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

Issue Date: 2015-11-18

The science of fighting terrorism

The relation between terrorist actor type and counterterrorism effectiveness

1. The cases of the Weather Underground and the Red Army Faction show that strategic success of repressive counterterrorism instruments can be achieved in the absence of operational success.
2. The pacification of the Provisional IRA is often cited as a success of an accommodating approach to conflict resolution, but should rather be seen as a success of the application of more repressive tools: the group's acceptance of the Good Friday Agreement was largely the result of a long series of defeats at the hands of the British security forces.
3. The counterterrorism measures that were applied against the British as well as the Dutch jihadist movement had very similar effects.
4. Contrary to what is often believed, decentralised terrorist actors are as vulnerable to infiltration as more hierarchically structured ones.
5. The phenomenon of Western foreign fighters in Syria is a logical continuation of the jihadist movement, whose prime concern has always been the liberation of the 'Muslim lands'.
6. The field of terrorism and counterterrorism studies suffers from an excess of single or double case studies.
7. The term 'terrorism' certainly has a pejorative undertone, but can nevertheless be used to identify a distinct form of political violence, regardless of whether we morally approve of its use.
8. The democracy 'fighting with one hand on its back' is a myth: democracies do not necessarily fight terrorism in more restrained ways than autocracies.
9. The use of drones, as well as the imagery and the jargon involved, constitutes a sanitisation of violence that serves the purpose of making the US counterterrorism campaign more acceptable to the general public.