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## **The science of fighting terrorism : the relation between terrorist actor type and counterterrorism effectiveness**

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## **Intermediate conclusion I: how to fight revolutionary terrorism**

Having applied the research design outlined in chapter 1 to the two cases in this cluster, one may ask if there indications that the counterterrorism principles have worked out similarly against both groups. For both cases it has been examined which counterterrorism principles have been applied and what effects they had. We should now be able to tell whether there are any similarities between the two cases. Unfortunately, as only a small number of counterterrorism principles have been applied in both cases, the case studies do not provide much evidence that counterterrorism principles have similar effects when applied against groups that resemble the Weather Underground and the RAF. At the same time, the evidence does not allow for the opposite conclusion either. As different counterterrorism principles were applied against the two groups, there is simply little material for comparison. If we would have to answer the research subquestion whether counterterrorism principles have similar effects when applied against similar terrorist groups or movements, the answer would be that, given the differences in counterterrorism approaches used by both states, we simply do not know.

But although this cluster is of limited use in ascertaining whether there is a relation between counterterrorism effectiveness and terrorist actor type, it does vindicate certain counterterrorism principles. One of the things that this cluster does show, is that violations of the counterterrorism principles 'restraint in the use of force' and 'rule of law' can indeed be counterproductive in the fight against groups that have significant popular support. Both the RAF and the Weather Underground grew out of mass protest movements, and when they were still connected to those milieus, repressive measures were easily explained by the group's constituency as dictatorial. Mass arrests, liquidation of radicals, and other crude measures turned the protest movements in both countries further against the state, and increased their willingness to support or even join the RAF or the Weather Underground. Furthermore, they contributed to the radicalisation of members of the terrorist groups. Clear examples are the shootings of Benno Ohnesorg and Rudi Dutschke in West Germany

and Mark Clark and Fred Hampton in the US. The deaths of these men gave the RAF and the Weather Underground the idea that they were up against a brutal and ruthless enemy and convinced both groups further of the legitimacy and necessity of violence.

A second interesting finding pertains to the way in which both groups were distracted from their political goals as a result of law enforcement pressure. The dynamics were different, but in both cases, the police scored a political success that had little to do with any operational success. In the case of the Weather Underground, the group members had to put all their time and effort into staying out of the hands of the law, which left them unable to bring a political message across. Very few Weathermen were arrested after the activities had been moved underground, but in return for the hard-won organisational security, the group effectively sacrificed its political impact. Operationally successful terrorist attacks by the Weather Underground did occur, but they failed to spark the revolution that the Weathermen hoped would take place as a result of their 'propaganda by the deed'. In the case of the RAF, the group failed politically because it put its own interests before those of their constituency. Liberating incarcerated group members and avenging fallen comrades took precedence over actions that could convince the group's support base that the RAF was truly fighting for the proletariat. The cruelty and self-centredness that the group displayed in these attacks estranged many potential supporters. Like the Weather Underground, the RAF was at times operationally successful in the sense that it managed to carry out attacks and get away with it, but it was no longer a political force to be reckoned with. It had become a mere nuisance, not a serious challenger to state power.