 otherwise	.7131 (.7381)	.4542 (.4450)
DEADPAS	1 if terrorists allowed a deadline to pass; 0 otherwise	.1475 (.1667)	.3561 (.3772)
RANDE	Ransom initially demanded	130.05 (377.76)	555.98 (903.54)
RANPD	Ransom paid	59.89 (173.98)	457.79 (773.41)

NOTE.—The values in parentheses are for the forty-two observations included in the Tobit regressions. All other values are for 122 observations.

TABLE 2  
ESTIMATED PARAMETERS FOR RANSOM-PAID TOBIT REGRESSION

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	MODELS		
	1	2	3
Constant	-883.74** (-1.8957)	-960.28* (-2.1665)	-920.06* (-2.1393)
NUMTW	-181.35 (-1.0122)	-188.77 (-1.1119)	-191.88 (-1.1244)
HIPWRW	19.454 (.13885)	...	...
NUMHOS	-3.0402 (-.95102)	-3.4546 (-1.0904)	-3.7870 (-1.2478)
TASR	901.99* (2.7023)	997.49* (3.2174)	1,000.5* (3.2299)
KIDNAP	216.10 (.86304)	264.97 (1.1540)	266.32 (1.1614)
NUMHOSW	-24.837 (-1.0816)	-23.292 (-1.0631)	-22.787 (-1.0246)
ASUBHOS	93.105 (.44847)	78.192 (.37560)	...
RANDE	.53973* (4.9495)	.55172* (5.0567)	.55036* (5.0441)
USVICT	-93.924 (-.75039)	...	...
DEADPAS	-1,015.0* (-3.9822)	-1,007.8* (-3.9597)	-1,013.1* (-3.9876)
NNATH	124.87* (3.8787)	121.55* (3.8320)	122.84* (3.9029)
SKYJACK	401.09 (1.0899)	404.95 (1.0911)	367.77 (1.0290)
Log of likelihood function	-162.86	-163.15	-163.23
Global chi square	69.34	68.76	68.60
Degrees of freedom	12	10	9
Probability value	.0000	.0000	.0000
R <sup>2</sup> between observed and predicted	.9688	.9675	.9675

NOTE.—Data include forty-two incidents in which ransom was demanded. Asymptotic *t*-values in parentheses.

\* Significant at .05 level for a two-tailed test.

\*\* Significant at .05 level for a one-tailed test.

In their *A Bargaining Model of War and Peace: Anticipating the Onset, Duration, and Outcome of War*, Suzanne Werner and Darren Filson explain that in the model, each player has certain costs and certain benefits. “Each player’s objective is to obtain as many benefits as possible” (Filson & Werner 821). They do this through the negotiation process, where both sides (the government versus the terrorist organization) have the option to negotiate peace or go to “war.” Both sides would analyze their perceived costs and perceived benefits in relation to one



another. For the government, the perceived costs may be the risk of several citizens being killed in a terror attack. The perceived benefits may be successfully repressing the terror organization. For the terrorists, the perceived costs and benefits would be flipped. In the center of the model is the bargaining range. This is the area between both sides perceived costs of war. Based on the perceived costs and benefits, the two sides would negotiate and, in the case of terrorist entities, the terrorist group would offer its demands. If the demands fell into the bargaining range, the government would accept. If they went beyond that of the bargaining range (past what the government determines its perceived costs of going to war may be) the government would refuse to negotiate, believing instead that giving into the demands would be more costly than the terror attack itself.

The bargaining model of war is important for governments to apply during terrorist engagements because the costs and benefits of negotiation versus attack are not constant figures. Terrorist groups, especially in the era of new terrorism, are highly varied in practices and objectives. Despite maintaining the assumption that they reluctant terrorists, these entities are constantly shifting and evolving. Thus, the bargaining model, with its ability for costs and benefits to shift given new information, suits the highly ambiguous situation of dealing with a terrorist entity. With this model, governments can analyze groups on a case-by-case basis, coming to different conclusions given different situations.

**Does Negotiation Compromise Deterrence?**

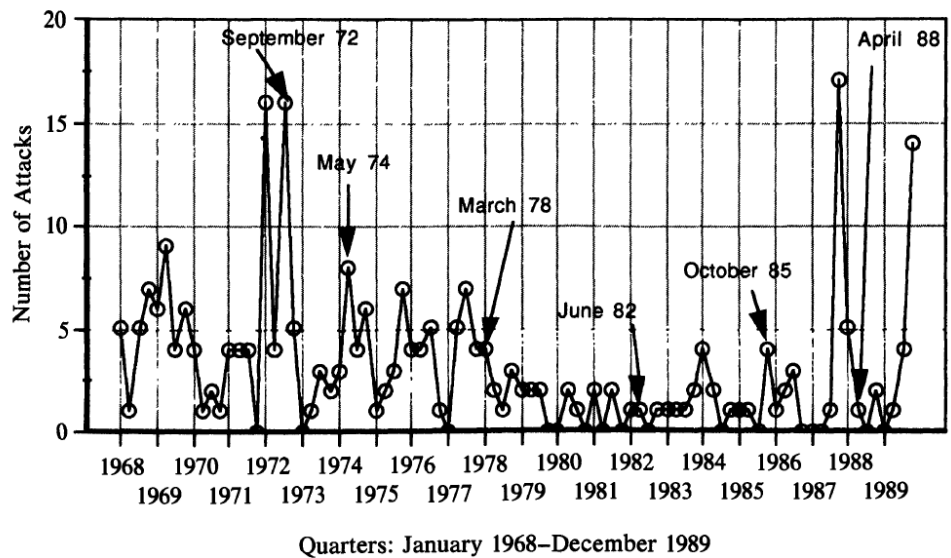
We can see that negotiation is a viable and positive path for governments to pursue in some situations. However, many governments continue to declare policies of unequivocal non-negotiation anyways. Why? The answer, of course, is deterrence. Many policy-makers argue that

dropping proclamations and instead engaging in negotiation may “encourage more groups of people to pretend to be terrorists (of the reluctant type) so that they can extract concessions from the government” (Quackenbush 424). The argument seems logical – give out concessions to violent groups and more groups will come knocking. However, a hard look at the realities of the bargaining model of war and an examination of the data compiled in Bryan Brophy-Baermann and John Conybeare’s study of the effects of past deterrence suggest otherwise.

In their study *Retaliating against Terrorism: Rational Expectations and the Optimality of Rules versus Discretion*, Bryan Brophy-Baermann and John Conybeare enlist a “time series intervention model of terrorist attacks against Israel” in order to show that retaliation has “no long-term deterrent or escalation effect.” The model studies the frequency of terrorist attacks against Israel over a period of time, examining if strong retaliation events conducted by the Jewish state (for example: airstrikes), have any effect on future attack rates. Brophy-Baermann and Conybeare find that reprisal attacks have an extremely small and temporary deterrence value. As seen in their graph, Israeli retaliations (shown by the dates and arrows), do not have a

large impact on the rate of future attacks. In fact, by dividing the data set into four, Brophy-Baermann and Conybeare found an average rate of 2.13 attacks per quarter. Despite some quarters having more reprisal attacks than others,

**Figure 1. Terrorist Attacks on Israel and Israeli Retaliations**



none of the quarters were statistically significant in their deviation from that average terrorist attack rate (Brophy-Baermann & Conybeare). “Although such tough declarations may win votes,” they argue, “there is significant evidence that retaliation against terrorists has no long-term deterrent effect” (Brophy-Baermann & Conybeare). In fact, when looking at isolated instances, the study finds that the only events which cause the deterrence value to “deviate from the natural rate” are unexpected ones (Brophy-Baermann & Conybeare). This means that if terrorists *do not* expect the response they receive from the Israeli government (whether high retaliation or low), it will cause longer lasting deterrence rates. In conclusion, Brophy-Baermann and Conybeare’s study on retaliation against terrorism signifies that both strong and expected deterrence are “largely irrelevant in the long term.” Perhaps intuitively backwards, governments are actually better suited not revealing their intentions through proclamations and instead considering negotiation as a more impactful alternative.

Further disproving the idea that present negotiation may lead to more requests of concessions in the future, the bargaining model of war shows that newcomers often would not have their demands met by governments anyways. Through the rules of the bargaining model of war, we know that each player on the bargaining model has the objective to “obtain as many benefits as possible while conserving resources” (Filson & Werner 821). Assuming this to be true, existing powerful terrorist groups would have leverage with the government, thus prompting the government to offer concessions of negotiation. The government would perceive the the cost of going to war with these powerful groups as more costly than granting the concessions. Quackenbush, however, argues that newcomer organizations “just about always start out as very small, weak collections of disaffected people with little influence” (Quackenbush 420). These weaker groups, therefore, would find themselves in a different

situation entirely. If the government feels as though it will obtain more benefits and conserve more resources through the dismissal or repression of the weaker specified terrorist organization, it will do so instead of partaking in negotiations. Even with the option of negotiation available and pursued by the terrorist organization, the government might see more potential benefits through removing the group all together. And, as we know from Atkinson, Sandler, and Tschirhart's study, the "terrorists" are not ignorant to this reality. Thus, not many will wish to engage "in that extremely risky bluff" unless they can somehow reach the status of a powerful terrorist organization without being repressed first. (Quackenbush 424). In conclusion, "it is unlikely many groups will pretend to be terrorists when doing so might get them some concessions but also might get them killed" (Quackenbush 424).

Therefore, the deterrence argument simply does not hold up. Through Brophy-Baermann and Conybeare's analysis on Israeli hard retaliation strategies, it is shown that hard retaliation has no worthwhile deterrence effect. In fact, only unexpected government responses are able to modify the deterrence value. Through Atkinson, Sandler, and Tschirhart's study on terrorism and bargaining, it is shown that rational terrorists are aware and influenced by their probability of success. Weak rational newcomers will not be inspired by past negotiations to threaten future terror, understanding the potential implications of doing so. Governments therefore should keep the pathway of negotiation open, relegating whether it is indeed the desirable option on a case-by-case basis through the bargaining model.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, nations in the modern world must alter their strategy on terrorism in light of its increasing prevalence and lethality. Due in part to the massive differentiation between one

terrorist group to another, nations must rid themselves of proclamations of no negotiation. As shown by Lapan and Sandler, proclamation can actually lead to higher rates of violence as opposed to deterring it. Governments should also apply terrorist groups on a case-by-case basis to the bargaining line. The irrational true believers will continue to commit terror and be guided by the same behavior as they would have previously. However, through the bargaining line, the government can assess whether negotiation, dismissal, or repression is the best path in any given situation involving a reluctant terrorist group. If the government deems the cost of the potential terror attack to be greater than that of giving concessions, it will choose to negotiate. If it deems the costs of the potential terror attack to be lower than that of giving concessions, it will not. Finally, governments should not refuse to negotiate out of fear of losing credible deterrence. Through the study done by Brophy-Baermann and Conybeare, governments can see that hard, predictable retaliation has very little to no deterrence value. If the government wishes to increase its deterrence it should, perhaps counterintuitively, open up the possibility of negotiation as opposed to threatening retaliation.

If these steps towards more flexible engagement policies are taken, governments will experience the additional side effect of an increased understanding of their terrorist adversaries. According to Dr. Jubin Goodarzi, increased levels of engagement with the violent actors themselves will allow governments to “better understand the societal underpinnings which spur violence in the first place” (Goodarzi). Further, we know through the bargaining model of war that the level of uncertainty is lowered as new information is revealed (Filson & Werner). Thus, governments with more flexible engagement policies may have the opportunity while negotiating to see the underlying problems which the drove the group to make such demands in the first place. Sometimes these problems are indivisible and the government has no possibility of

correcting them. However, through “opening the doors to negotiation, whether it works with every group or not, the government has the opportunity (and the increased level of information) to make that call” (Goodarzi). If done correctly, governments will gain the capacity to stop terrorism at its roots by addressing the issues that drove people to it in the first place.

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