



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **The interaction between counterterrorism and terrorist groups**

Duijvesteijn, I.G.B.M.; Gofas, A.

### **Citation**

Duijvesteijn, I. G. B. M. (2018). The interaction between counterterrorism and terrorist groups. In A. Gofas (Ed.), *Terrorism and European Security Governance* (pp. 6-9). Florence: European University Institute. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3453879>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licensed under Article 25fa Copyright Act/Law \(Amendment Taverne\)](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3453879>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

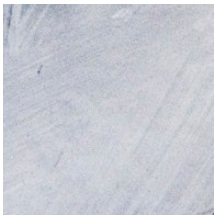
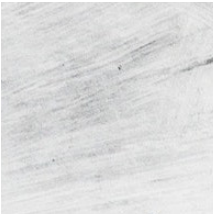
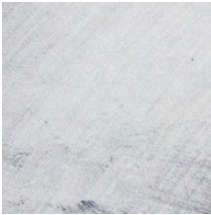
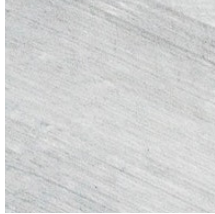


European  
University  
Institute

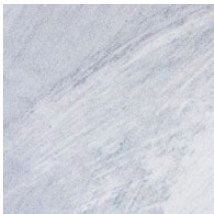
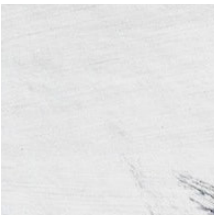
ROBERT  
SCHUMAN  
CENTRE FOR  
ADVANCED  
STUDIES



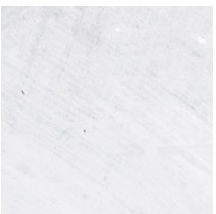
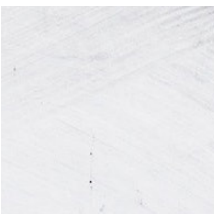
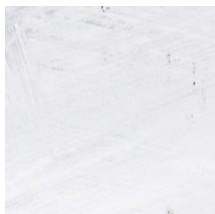
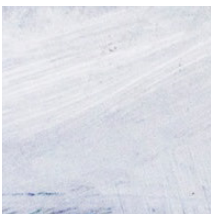
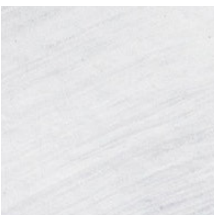
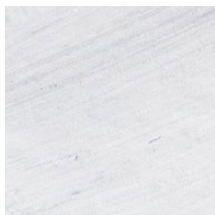
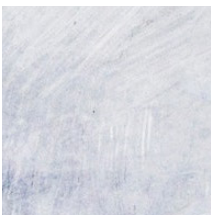
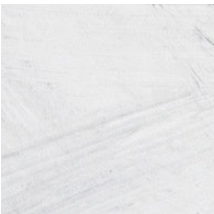
 GLOBAL  
GOVERNANCE  
Programme



# TERRORISM AND EUROPEAN SECURITY GOVERNANCE



Edited by Andreas Gofas



This work has been published by the European University Institute,  
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

© European University Institute 2018

Editorial matter and selection © Andreas Gofas 2018

Chapters © authors individually 2018

doi:10.2870/132977

ISBN:978-92-9084-698-7

QM-01-18-563-EN-N

This text may be downloaded only for personal research purposes. Any additional reproduction for other purposes, whether in hard copies or electronically, requires the consent of the author(s), editor(s). If cited or quoted, reference should be made to the full name of the author(s), editor(s), the title, the year and the publisher

Views expressed in this publication reflect the opinion of individual authors and not those of the European University Institute.



This publication is based on a June 2017 workshop that was sponsored by NATO's Public Diplomacy Division. Views expressed in it reflect the opinion of individual authors and should not be construed as representing an official position of NATO.

## **Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies**

The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, created in 1992 and currently directed by Professor Brigid Laffan, aims to develop inter-disciplinary and comparative research on the major issues facing the process of European integration, European societies and Europe's place in 21st century global politics.

The Centre is home to a large post-doctoral programme and hosts major research programmes, projects and data sets, in addition to a range of working groups and ad hoc initiatives. The research agenda is organised around a set of core themes and is continuously evolving, reflecting the changing agenda of European integration, the expanding membership of the European Union, developments in Europe's neighbourhood and the wider world.

For more information: <http://eui.eu/rscas>

## **The Global Governance Programme**

The Global Governance Programme is one of the flagship programmes of the Robert Schuman Centre. It is made of a community of outstanding professors and scholars, produce high quality research and engage with the world of practice through policy dialogue. Established and early career scholars research write on and discuss issues of global governance within and beyond academia, focusing on four broad and interdisciplinary areas: Global Economics, Europe in the World, Cultural Pluralism and Global Citizenship.

The Programme also aims to contribute to the fostering of present and future generations of policy and decision makers through its executive training programme: the Academy of Global Governance, where theory and 'real world' experience meet and where leading academics, top-level officials, heads of international organisations and senior executives discuss on topical issues relating to global governance.

For more information: <http://globalgovernanceprogramme.eui.eu>

The European University Institute and the Robert Schuman Centre are not responsible for the opinions expressed by the author(s).



# TERRORISM AND EUROPEAN SECURITY GOVERNANCE

Edited by  
[Andreas Gofas](#)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1  
Andreas Gofas

## UNDERSTANDING THE ENEMY: ANALYTICAL CHALLENGES

1.Understanding Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century 3  
Richard English

2.The Interaction between Counterterrorism and Terrorist Groups 6  
Isabelle Duyvesteyn

3.The New Crime-Terror Nexus in Europe 10  
Rajan Basra & Peter R. Neumann

4.Jihadist Strategies on the Internet 17  
Antonis Samouris

## CONTAINING THE THREAT: GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

5.The Post 9/11 UK Counterterrorism Strategy 23  
Jonathan Evans

6.Terrorism and the NATO Contribution 27  
Jamie Shea

7.NATO Broods on Counter Terrorism 32  
Juliette Bird

8.The Recent Development of Europol:  
An Alternative for a European FBI?! 36  
Wil van Gemert

# THE INTERACTION BETWEEN COUNTERTERRORISM AND TERRORIST GROUPS

Isabelle Duyvesteyn

*Professor of International Studies and Global History, Leiden University*

What is the link between the Peruvian Shining Path, Hezbollah and Al Qaeda? The answer is that despite the very different locations, backgrounds and approaches of these groups, all feature on international lists of designated terrorist organisations.<sup>1</sup> This contribution will argue that grouping these divergent violent actors together under the rubric of terrorism is a problem. It is problematic not only because it muddles the definition and conceptualisation of terrorism unnecessarily through the inclusion of a panoply of different organisations with different strategic approaches but, importantly, the practice is also problematic because the diverging strategies the groups employ have important consequences and constraints on the counter-measures that states can enact. A conceptual distinction between terrorist and insurgent strategies is crucial. Political, organisational and relational distinctions separate these two distinct approaches. Making the distinction is important, first, in order to understand the widespread charge that there is too much of a Western focus in the terrorism debate to the detriment of non-Western experiences (see also the contribution by Richard

1 For the US list, see <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>. For the EU list, see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009E0468&qid=1412596355797&from=EN>.

English in this volume). Second, the distinction has significant consequences when it comes to designing appropriate answers to counter these activities. This contribution will proceed by first outlining the differences between the two strategic approaches and subsequently thinking through the consequences for counterterrorism (CT).

## Terrorism versus Insurgency<sup>2</sup>

In contemporary discourse, it appears that any non-state armed group using violence is terrorist. This simplification of reality obfuscates the fact that many of these non-state groups have a choice between several different approaches to challenge their opponents, which are usually states. Terrorism is but one of these methods. It can be distinguished from insurgency and conventional war, its two main alternatives, by its distinctive political, organisational and relational features. Politically, terrorism is an indirect approach; organisationally, it thrives on secrecy but possesses limited material and human capacity; and relationally, it is often distant from the population rather than operating in its midst. Insurgents are not simply terrorists with territory but have a distinct dynamic of their own. Their political strategy is geared towards putting direct pressure on the government or governments; this is combined with an active organisation of the population in an alternative governance relationship or a shadow state; and relationally, insurgents operate among the population on whose behalf they (claim to) fight. Conventional war is relatively rare among non-state groups since it requires large-scale material and fighting capacities that are usually the prerogative of states. The Tamil Tigers are one of the few groups that have managed to fight conventionally but this was part of a final phase of insurgency warfare. Politically,

2 For a previous version of some of these arguments, see Isabelle Duyvesteyn and Mario Fumerton 2009. 'Insurgency and Terrorism: Is there a difference?' in: Caroline Holmqvist-Jonsater and Christopher Coker (eds.), *The Character of War in the 21st Century* London: Routledge, pp. 27-41.

conventional war entails a direct translation of military goals into political ends; organisationally, it requires direct large-scale consistent engagement with the population, possibly in the shape of a social contract; relationally, there are very close ties between the group and the population. Since conventional war is rare, the elaboration of these arguments below will focus on the distinction between terrorism and insurgency.

Terrorism and insurgency both embrace a political goal. The road to achieve it, however, diverges. Contrary to some recent scholarship, this contribution will argue that terrorism is a strategic enterprise and not simply a tactic or a method. The reason is that there is a means-ends relationship, which features prominently in almost all attempts to understand this social phenomenon. If we deny the political dimension and focus solely on terrorism as a tactic, part of the picture becomes unbalanced. To be fair, within the strategic approach of insurgency, terrorism does occur as a tactic. In that case it remains linked to the means-ends relationship that is central to insurgency as well.

The essence of the strategic approach of terrorism is to provoke responses from the opponent that will bring the stated goals closer. A terrorist strategy in and of itself is rarely able to directly translate its violent activities into political effects commensurate with these stated goals. More often, terrorist actions create an effect that indirectly contributes to their political objective. Violence can be seen, in the perspective of the terrorist, as propaganda by deed, a concept that has roots in the nineteenth century. Alternatively, insurgency is a more direct strategic approach that links its political goals to a military operational plan. Conceptualised originally by Mao, and amended and ameliorated by subsequent generations of thinkers and practitioners of revolutionary war, insurgency is focused on a political objective which can be reached directly by offering an alternative political model: alternative governance for a population in a specific territory.<sup>3</sup>

3 Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn. 2012. *The*

Organisational differences take shape via the routes of recruitment and the structures of groups. Terrorists rely on secrecy, recruit on a small scale and are highly selective in this recruitment process. The survival of the group depends on the maintenance of secrecy and a guarded life in the underground, and less than careful selection runs the risk of detection and group demise. The small-scale organisational structure that these groups embrace falls short in cases where they manage to attract significant popular support. If the group fails to accommodate this support, it is bound to decline. This is where insurgents hold stronger cards. Their organisational structure is able to welcome recruits, in fact it actively seeks to welcome them. These individuals will build the support base on which the core structure of the group relies. The process of recruitment is less selective and therefore leads to a risk of denunciation of the insurgent group.

The social relations between the group and the wider population form a last distinctive feature of the two strategic approaches. For collective political violence to be effective and successful, popular support and legitimacy are necessary. Active or passive support for terrorist organisations is often more an 'aspiration by way of inspiration' than a clear tactical or operational goal.<sup>4</sup> For insurgents, without popular support they cannot exist. Human and material capabilities are necessary for the group to function and only the population, whose support they must foremost seek, can provide this.

These distinctive features have consequences for the counter-measures that can be employed. What works against a group that uses violence as a call to arms, is secretive and is small-scale is fundamentally different from what works against a group that aspires to gain control over a population by way of offering governance and a social contract. Both terrorist and insurgent strategies are characterised by extreme flexibility and adaptability. Non-state

.....  
*Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*. London: Taylor & Francis.

4 Duyvesteyn and Mario Fumerton, 'Insurgency and Terrorism: Is there a difference?' p. 38.



actor groups can shift between the strategies of terrorism and insurgency and have been known to do so in many instances. Over the course of their existence, the groups mentioned at the start of this contribution have embraced both insurgency and terrorism. The Shining Path in Peru put a Maoist insurgency strategy into practice that involved territorial control and alternative forms of governance. Since the apprehension of their leader, Abimael Guzman, in the early 1990s, the group has switched to a more terrorist approach. Hezbollah has interestingly moved from being a terrorist group, to an insurgency strategy focused on safeguarding the rights of the Shi'ite population in Lebanon, to becoming a full participant in the official politics of the Lebanese state. Al Qaeda and its many incarnations since its inception in the 1980s used the territory of the Afghan state to launch its worldwide struggle, employed a terrorist strategy, but according to many experts is now merely a network or even an ideology or inspiration.

## Counter-terrorism and Substitution

The flexibility and adaptability of these violent non-state actors to shift between approaches lead to increased complexity for states attempting to counter them. These transformations are given shape prominently in a substitution or 'waterbed' effect. There are four forms of substitution: tactics, targets, territory and time – the T4 of substitution.<sup>5</sup> Terrorists shift between tactics; when one tactic becomes more difficult, they shift to other more easily executable tactics.<sup>6</sup> For example, airplane hijacking in the early 1970s was extremely popular

<sup>5</sup> Bruno S. Frey, 2004. *Dealing with Terrorism: Stick or Carrot?* London: Edward Elgar.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Enders and Todd Sanders, 2000. "Is Transnational Terrorism Becoming More Threatening?; A Time-Series Investigation." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44 (3): 307-332. Walter Enders, 2004. "What do we Know about the Substitution Effect in Transnational Terrorism?" In Andrew Silke (ed.) *Research on Terrorism: Trends, Achievements & Failures*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 119-137.

among terrorist groups. These hijackings were not intended to kill people but to attract attention and were highly effective. With the institution of safety measures such as metal detectors and luggage checks at airports, the practice almost disappeared but conventional bombings rose sharply. Furthermore, there is also evidence that non-state armed groups copy successful tactics from others. One example is the spread of suicide terrorism.

Similar to shifts in tactics, targeting is subject to frequent change. When targets become less accessible, a shift to others is commonly observable. An example here are the embassy fortifications that became standard practice after the embassy bombings in East Africa in 1998. The bombing of these diplomatic representations dwindled but targeting alternative American targets increased.

Substitution in the shape of territory is visible in spillover effects or conscious choices to carry out attacks in previously untouched areas. One example is Hezbollah, which has purportedly carried out attacks in Europe and South America in its struggle against Israel.

The last substitution effect is postponement in time. This is very difficult to prove. When did an organisation decide to wait until a later moment or more conducive period of time for its attacks? Still, it forms part of the range of options available to terrorist and insurgent groups.

The four forms of substitution and their examples point to the close links between substitution and counter-measures. A very strong cause and effect relationship is visible. Counter-measures affect choices of tactics, targets, territory and time and therefore form a prominent witness to their effect. This also shows that the resolution of one problem tends to create another. What are the consequences that deserve further attention?

## Consequences for CT

These short reflections lead to several pressing issues. Counter-measures cause shifts in strategic approaches and substitution. What can work against groups working with a terrorist approach, however, is not the same as what can be effective against insurgents. On the basis of previous experiences, to counter-balance the attractiveness of insurgent claims the provision of a working social contract can be effective. The flip side of this argument has recently been observed in the areas under the control of Islamic State for example.<sup>7</sup> The alternative offer of a credible social contract in the absence of alternatives contributed to its hold over populations and territory. A Syrian and Iraqi state alternative was absent. However, countering terrorist groups by way of a viable counter-measure does not make much sense. A related issue here is whether the distinction between terrorism and insurgency does not in fact denote a distinction between the Western and non-Western world. It is a fact that territory cannot easily be contested against a well-functioning Westphalian state and it would require significant capability. Does this make insurgency exclusively a problem of the developing world and does it rule out strategic terrorism? Some more scholarly attention investigating this would be welcome.

Second, if terrorism is a problem of the Western world with little or no chance of rival territorial control, except possibly for foreign sanctuary, how can we think of counter-measures? Where do the weaknesses lie in the approach of terrorism? The organisational structure can be targeted and the violent activities curbed, but again such groups are highly adaptable. The political challenge that terrorism poses is where exploitable weaknesses potentially reside.

When counter-terrorism measures feed substitution behaviour, the valid question is that of the extent to which we have shifted the problem rather than resolved it. Different tactics, other targets or a shift in territory have morphed the challenge posed by these violent groups. What then is our definition of success? Is a shift a form of success? These questions require some sort of answer if we are to break the cycle of measure and counter-measure repeating itself over and over again.

7 .....  
Craig Whiteside, 2016. 'The Islamic State and the Return of Revolutionary Warfare.' *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 27 (5), pp. 743-776.

