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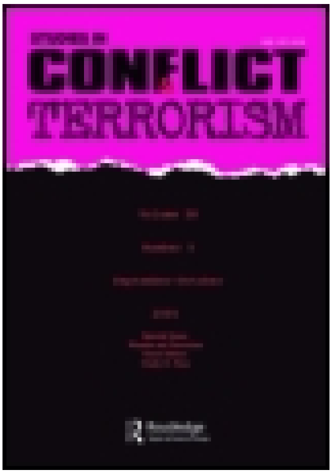

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Edward Newman [a]

[a] Peace and Governance Programme , United Nations University , Tokyo, Japan

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Exploring the "Root Causes" of Terrorism

EDWARD NEWMAN

Peace and Governance Programme
United Nations University
Tokyo, Japan

This article attempts to clarify what is meant by "root causes" and considers if their analysis helps to explain and describe how, where, and why terrorism occurs. In attempting to explore—but not definitively resolve—these challenges, the article will attempt to delineate "root causes" into qualitative and quantitative variables that can be empirically tested in relation to contemporary terrorist activity. In so doing, it considers the relative merits of different methodologies for approaching "root causes." The article concludes that indirect and underlying sources of conflict are significant to understanding specific incidents of terrorism and certain categories of terrorism; that "root causes" are less helpful in describing and explaining terrorism as a general phenomenon; and that root causes are of analytical use only *in conjunction with precipitant factors.*

The idea of "root causes" of terrorism suggests that there is some form of causal relationship between underlying social, economic, political, and demographic conditions and terrorist activity. According to this proposition, certain underlying conditions and grievances help to explain how, where, and why terrorism occurs. As a corollary, a failure to understand the linkages between these underlying conditions and terrorism may result in inadequate counterterrorist policies. Moreover, according to this argument, an approach to counterterrorism that ignores this relationship may even exacerbate the underlying conditions that give rise to terrorism and in turn intensify the terrorist threat.

The idea of root cases has some intuitive appeal. However, it is highly problematic from a methodological perspective and scholars have been reluctant to seriously consider or apply it. In fact, most scholars tend to dismiss it without any form of testing. Similarly, members of the policy community have little faith in exploring root causes as a guide to explaining, understanding, predicting, and preventing terrorism. Some analysts are reluctant to consider root causes because they refuse to accept that there may be any legitimate causes or grievances behind terrorism. Strangely, few scholars have sought to apply a methodologically rigorous approach to the issue of root causes (Mani 2004, 219–220). Some have, however, correctly identified the methodological limitations of such an endeavor (Stern 2003, xxx).

This article will attempt to clarify what is meant by root causes of terrorism and what root causes are. On this basis it considers if this analytical approach helps to explain and

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Address correspondence to Edward Newman, Director of Studies on Conflict and Security, Peace and Governance Programme, United Nations University, 53-70 Jigumae 5-chome, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8925, Japan. E-mail: newman@hq.unu.edu

describe how, where, and why terrorism occurs. It will consider if it is possible to isolate and quantify root causes and present them as explanatory variables for the existence and intensity of terrorist activity. In particular, it will consider if it is methodologically possible to clarify the relationship between underlying social conditions and terrorism, and consider root causes as causal factors with either general or case-specific explanatory relevance.

In attempting to explore—but not definitively answer—these questions, the article will attempt to delineate root causes into qualitative and quantitative variables that can be empirically tested in relation to contemporary terrorist activity. In so doing, it considers the relative merits of different methodologies for approaching root causes.

In conclusion the article suggests that indirect and underlying sources of conflict are significant to understanding specific incidence of terrorism and certain categories of terrorism; that root causes are less helpful in describing and explaining terrorism as a general phenomenon; and that root causes are of analytical use *only* in conjunction with precipitant factors. Despite the tentative nature of these conclusions, the article suggests that these findings have implications for counterterrorism and further academic scholarship.

The Root Causes Argument

The basic concept of the root causes of terrorism is that certain conditions provide a social environment and widespread grievances that, when combined with certain precipitant factors, result in the emergence of terrorist organizations and terrorist acts. These conditions—such as poverty, demographic factors, social inequality and exclusion, dispossession, and political grievances—can be either permissive or direct. The idea suggests, for example, that "human insecurity, broadly understood, provides the enabling conditions for terrorism to flourish" (O'Neill 2002b, 20). Stated formally, Ross (1993, 318) has argued that "the higher the number and intensity of structural causes of terrorism (the independent variables), the higher the number of terrorist acts perpetrated by any particular terrorist or terrorist organization (the dependent variables)."

These propositions raise many difficult questions. What do analysts mean by root causes; what is the relationship between root causes and specific acts of terrorism? Why, as Homer-Dixon (2001) observes, do "some commentators object so vociferously to any discussion of terrorism's root causes"? What is the relationship between root causes and patterns of terrorism? Can this relationship be systematically explained; can a theory be developed that incorporates root causes and that has general explanatory value as to where and why terrorism occurs? Do root cause explanations have greater utility in explaining certain types of terrorism? If root causes are key determinants of support for terrorist groups, for the emergence of terrorist groups, and for the occurrence of terrorist activities, what are the implications for the war on terror and contemporary counterterrorism policy?

There is intuitive support for the idea that certain background conditions and grievances have a role to play in explaining and describing terrorism. Steinberg (2002, 7), for example, observes that "in the long run, terrorist networks will reconstitute themselves unless we make it harder for them to recruit new members and sustain their activities. This means helping to build stable, prosperous, democratic societies in countries that have seen too little of all three, particularly in the Arab world, Africa, and parts of Central, South and Southeast Asia." Many other analysts agree that containment is not sufficient and that addressing the underlying causes of terrorism is necessary (Simon 2003; Elnur 2003; Ehrlich and Liu 2002; Marshall 2002; Ross 1993; Chomsky 2003; Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2003; Madriz 2001). Even analysts who strongly recommend enhancing and prioritizing security of the homeland in the war on terror concede that it is essential to address the background conditions that result in support for terrorism (Campbell and Flourney 2001; Howard 2002; Betts 2002; Lake 2004).

These ideas are not without controversy. Some people are clearly uncomfortable with the idea of root causes because it disturbs the "moral clarity" that they believe is necessary to confront terrorism (Bennett 2002, 67–69). They wish to deny that any form of terrorism could be associated with a legitimate political cause, because they wish to deny that terrorist groups have any legitimacy whatsoever. From another angle, a political scientist has claimed that root causes are: "misleading as an explanation for terrorism or a prescription for dealing with it" (Jervis 2002). Yet few people would argue that background conditions are totally irrelevant to terrorism; what is more difficult is to identify a convincing causal relationship that has general explanatory range. Is it really possible to talk in terms of "the basic conditions that generate terrorist acts"? (Ehrlich and Liu 2002) or "enabling conditions of terrorism" (O'Neill 2002a, 7)? Can a methodological case can be presented for seriously considering root causes to explain and describe terrorism, either in specific cases or in general?

Although the language of root causes is used or alluded to a great deal, there has not been significant progress in systematically disaggregating what root causes might be. Generally, root causes refers to a very broad range of issues that cannot be contained within a single social category: for example, factors such as poverty, social inequality and exclusion, dispossession and political grievance, oppression and human rights abuse, population explosion, and demographical factors. If terrorism—both the emergence of a terrorist organization or a terrorist act—is considered the dependent variable, then root causes form the background independent variables. A range of precipitant factors—such as leadership, funding, state sponsorship, political upheaval—form essential intervening variables (catalysts). This is a controversial proposition because it suggests that root causes are an essential part of the equation. It also suggests that precipitant factors are also essential.

Root causes can be further broken down into permissive structural factors and direct underlying grievances. Structural factors create an enabling environment that, alone, is of no explanatory value but when in conjunction with other factors, may have explanatory value. Underlying grievances are more than merely structural: they represent tangible political issues.

Permissive Structural Factors

First, poverty is often presented as a basic underlying root cause of terrorism. According to this proposition: "Poverty of resources, combined with poverty of prospects, choices and respect, help enable terrorism to thrive" (O'Neill 2002a, 9). Poverty can breed resentment and desperation and support for political extremism. In addition, as well as providing grounds for grievance, poverty often means underdevelopment, poor or weak governance, or failed states, something that has been referred to as "back holes" within which fanaticism can emerge (Ranstorp 2003, 11). Poor societies often make for weak states, which may not have the capacity to prevent terrorist activity or recruitment. They also lack the capacity for the types of education program that might reduce support for terrorism. It has thus been argued that "states that lack legitimacy and control over the economy and other traditional levers of power provide the space and oxygen for terrorists groups to flourish" (O'Neill 2002b, 20). It is in such environments—such as Afghanistan, Sudan, Pakistan, Somalia, Georgia, Yemen, and Algeria—that local or transnational terrorist organizations can find a base of operations, a vacuum of authority, and a source of support. It is also worth noting that sudden economic and social downturns have been associated with patterns of extremism, for example in southeast Asia (Rabasa 2003, 11).

Klaus Topfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), argued (2001) although whilst not sole causes, poverty and environmental degradation can "fan the flames of hate and ignite a belief that terrorism is the only solution to a community's or nation's ills. When people are denied access to clean water, soil, and air to meet their basic human needs, we see the rise of poverty, ill-health and a sense of hopelessness. Desperate people can resort to desperate solutions."

Yet, as is often pointed out, the active supporters of most terrorist organizations are not poor or uneducated. One study analyzes attitudes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip toward terrorist attacks against Israeli targets, and found that support for violent attacks does not decrease among those with higher education and higher living standards, concluding that neither poverty nor education has a direct, causal impact on terrorism (Krueger and Maleckova, 2003). This suggests that the link between terrorism and social conditions is complex: "modern terrorist organizations require management and technological skills found in the upper and middle classes yet they also need foot-soldiers who overwhelmingly hale from the poor and down-trodden" (O'Neill 2002a, 8).

Second, demographic factors have also been presented as key background conditions. Significant demographic conditions include rapid population growth, and especially a burgeoning of young males; and uneven population shifts across different ethnic groups (Ross 1993, 320–322; Sidel and Levy 2003; Simon 2003; Ehrlich and Liu 2002*)*. Homer-Dixon (2001) describes, in some regions of the world, "a demographic explosion that has produced a huge bulge of urbanized, unemployed young men." A related demographic condition that has been associated with terrorism involves migration and shifts in the ethnic, religious, and social balance of a society. Stern (2003, 63–106), for example, has described how population changes and migration in regions of Indonesia contributed to the emergence of terrorist violence.

Third, linked to this, urbanization has been correlated with terrorist activity (Brennan-Galvin 2002; Massey 1996; Ross 1993, 321). Urbanization—especially in conjunction with unemployment and poverty—can generate a disaffected population, which enables terrorist recruitment and organization. According to Massey (1996) "Urbanization, rising income inequality, and increasing class segregation have produced a geographic concentration of affluence and poverty throughout the world, creating a radical change in the geographic basis of human society. As the density of poverty rises in the environment of the world's poor so will their exposure to crime, disease, violence, and family disruption." Homer-Dixon (2001) brings environmental factors into play, "especially shortages of cropland and fresh water—that have crippled farming in the countryside and forced immense numbers of people into squalid urban slums, where they are easy fodder for fanatics."

Direct Root Causes

Fourth, related to absolute poverty, exclusion and social inequality can be sources of conflict when combined with other factors, and also terrorism (Ehrlich and Liu 2002). In particular, poverty and inequality, especially when affecting distinct national, religious, cultural, and/or ethnic groups—so called horizontal inequalities—is a breeding ground for conflict (Klugman 1999). A combination of social tensions and heterogeneity can result in social upheaval, extremist politics, and civil war.

Fifth, dispossession, human rights abuse, alienation, and humiliation are sources of conflict that are also linked to terrorism. Demonstrable factors in the perpetration of terrorist violence are a "burning sense of injustice and dispossession" (Hoffman 1998, 75) and a "desperation and uncontrollable rage" (Stern 2003, 32). Physical dispossession and the perception of a denial of rightful resources or territory is a common thread to certain types of terrorism. A similar perception can be harbored among groups that believe that a particular political or social order denies their rights, be they social, linguistic, cultural, or ideological. This is reflected in ethno-nationalist causes such as Basque separatism and in conflicts in Sri Lanka, Chechnya, and Kashmir.

O'Neill (2002a, 11) suggests that "Terrorist leaders seek support from people who feel humiliated, threatened, aggrieved and without help" and that "Terrorism is thus often linked to a sense of injustice and impotence rather than sheer poverty" (O'Neill 2002b, 22). Gunaratna (2002, 34) agrees that "In conditions of poor governance, rampant corruption, and human right abuses, terrorism flourishes." This is a common theme: Rajaee (2002, 35), with reference to 9/11 but with general relevance, argues that the "roots lie in the politics of exclusion and the emergence of a triad of dispossession, empowerment, and an ideology that justifies violence." Indeed, Osama bin Laden himself referred to the humiliation and degradation of the Islamic world (Rajaee 2002, 35; CNN 1997; ABC News 1998; Bergen 2001, 17–22), and this is clearly a perception that is widely shared.

Nasra Hassan (2001, 37) interviewed nearly two hundred and fifty people involved in the most militant Palestinian groups: "none of them were uneducated, desperately poor, simple-minded, or depressed. Many were middle class and, unless they were fugitives, held paying jobs." But more than half were refugees, and many expressed feelings of humiliation, indignity, dispossession, and trauma. In 1985 the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution that found the underlying causes of terrorism to include "colonialism, racism and situations involving mass and flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and those involving alien occupation" (United Nations General Assembly 1985, para. 9). Interviews with suicide bombers concur that feelings of humiliation, revenge, and despair are important explanatory factors in certain types of terrorism (Levy-Barzilai 2002, 2003; Hassan 2001).

Sixth, a clash of values, especially associated with ideological or "religious" terrorism, has been posited as a root cause of certain types of terrorism. As a result of globalization, value systems have increasingly come into contact and in some cases into tension, creating the perception or fear of cultural imperialism and hegemony. This is not necessarily a religious clash, but a cultural clash. Ajami (2001) has argued that "Islam didn't produce Mohamed Atta. He was born of his country's struggle to reconcile modernity with tradition." Similarly, Barber (2001, xii) has described the "collision between the forces of disintegral tribalism and reactionary fundamentalism" with "the forces of integrative modernization and aggressive economic and cultural globalization . . . brutally exacerbated by the dialectical interdependence of these two seemingly oppositional sets of forces." For Barber (2001, xiv), so-called Islamic fundamentalist terrorists are in fact "people who detest modernity—the secular, scientific, rational, and commercial civilization created by the Enlightenment as it is defined by both its virtues (freedom, democracy, tolerance, and diversity) and its vices (inequality, hegemony, cultural imperialism, and materialism)." So, "globalization's current architecture breeds anarchy, nihilism, and violence" (Barber 2001, xvi). Scruton (2002, 126–28, 157–161) also sees Islamic "terrorism" as an expression of the rejection of the modern state and secularism, and a collision between globalization and Islamic revivalism in crisis.

Thus, it is not poverty per se that causes terrorism. Modernity and globalization "means the loss of sovereignty, together with large-scale social, economic, and aesthetic disruption. It also means an invasion of images that evoke outrage and disgust as much as envy in the hearts of those who are exposed to them" (Scruton 2002, 132). Rabasa (2003, 9) also notes the "radical change that the Muslim world has undergone in modern times" and the intrusion of Western culture and globalization. This clash of values argument often includes the structure and nature of U.S. power and foreign policy as a explanatory cause, especially when it relates to U.S. "intervention" and support for "corrupt" governments (Baregu 2002; Bergen 2001, 19–20; Hinde 2002; Stern 2003) .

Chua (2003) relates this phenomenon beyond Islamic extremism. She argues that globalization, free markets, and the spread of democracy have resulted in economic instability, volatile social situations, and have incited economic devastation, ethnic hatred and genocidal violence throughout the developing world. So, for Chua and others, the market is not neutral: it is destructive and brings fundamental, violent change. Mousseau (2002, 5–6) agrees that an important underlying cause of terrorism is "the deeply embedded antimarket rage brought on by the forces of globalization." But where is the causal relationship, and is this of use to the analyst?

Implications of Root Causes

For Homer-Dixon (2001), these root causes come together and it is worth quoting him at length:

> In the Middle East and South Asia, they include a demographic explosion that has produced a huge bulge of urbanized, unemployed young men—the most dangerous social group of all, according to many social scientists. They also include environmental stresses—especially shortages of cropland and fresh water—that have crippled farming in the countryside and forced immense numbers of people into squalid urban slums, where they are easy fodder for fanatics. The impact of these factors is compounded by chronic conflict (including the Israeli/Palestinian and Afghan conflicts) that have shattered economies and created vast refugee camps; by the region's corrupt, incompetent, and undemocratic governments; and by an international political and economic system that's more concerned about Realpolitik, oil supply, and the interests of global finance than about the well-being of the region's human beings.

An underlying grievance, in the context of a permissive enabling environment, gives rise to the emergence of a terrorist organization and terrorist activity as a result of precipitant factors and catalytic forces. The structural factors and underlying grievances provide a source of terrorist recruits, an ideology, and operational base. The precipitant factors provide a political agenda, opportunity, leadership, and organization.

If root causes are important for understanding and explaining terrorism, there are a number of policy implications. Underlying conditions and grievances will generate individuals and groups willing to perpetrate terrorist actions, even if counterterrorist efforts are able to interdict some groups and individuals. Mani (2004, 237) suggests that "Effective prevention that will reduce the terrorist threat will require more than effective domestic and international police and military measures, improved information sharing, and other such collaboration. Effective prevention will necessitate structural changes within the global system." Therefore, this suggests that efforts should be directed at addressing underlying grievances and enabling factors in order to undermine support for terrorism in societies at risk: investing in sustainable development, poverty reduction, progressive education, improved governance, and strengthening the rule of law, for example. In terms of the "clash of values" argument, this line of reasoning would suggest that it is essential to restrain the social impact of unfettered globalization (Scruton 2002, 157–161).

These conditions provide oxygen for terrorist organizations and this holds implications for policies that seek to ameliorate terrorism: "Attacking the poverty that breeds despair, alienation and grievances will help limit the size of the next generation of terrorist foot soldiers" (O'Neill 2002a, 10). Wolfensohn (2002) argues that "Our common goal must be to eradicate poverty, to promote inclusion and social justice, to bring the marginalized into the mainstream of the global economy and society." As a corollary, "the use of force may be appropriate in certain cases but it is also problematic since its use can create new resentments, grievances and even the next generation of terrorists" (O'Neill 2002b, 20). Homer-Dixon (2001) wrote that "Until we understand the sources of terrorism and do something about them, we can arm ourselves to the teeth, rampage across the planet with our militaries, suspend many of our civil liberties, and still not protect ourselves from this menace." Other analysts share this view (Rogers 2004, 187).

Variables: How to Apply and Test Root Causes

Intuitively, it is clear that these root causes—permissive or direct—do not apply in many cases of terrorism, either historically or in the contemporary world. Terrorist organizations have emerged from and operated within stable, democratic, and developed states: in North America and Europe, for example. Moreover, analysts correctly point out that leaders of terrorist organizations are generally not personally deprived or uneducated (Laqueur 1999, 36; Hudson 1999, 10, 75, 195; Hoffman 2002, 33; Bergen 2001, 28–29; Arnold 1988, x; Sofsky 2003, 182–183; Scruton 2002, 131; Krueger and Maleckova 2003; O'Neill 2002a, 7; Betts 2002, 16; Gunaratna 2002, 34). Although this is indeed true, the same authors will often accept that there are very important exceptions to this: Hamas, for example, "thrives on the misery and frustration" (Hudson 1999, 183). The common observation that terrorists are rarely personally deprived or uneducated, and therefore root causes are meaningless, misses an obvious point: terrorists (just like all people) surely do not act only according to their own experience or background. They perceive that they are responding to social conditions, irrespective of their own personal situation. Moreover, even if the generalization is true (and most terrorist leaders are not uneducated or personally deprived), the background of terrorist leadership is only one variable; support for terrorism is also important, and social conditions can be significant in this respect.

Nevertheless, there are obviously problems in applying or testing root causes. The first methodological problem concerns the concept of terrorism itself. Laqueur (1999, 21) has stated that generalizations with regard to terrorism "are almost always misleading." This has led to the academic study of terrorism being described as "descriptively rich but analytically barren" (Ross 1993, 326). Indeed, to use one term—"terrorism"—to describe a very wide array of phenomena is very problematic from an analytical perspective. The broadest definition of terrorism encapsulates a range of factors: the deliberate and illegal use of violence with no regard for—or deliberately targeting—civilians; a political objective; and the intention to exert influence and change on third parties. This covers such a wide range of phenomena that it would appear to defy systematic analysis using the tools of social science. In line with this, the idea of root causes has greater utility with reference to certain types of terrorism and less so with others.

A further complication is that the concept of root causes does not imply direct cause and effect. Phenomena such as poverty, social inequality, dispossession, denial of human rights, or self-determination clearly do not necessarily result in terrorism. The vast majority of the millions of people who suffer from these grievances do not become terrorists. Most societies where these root causes exist do not give rise to terrorism. This implies that root causes do not form a satisfactory or sufficient explanation for the occurrence of terrorism. Other variables must be identified to provide a satisfactory explanation that has general relevance; therefore, root causes can never form the whole picture. Still, in considering those societies from which terrorist organizations *have* emerged, are so-called root causes a common feature? A number of approaches that might help to explicate these themes follows, focusing on the society as unit of analysis, and terrorist organizations and activities as the dependent variable.

Testing Root Causes as Explanatory Variables

There are many possible ways to apply and test the root causes approach to terrorism, and far too many to include in this short article. This section will present an illustrative demonstration of different methodologies for testing root causes. It is not meant to produce definitive conclusions or propositions about the validity of root causes, but rather to explore different methodologies—and specifically to consider the relative strengths and weaknesses of different methodologies.

Large Sample Analysis: Where Terrorist Incidents Occur

One method is to evaluate the frequency of terrorist incidents and attempt to judge if there is any relationship between frequency and the socioeconomic conditions in the societies in which terrorism occurs. First, 1,045 terrorist incidents carried out in 79 countries between 1996 and 2003 that constitute "Significant Terrorist Incidents" according to the U.S. State Department are examined (2004). A significant terrorist incident is so judged "if it results in loss of life or serious injury to persons, abduction or kidnapping of persons, major property damage, and/or is an act or attempted act that could reasonably be expected to create the conditions noted." The emphasis in this analytical approach is upon societies in which terrorist incidents occur, without making a distinction as to the origin of the terrorist organization. Clearly, terrorist operations are carried out both by citizens of the states in which the acts occur, and also by foreign perpetrators, although this data does not make such a distinction and so only a simple evaluation can be made of frequency of terrorist activity in specific states, without determining the source. This is the limitation of this particular test, that would, for example, have difficulty explaining the terrorist attack of 9/11 through root causes, because this attack was perpetrated by individuals and groups that emerged from different societies from where the terrorism occurred. (Although it is worth noting that a significant proportion of terrorism is indeed domestic in the sense of being perpetrated in the states of which the perpetrators are citizens.) Moreover, this test measures only frequency of terrorist incidents, and not severity, loss of life, and so on. Obviously, the use of this sample will not satisfy some analysts for this reason, but to repeat: the exercise is to explore different methodologies rather than produce conclusive results.

Is there a clear correlation between frequency of terrorist incidents and absolute deprivation in the societies in which the incidents occur? The indicator of social and economic welfare employed here is the Human Development Index (HDI), used by the

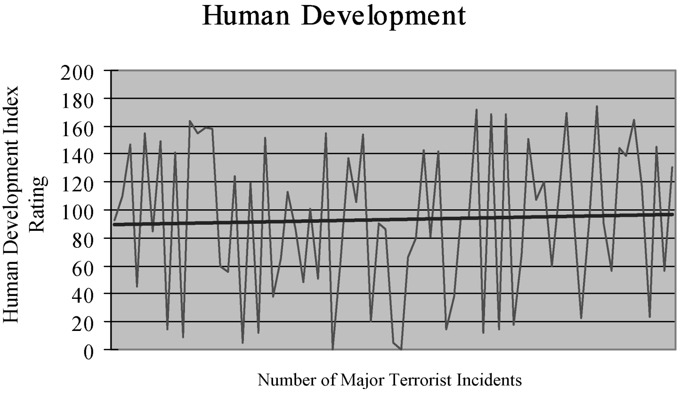

Figure 1. Human development level of societies in which terrorist incidents occur based on a sample of 1,045 terrorist incidents. **Note**: The HDI measures countries' achievements in three aspects of human development: longevity, knowledge, and standard of living. One is the best ranking. *Source*: United Nations Human Development Index 1996, 2003. The HDI rating used here is an average of the 1996 and 2003 figures. The horizontal axis indicates 79 societies in which a total of 1,045 "Significant Terrorist Incidents" occurred between 1996 and 2003 (U.S. State Department 2004), arranged according to the frequency with which terrorist incidents occurred. The fluctuating line indicates the Human Development rating of each of these societies. Therefore, societies in which higher frequencies of terrorism occur are not necessarily lower in terms of standards of human development. The straight line represents a trend line relating HDI values to frequency of terrorism.

United Nations Development Programme. The HDI is a summary measure of human development. It measures the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of human development: standard of living, measured on a per capita basis; life expectancy at birth; and knowledge, measured by the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary gross enrollment ratio.

In terms of the frequency and absolute number of terrorist incidents in different countries between 1996 and 2003, there is no clear correlation between absolute human welfare—measured in terms of the Human Development Index—and incidence of terrorism (see Figure 1). That is to say, societies with the lowest ranking of human development do not necessarily experience the highest frequency of terrorism, and societies with the highest ranking of human development do not necessarily experience the lowest frequency of terrorism. However, when a trend line is added, a slight increase in the frequency of terrorist incidents is seen as the human development level decreases (but as the frequency of incidents indicated in this data is nonlinear in terms of the increments in which increases occur, this slight trend does not form a significant correlation). In addition, of the 20 countries (out of a total of 79 countries) that experience the highest frequency of terrorist incident in the period under study, 18 were medium or low human development countries in 2003, and only 2—Israel and Greece—were clearly in the high human development category. Yet this is hardly a convincing pattern in favor of root causes; of the 20 countries that experienced the lowest frequency of terrorism during this period, only five countries are in the high human development category: Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, and Poland. In fact the broad range of 79 countries displays a nonlinear relationship between terrorist frequency and human development, as the graph indicates. Absolute indicators of economic well-being do not, therefore, appear to be a satisfactory explanatory variable for frequency of terrorism.

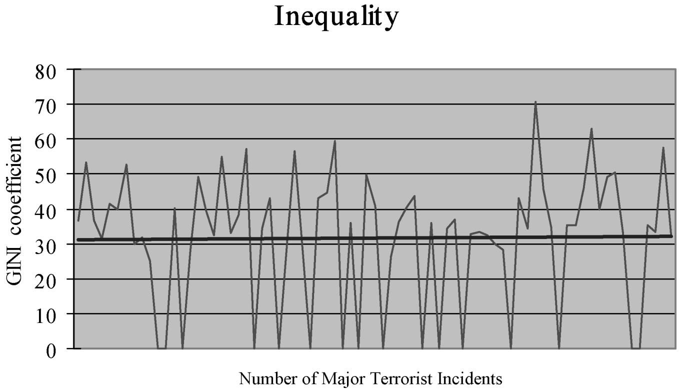

Figure 2. Level of economic inequality of societies in which terrorist incidents occur based on a sample of 1,045 terrorist incidents. **Note**: The GINI coefficient is a measure of income inequality, where 0 is perfectly equal and 100 is perfectly unequal. *Source*: World Bank.

Analyzing the terrorist frequency sample with reference to indicators of social and economic inequality also does not produce a clear pattern. In terms of the frequency and absolute number of terrorist incidents in different countries between 1996 and 2003, there is no clear correlation between levels of inequality—measured in terms of the World Bank's Gini co-efficiency index—and incidence of terrorism (see Figure 2). That is to say, societies with the highest levels of social and economic inequality do not necessarily experience the highest frequency of terrorism. The trend line does suggest a very slight increase in frequency with an increase in social inequality, but again, this is not significant enough to constitute a correlation.

In terms of population density, political rights, and civil liberties, the results are similarly not particularly satisfying if one is looking for a simple correlation. According to the sample used and applying established indicators, frequency of terrorist incidents does not markedly increase as political rights and civil liberties are restricted (see Figures 3 and 4). In terms of populations density, which is often a function of urbanization and something

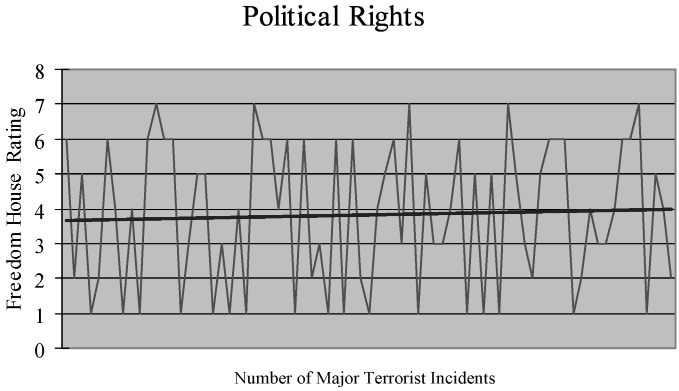

Figure 3. Political rights of societies in which terrorist incidents occur based on a sample of 1,045 terrorist incidents. **Note**: Freedom House gives a rating of 1 to countries with the best record of political rights, and a rating of 7 to countries with the worst record of political rights. *Source*: Freedom House 2003.

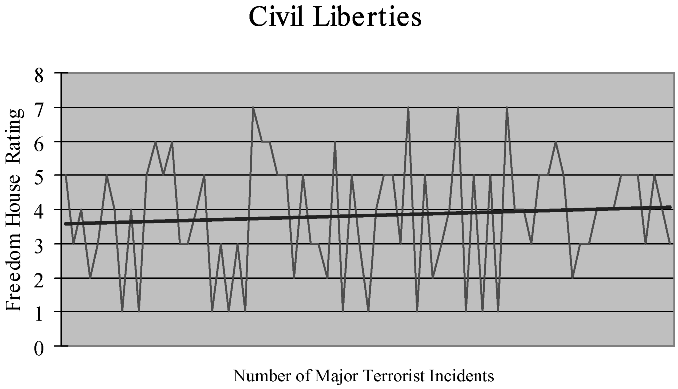

Figure 4. Civil liberties of societies in which terrorist incidents occur based on a sample of 1,045 terrorist incidents. **Note**: Freedom House gives a rating of 1 to countries with the best civil liberties record, and a rating of 7 to countries with the worst civil liberties record. *Source*: Freedom House 2003.

that is frequently associated with terrorism, when applying simple large sample analysis and tracking the basic trend, the frequency of terrorist incidents in fact declines in relation to higher population density (Figure 5). Urbanization suggests no clear correlation at all (Figure 6) and, surprisingly, neither does age of population (Figure 7).

It would seem that an analysis of a wide range of samples is not conducive to generalized conclusions regarding the relationship between social and demographic indicators and terrorism. The reason for this is that there are a host of variables that account for the frequency of terrorist incidents, and indicators such as deprivation, political rights, and population density are only a small part of the larger picture. Yet these negative findings are not the end of the story because of the methodological limitations observed here, and most obviously that terrorist organizations do not always emerge from the societies in which they conduct terrorist acts. Therefore, examining social indicators in the societies in which terrorism occurs is of limited validity. Nevertheless, this is not to say that social factors are not important in combination with other factors, and by analyzing specific terrorist organizations and activities—thus approaching the question from a different methodological

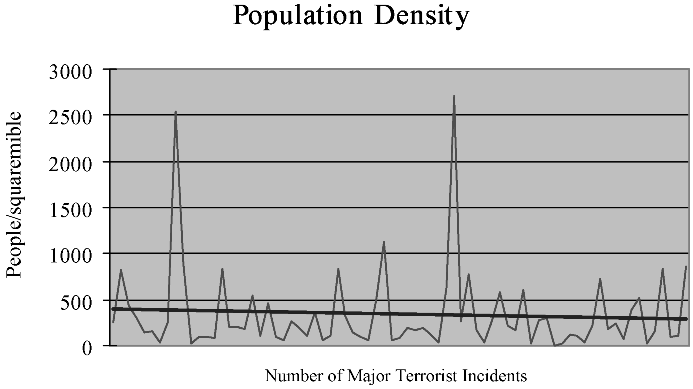

Figure 5. Population density of societies in which terrorist incidents occur based on a sample of 1,045 terrorist incidents. *Source*: Population Reference Bureau 2005.

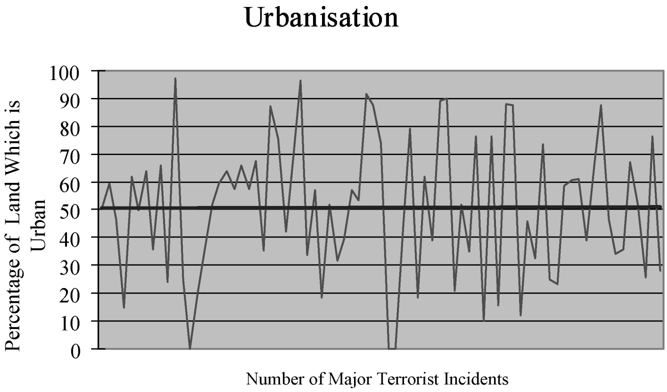

Figure 6. Urbanization of societies in which terrorist incidents occur based on a sample of 1,045 terrorist incidents. *Source*: United Nations Population Division: World Urbanization Prospects 2003.

angle—it may be easier to identify how different factors interact and correlate in order to identify patterns of terrorism.

Focusing on Terrorist Organizations

There are thousands of organizations around the world described as "terrorist," and such a focus can never be comprehensive. The choice of which organizations to choose is rather arbitrary, at best, and politically sensitive given the controversy over defining terrorism. It is accepted wisdom that governments as well as nongovernmental organizations are not objective in terms of the organizations they label as "terrorist." Thus, taking as a sample any single established list is problematic from a methodological perspective. Nevertheless, for illustrative purposes, this study will use as a sample the combined lists of the U.S. State Department "Foreign Terrorist Organizations" and the European Union list of designated terrorist entities both within the EU and worldwide (U.S. State Department 2004) (Table 1). The combined lists are neither comprehensive or politically impartial. Yet

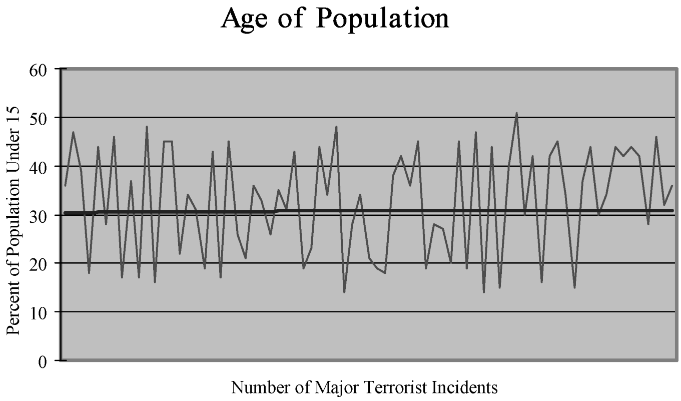

Figure 7. Percentage of population under 15 as an indication of median age of societies in which terrorist incidents occur based on a sample of 1,045 terrorist incidents. *Source*: Population Reference Bureau 2005.

Table 1
Sample

1. Abu Nidal Organization (ANO)
2. Abu Sayyaf Group
3. Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade
4. Al-Takfir and Al-Hijra
5. Ansar al-Islam
6. Antifascist Resistance Groups First of October (Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primaero de Octubre)
7. Anti Imperialist Territorial Units (Nuclei Territoriali Antiimperialist)
8. Armed Islamic Group (GIA)
9. Armed Units for Communism (Nuclei Armati per il Comunismo)
10. Artisans' Cooperative Fire and Similar—Occasionally Spectacular (Cooperativa Artigiana Fuoco ed Affini—Occasionalmente Spettacolare)
11. Asbat al-Ansar
12. Aum Shinrikyo
13. Babbar Khalsa
14. Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)
15. Cell Against Capital, Prison, Prison Warders and Prison Cells (CCCCC—Cellula Contro Capitale, Carcere i suoi Carcerieri e le sue Celle)
16. Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA)
17. Continuity Irish Republican Army
18. Gama'a al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group)
19. Great Islamic Eastern Warriors Front
20. HAMAS (Islamic Resistance Movement)
21. Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM)
22. Hizbullah (Party of God)
23. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development
24. International Sikh Youth Foundation (ISYF)
25. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)
26. Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) (Army of Mohammed)
27. Jemaah Islamiya organization (JI)
28. al-Jihad (Egyptian Islamic Jihad)
29. Kahane Chai (Kach)
30. Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a.k.a. Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK)
31. Lashkar-e Tayyiba, a.k.a. Lashkar e Tayyaba (LT or LET) (Army of the Righteous)
32. Lashkar i Jhangvi
33. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
34. Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF)
35. Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MEK or MKO)
36. National Liberation Army (ELN)
37. Orange Volunteers (OV)
38. Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)
39. Palestine Liberation Front (PLF)
40. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)
41. PFLP-General Command (PFLP-GC)

(continued on next page)

Table 1
Sample *(Continued)*

42. Al Qaeda
43. Real IRA
44. Red Brigades for the Construction of the Fighting Communist Party (Brigate Rosse per la Costruzione del Partito Comunista Combattente)
45. Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)
46. Red Hand Defenders (RHD)
47. Revolutionary Nuclei (Epanastatiki Pirines) (formerly ELA)
48. Revolutionary Organization 17 November
49. Revolutionary People's Liberation Army/Front/Party (DHKP/C)
50. Revolutionary Popular Struggle (Epanastatikos Laikos Agon (ELA)
51. Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC)
52. Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso, SL)
53. Stichting Al Aqsa, a.k.a. Stinchting Al Aqsa Nederland, a.k.a., Al Aqsa Nederland
54. Twentieth of July Brigade (Brigata XX Luglio)
55. Ulster Defence Association/Ulster Freedom Fighters (UDA/UFF)
56. United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC)
57. Unit for Revolutionary Proletarian Initiative (Nucleo di Iniziativa Proletaria Rivoluzionaria)
58. Units for Proletarian Initiative (Nuclei di Iniziativa Proletaria)
59. Unofficial Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.—Federazione Anarchica Informale)

they are significant in terms of identifying important contemporary terrorist organizations and activities. Again, this sample is used for illustrative purposes to demonstrate a particular approach to the exploration of root causes.

The questions that can be applied for this analysis include the following:

1. What are the nature and aims of terrorist organizations: are they related to underlying grievances and "rational" political objectives?
2. What is the background of terrorist leadership: educated, affluent, elitist, or personally deprived, uneducated, alienated?
3. What is the background of key supporters and operatives: educated, affluent, elitist, or personally deprived, uneducated, alienated?
4. What is the social base of the terrorist organizations: in a developing country which reflects structural background conditions, underlying grievances and precipitant factors?

Taking the group in Table 1 as a single sample does not deliver a satisfactory result in terms of identifying a clear pattern of root cases for explaining and describing terrorism. The obvious reason for this is that terrorist organizations vary hugely in their background, methods, composition, objectives, and social base. However, approaching the root causes problem by focusing on terrorist organizations does bring one closer to identifying how root causes analysis may be helpful in explaining certain *types* of terrorism. Most obviously, ideological (mainly European-based Marxian organizations) groups display less evidence of root cause factors within their leadership and core support, and emerge in societies that do not display markedly high levels of deprivation or inequality. These include the Antifascist

Resistance Groups First of October; Anti-Imperialist Territorial Units; Artisans Cooperative Fire and Similar—Occasionally Spectacular; Armed Units for Communism; Cell Against Capital, Prison, Prison Warders and Prison Cells; Red Brigades for the Construction of the Fighting Communist Party; Twentieth of July Brigade; Unit for Revolutionary Proletarian Initiative; Units for Proletarian Initiative; Unofficial Anarchist Federation; Revolutionary Organization 17 November; Revolutionary Popular Struggle; and Aum Shinrikyo.

Demographic factors and population growth—particularly among young males—and urbanization would appear also not to characterize societies that gave rise to these types of terrorist organizations. Perceptions of dispossession, human rights abuse, alienation, and humiliation are more subjective, and so is the clash of values concept, but no authoritative analysis asserts that societies in which these types of organizations emerge are afflicted by such problems. Thus, however much such ideological groups claim to derive a mandate from background social conditions, it can be concluded that no such reality objectively exists.

In terms of Ideological-Marxian groups in developing countries—such as the National Liberation Army, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, and Shining Path—root cause analysis appears to have slightly greater utility. These groups tend to draw on dispossessed and deprived communities for support among the ranks, often in societies that display pronounced levels of absolute poverty and social inequality, including "horizontal inequalities" across different ethnic or national groups. A perception of human rights abuse is also common to societies in which most such groups arise.

European-based nationalist groups—such as the Continuity Irish Republican Army, Real IRA, Ulster Defence Association, Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)—do not exist in environments of acute deprivation of inequality, but do emerge out of situation with perceived inequality and humiliation.

Ethno-nationalist groups in the developing world—including the International Sikh Youth Foundation, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Kurdistan Workers' Party, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Palestine Liberation Front, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Hamas, and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam—appear to reflect certain root cause dynamics. These groups tend to draw on dispossessed and deprived communities for support among the ranks, often in societies that display pronounced levels of social and economic inequality across ethic/national identities. A "clash of values" phenomenon is also apparent in many such scenarios, where ethno-nationalist groups perceive that they are engaged in a struggle against an incompatible value system. Clearly it is often the sense of material deprivation, in addition to perceptions of cultural, religious or ethnic discrimination, which mobilizes minorities to support secessionist campaigns.

Islamist and Islamist insurgency groups—which can also be ethno-nationalist—also reflect certain root cause dynamics, although their objectives are more diverse. Such groups include Abu Nidal Organization, Abu Sayyaf Group, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Al-Takfir and Al-Hijra, Ansar al-Islam, and Al Qaeda. Sometimes such groups have a specific local objective, such as causing domestic upheaval. For example, the Armed Islamic Group aims to overthrow the secular Algerian regime and replace it with an Islamic state. Others have more global and nebulous objectives, such as Gama'a al-Islamiyya and Al Qaeda. They seek to defend "Islamic interests" worldwide, to resist foreign "intervention" and occupation in the Islamic world, to overthrow "corrupt" governments in Islamic countries, promote a global resurgence of an orthodox form of Islam, and resist alien secular forces and values. Both types of Islamist organization exploit certain root cause dynamics. Generally, as is often pointed out, the leadership of such groups is educated and even affluent. However, their support group and lower ranking operatives are more likely to reflect certain conditions:

dispossessed or marginalized, the perceived victim of humiliation, denied opportunities, and suffering from a lack of education opportunities. They also reflect the root cause demographic profile: young males in urban concentrations are a characteristic of the support base of most of these groups. Clearly, in addition, such groups feed on a perception of an irreconcilable "clash of values."

By focusing on a broad range of terrorist organizations it can again be seen that so-called root causes do not provide a satisfying analysis for explaining and describing (let alone predicting) the broad phenomenon of "terrorism." Approaching the question from the perspective of different terrorist organizations does not present a satisfying case for root causes analysis if the objective is to generate propositions with general explanatory value. Some correlations are apparent with respect to specific types, particularly ethno-nationalist,

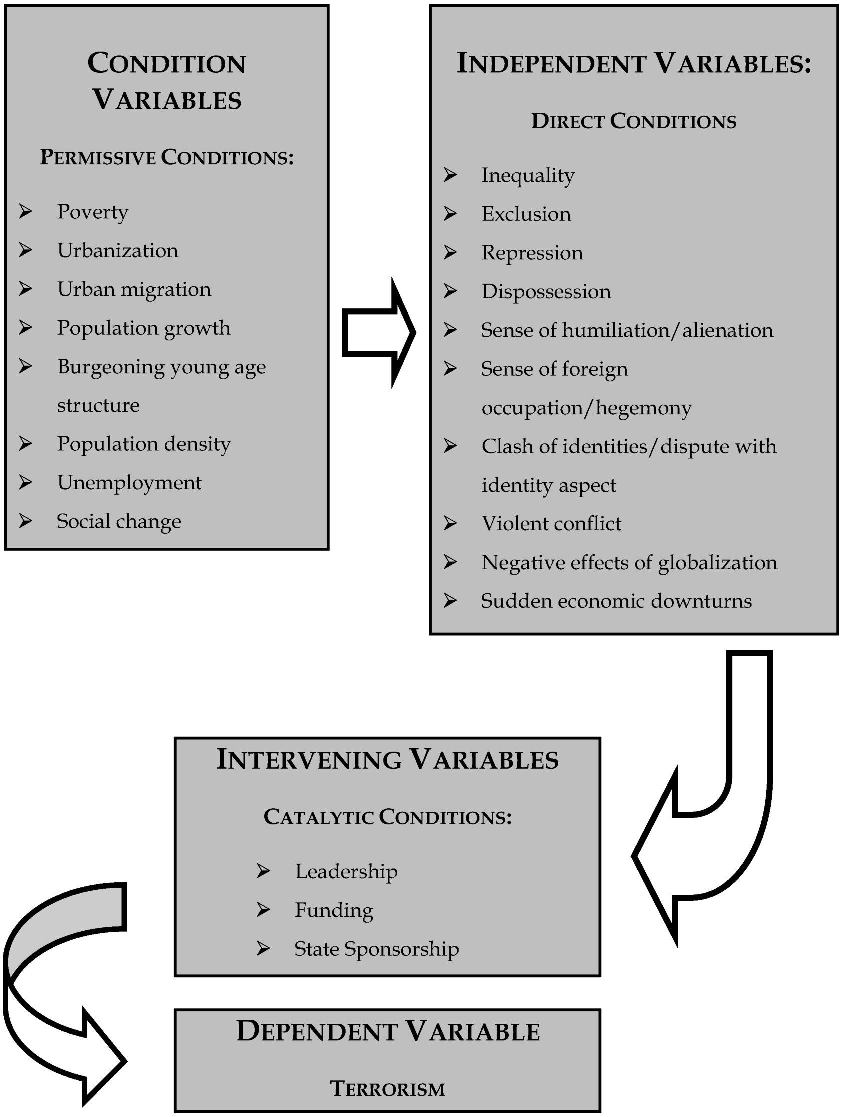
CONDITION VARIABLES
PERMISSIVE CONDITIONS:
➢ Poverty
➢ Urbanization
➢ Urban migration
➢ Population growth
➢ Burgeoning young age structure
➢ Population density
➢ Unemployment
➢ Social change
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES:
DIRECT CONDITIONS
➢ Inequality
➢ Exclusion
➢ Repression
➢ Dispossession
➢ Sense of humiliation/alienation
➢ Sense of foreign occupation/hegemony
➢ Clash of identities/dispute with identity aspect
➢ Violent conflict
➢ Negative effects of globalization
➢ Sudden economic downturns
INTERVENING VARIABLES
CATALYTIC CONDITIONS:
➢ Leadership
➢ Funding
➢ State Sponsorship
DEPENDENT VARIABLE
TERRORISM

Figure 8. Interaction among "root" and direct causes.

secessionist, and Islamist terrorism, which do show a correlation to the main types of root causes (see Figure 8). But these patterns are confined to certain *types* of terrorist organizations.

Focusing on the Societies from Which Terrorist Organizations Emerge and Are Based: Deadly Terrorism

Where a focus on terrorist organizations *can* offer useful insights is when a sub-sample is identified and analyzed. Although the full combined list of U.S. State Department "Foreign Terrorist Organizations" and the European Union list of designated terrorist entities does not generate useful patterns, a smaller subset that focuses on the most deadly terrorist organizations—measured in terms of the number of fatalities resulting from their activities—does indicate something interesting. In this analysis, the numbers of fatalities attributed to specific terrorist organizations, and the society from which the terrorist organizations emerge and are based, are drawn from the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) Terrorism Knowledge Base (MIPT 2005). Of the full combined list of 59, the number of terrorist organizations whose activities have resulted in fatalities totals 39, ranging from a single death to over 3,000 deaths (in the case of Al Qaeda). Analyzing social and economic indicators in the societies in which these organizations emerged and are based suggests some rough correlations. The most deadly terrorist organizations—those whose activities have resulted in the greatest numbers of fatalities—are clustered in societies with lower Human Development Index ratings. Indeed, the deadliest terrorist organizations have generally emerged and are based in societies with lower Human Development levels (Figure 9). In terms of the political rights of societies—as judged by Freedom House—and the emergence of terrorist organizations there is no clear or radical correlation. However, the deadliest terrorist groups are certainly more prevalent in societies with poor records of political rights (Figure 10). The same can be said of civil liberties (Figure 11): the deadliest terrorist organizations are more likely to emerge

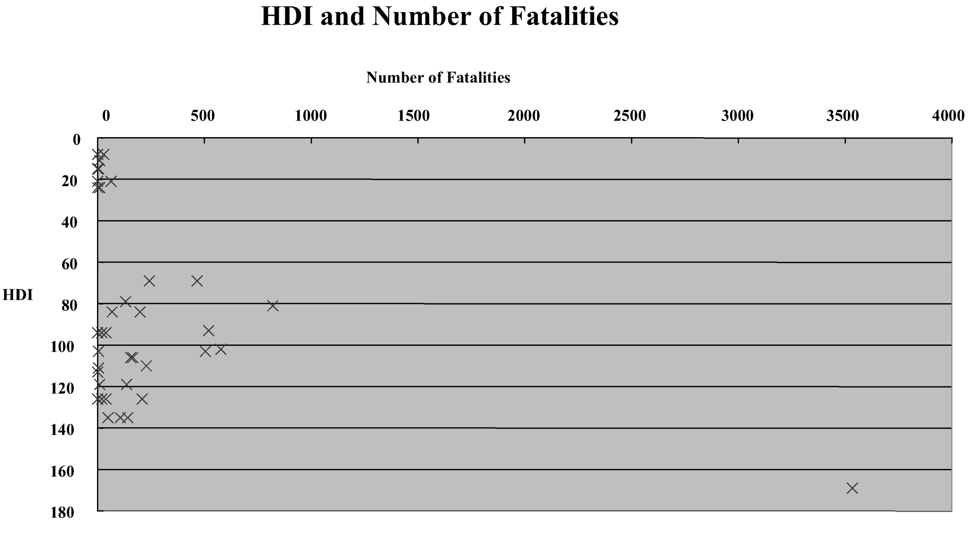

Figure 9. The Human Development level of societies from which deadly terrorist organizations have emerged and are based. *Source*: UNDP. Human Development Report 2004.

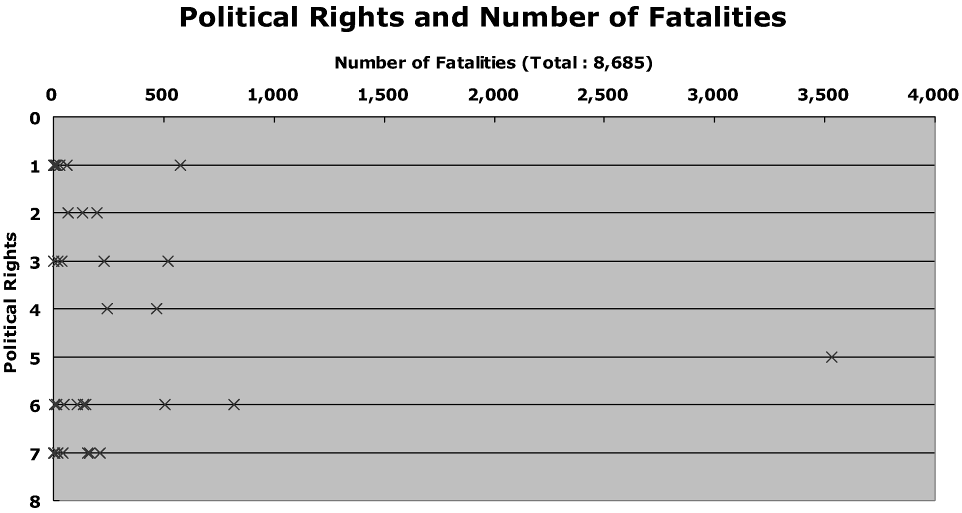

Figure 10. Political Rights of societies from which deadly terrorist organizations have emerged and are based. *Source*: Freedom House. Freedom in the World 2005.

from societies with poorer standards of civil liberties. In terms of demographic factors some interesting results arise that appear to support some of the root causes argument. The deadliest terrorist organizations emerge out of societies with lower median age ranges—thus societies with higher concentrations of "younger" people (Figure 12). However, there is no discernable pattern to relate the percentage of a population living in urban habitation, or population density, to the deadliness of terrorist organizations.

There may be some doubts regarding the methodology: for example, this analysis has assigned each terrorist organization under consideration to a single society from where it emerged, and analyzes a variety of social and economic indicators related to that society.

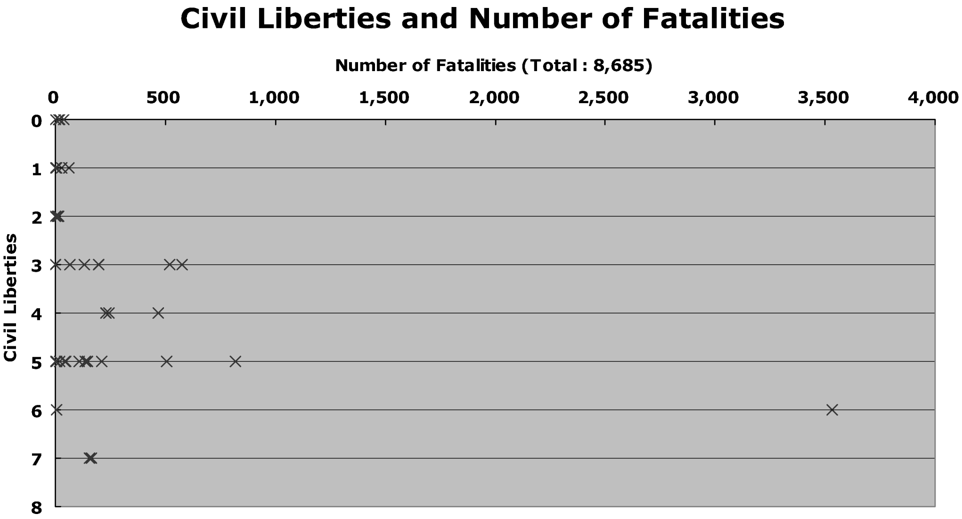

Figure 11. Civil liberties of societies from which deadly terrorist organizations have emerged and are based. *Source*: Freedom House. Freedom in the World 2005.

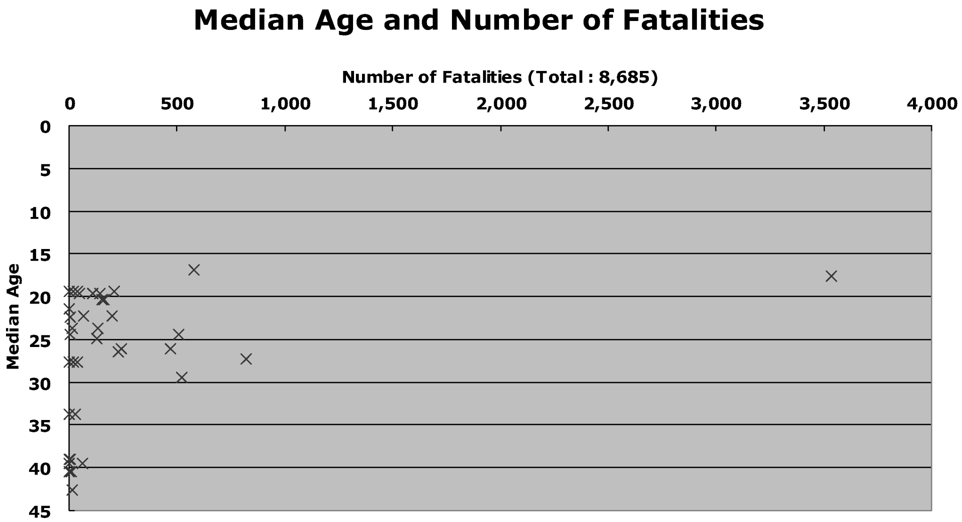

Figure 12. Median Age of societies from which deadly terrorist organizations have emerged and are based. *Source*: CIA. The World Factbook 2005. Median age represents the age that divides a population into two numerically equal groups; that is, half the people are younger than this age and half are older. It is a single index that summarizes the age distribution of a population.

However, in reality this is not always the case; international terrorist organizations cannot always be organically linked to a single society. Nevertheless, a high enough proportion of these terrorist organizations can be clearly associated to a particular society for this analysis to be meaningful. (In addition, in those cases where the situation is less clear—where a terrorist organization emerged from more than one society, for example—the characteristics of these societies are generally similar). However, there are other important limitations. For example, Islamist terrorism within Western Europe has sometimes—and perhaps increasingly—been perpetrated by individuals born and raised in Western societies and with only an ancestral link to developing societies where root cause factors might come into play, and with only the most tenuous link to any established terrorist organization. They may certainly be motivated by perceptions of root causes and grievances in the abstract or in *other* societies, but testing root causes when there is little or no direct link between the terrorist and the social factors that motivate him or her is very problematic. This does not definitively undermine the idea of root causes of terrorism, but it does cast doubt on the idea of a rigorous methodology for analyzing them.

Cases Analysis

The preceding types of analyses have sought to identify correlations between the frequency of terrorist incidents and the deadliness of terrorist groups and certain types of root cause conditions across a range of countries, focusing on the objectives of terrorist organizations and the social environment from which they emerge. These have sought to test the root causes approach by attempting to identify broad patterns. A further, different, type of analysis explores specific cases much more closely, in order to make a judgment concerning the utility of root causes for understanding and explaining terrorism. The value of this type of analysis is that it avoids the obvious generalizations and superficial nature of the statistical approach and demonstrates, in a narrative form, how root causes help to explain the background to terrorism. In other words, it gives substance to the concept of root causes, and demonstrates how root causes relate to other factors in a concrete sense. The downside of this sort of approach—especially when it deals in detail with a small number of cases—is that, although it may present a good argument with reference to a specific example, it does not seek to establish any propositions with general explanatory relevance. To apply this approach, this article will briefly consider the case of terrorism associated with the Palestinian cause.

Terrorist groups associated with Palestine do not share a common objective. Some are nationalist and essentially secular, whereas others embrace religious fundamentalism. Hamas, including its armed wing, is generally regarded as being the most significant fundamentalist Islamic Palestinian movement. Hamas has an extensive social service network—particularly in the occupied territories—and a terrorist wing that carries out suicide bombings in Israel. According to Hamas, "the real nature of the conflict is a civilizational conflict waged between, on the one hand Islamic Civilization with its divinely inspired laws and mission to create on this earth the society of justice and freedom which has been ordained by God; and on the other hand, Western Civilization with its materialistic culture, worship of ethnicity, and denial of God's supremacy" (Hamasonline 2004). Its objective is, principally, "destroying the Zionist entity that occupies Palestine, and establishing Palestine from the sea to the river based on Islamic principles" (Hamasonline 2004).

The support base of Hamas is strongest in the West Bank and Gaza strip territories. The communities are characterized by poverty, and what the World Bank describes as a "backdrop of death, injury, trauma and the loss of livelihoods and hope" (World Bank 2003). Using a poverty line of US$2.1 per day, the World Bank estimated that "21 percent of the Palestinian population were poor on the eve of the intifada, a number that increased to about 60 percent by December 2002. Accounting for population growth, the numbers of the poor have tripled, from 650,000 to 1.9 million. The poor are also getting poorer. In 1998, the average daily consumption of a poor person was equivalent to US$1.47 per day. This has now slipped to US$1.32. More than 75 percent of the population of the Gaza Strip are now poor. The high rate of Palestinian population growth (4.3 percent per annum) is fuelling the growth in poverty. The health status of the Palestinian population has deteriorated measurably. Real per capita food consumption has dropped by up to a quarter when compared to 1998 levels" (World Bank 2003). A 2002 survey found global acute malnutrition (GAM) and protein-calorie malnutrition in 9.3 percent of the children across the West Bank and Gaza (13.3 percent in Gaza and 4.3 percent in the West Bank) (Johns Hopkins University 2002).

The World Bank continues: "The crisis has affected different social groups differently. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable. Of an age to understand the economic hardships that their families face, but generally too young and inexperienced to be able to help much, they are particularly susceptible to trauma and to feelings of powerlessness and rage. . . . Many of these adolescents may find themselves locked into a life-long poverty trap, with poor prospects of escaping it when the economy recovers" (World Bank 2003). In 2002 and 2003 the average population growth in the West Bank and Gaza was 4.2 percent (World Bank 2004). This represents a rapidly burgeoning young age structure, inhabiting densely populated urban areas with sharp levels of unemployment. By the end of 2002, Real Gross National Income (GNI) had shrunk by 38 percent from its 1999 level. Unemployment stood at the end of 2002 at 37 percent of the workforce. With a 13 percent growth in the population of the West Bank and Gaza over the past 3 years, real per capita incomes are now 46 percent lower than in 1999, and poverty—defined as those living for less than US$2.1 dollar per day—afflicts approximately 60 percent of the population (World Bank 2003, x).

For comparison, the general social and economic conditions in Israel are quite distinct. According to the UN Human Development Programme, Israel is ranked at number 22 in the category of "high" human development, with a life expectancy of 79.1 years and an adult literacy rate of 95.3 percent in 2002.

Others have already established that absolute levels of poverty and social deprivation do not alone explain the resort to terrorism of youths in the West Bank and Gaza (Krueger and Maleckova 2003; Hassan 2001). However, although absolute levels of income and social conditions of terrorist leaders and operatives are not markedly low, there is a pattern of humiliation and dispossession among leaders and operatives. The humiliation and anger is compounded by the deprivation and hopelessness among their community and supporters, and it is this mix, grounded in an Islamist faith in martyrdom, that generates a body of recruits willing to engage in terrorist operations. It is not possible to separate this from the social and economic conditions that exist in the West Bank and Gaza, and which afflict the communities and families of terrorist supporters and many of the recruits themselves. It is a testament to the deprivation and the influence of extremists that Hamas provides a network of social and educational services in deprived areas, which in part accounts for its popularity and reach. Without the deprivation, the political conflict would surely still exist. However, the deprivation breeds hopelessness and provides a pretext for extremist organizations to penetrate deep into the community. In turn, extremist groups manipulate the sense of exclusion, repression, humiliation, and dispossession and make contact with those who are willing to sacrifice themselves or otherwise engage in terrorist activity. The leadership of the terrorist group draws on its funding—and occasionally external state sponsorship—and tactical experience in order to complete the equation. Specific precipitant incidents help to explain the timing of terrorist activities, such as policies to extend Israeli settlements, assassinations conducted by Israeli forces, the use of violence by Israeli groups and individuals such as Baruch Goldstein, who gunned down twenty-nine Palestinians at morning prayer in 1994, and the official Arab–Israeli peace process that the extremists oppose. Here, we see the interrelationship among permissive background conditions, direct grievances, catalytic variables, and terrorism itself.

Conclusions

This article has sought to explore what is meant by root causes of terrorism and present a tentative model that relates permissive conditions, direct grievances, and catalytic causes in explaining terrorism (Figure 8). It has also explored three methodologies for employing and testing root cause explanations of terrorism. Tentative conclusions are:

- Analyzing a wide range of samples is not conducive to generalized conclusions regarding the relationship between social conditions and terrorism. Thus, neither permissive nor direct root causes are alone effective in explaining or predicting terrorism.
- Focusing on terrorist organizations (considering their nature and aims, their leadership, the background of key supporters and operatives, and their social base) suggests that root cause analysis may be helpful in explaining certain *types* of terrorism.
- A tentative correlation can be identified in terms of the social and political conditions of the societies from which the most deadly terrorist organizations emerged and are based, and this particular focus deserves further analysis.

- Qualitative case analyses that present a detailed picture of specific conflicts offer the most effective methodology for understanding the role of root causes in relation to other explanatory variables. Root causes are necessary, but not sufficient, factors in explaining and understanding certain types of terrorism, but only in conjunction with precipitant factors (see Figure 8).
- Root causes tend to be most relevant in helping to understand terrorism associated with ideological, ethno-nationalist, and Islamist groups in developing countries; of limited value in explaining nationalist groups in developed societies; and least relevant with regard to ideological and nihilist groups in developed countries.
- Root causes are a fruitful focus of academic study and should not be dismissed on methodological grounds, but greater effort is needed for greater methodological rigor in studying the social background of terrorism.
- Root causes are a fruitful focus in counterterrorist policy. Even when it is not feasible to alter social and economic conditions in the short term, this should form a part of an integrated counterterrorism program. In turn, projections of social and economic trends, urbanization, and demography may hold implications for future patterns of terrorism. It is therefore prudent to include in a long-term counterterrorist agenda policies such as development aid, support for local democracy processes, human rights, the promotion and protection of minority rights, and the amelioration of the negative effects of globalization.

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