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REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM:
MUTATION AND POLITICAL SELECTION

Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca

Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca is Associate Professor of Political Science at the *Center for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences*, Juan March Institute, and at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Introduction[*]

The political mobilization of students and workers in many countries of the developed world during the late sixties and early seventies of the 20th century was followed in some cases by a wave of terrorist political violence that in some cases lasted for more than thirty years. There was revolutionary terrorism (such as the Red Army Faction in Germany), nationalist terrorism (such as ETA in Spain), and fascist terrorism (such as the "black" terrorism of *Ordine Nuovo* or *Avanguardia Nazionale* in Italy).

By far, the most common form of terrorism (though not the bloodiest) was the revolutionary, extreme-left variety. The first instances took place in Latin America, not in Europe. As is well known, the Tupamaros in Uruguay were the first to theorize and to put into practice the kind of urban guerrilla activity that we associate with the terrorism of that period (López-Alves 1989). The Tupamaros tried to emulate the Cuban experience, but the absence of either mountains or jungle in their country persuaded them that it was impossible to start their rebellion in the countryside. Consequently, they concluded that their only chance lay in the urban landscape (Torres 2002: 345-9). The example was followed by Montoneros and other groups in Argentina (Moyano 1995). The doctrine behind this form of terrorism was systematized by the Brazilian terrorist Carlos Marighella in his *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla* (1969). These Latin American experiences were a source of inspiration for many revolutionary movements in Europe. The influence was particularly strong in the Red Army Faction, which explicitly tried to reproduce the Tupamaros' urban guerrilla warfare in Germany.

Revolutionary terrorism in developed countries killed around 360 people in the 1970-2000 period. The most obvious precedent, the wave of anarchist violence in the Western world, was responsible for around 150 deaths during the 1880-1914 period (excluding Russia from the calculus) (Jensen 2004: 150). These figures are certainly low when compared, for

instance, to nationalist terrorism: the numbers of deaths caused by the Provisional IRA and ETA are respectively around 1,644 and 773 people (my own calculations).

Yet, despite small numbers, the political impact of revolutionary terrorism was by no means negligible, albeit varying enormously across countries. It hit countries such as Italy, Spain, Germany, Japan or Greece, creating serious political tensions in their democratic systems; it was milder in countries such as France, Portugal or the United States; and it was absent in many other countries, such as Great Britain, Canada, Austria, Switzerland, Australia, or the Scandinavian bloc. The aim of this paper is to account for this variation. What can explain the varying degree of revolutionary terrorism across developed countries? This question is particularly puzzling if we think of the 1968 movement. How is it that some of the countries where the movement was more powerful, such as France or the United States, developed so little leftist terrorism, whereas terrorism flourished in countries in which 1968 had not provoked much turmoil, such as Spain or Germany?

The focus on revolutionary terrorism makes sense methodologically. The left-right cleavage is active everywhere and therefore all developed countries are potential candidates for this kind of terrorism. Thus, it is possible to engage in a statistical cross-country comparison. By contrast, nationalist terrorism can only happen in ethnically divided countries, where ethnic or territorial claims become a political issue. This reduces considerably sample size, constraining the kind of comparative analysis that can be carried out.

Generally speaking, any comparative design on terrorism is a difficult one, if only because the role of contingency in terrorism is greater than in other forms of political violence like inter-State wars or civil wars. Terrorist organizations, given their underground condition, are smaller in size than national armies or guerrillas. The creation of a terrorist organization may be decided by a handful of people, and a hundred volunteers may be more than enough to launch terrorist activity. Is there room then for a systematic explanation of cross-country variation in the intensity of revolutionary terrorism?

A biological analogy can be useful here. I suggest that terrorist violence is a mixture of chance and necessity. More concretely, I argue that the formation of terrorist organizations is a random mutation that occurs within societies, but that there are political, social and economic conditions that filter or select those mutations that survive and reproduce themselves, creating a serious challenge to the political system. According to this model of "political selection", the formation of terrorist groups is a contingent event, but its survival or extinction is determined by conditions that can be specified more systematically.

In order to substantiate this argument, I show first that in the 1970s revolutionary groups with roughly similar motivations, ideology and organizational resources emerged in most of the developed world, but only in some countries did these groups evolve into full terrorism. Among the country features that could foster or fetter revolutionary terrorism, I contemplate the following ones: (i) economic growth, (ii) expansion of higher education, (iii) level of development, (iv) inequality, (v) political mobilization, (vi) labor conflicts, (vii) past political instability, (viii) strength of Communist parties, and (ix) population.

The analysis is based on my own data set of fatalities caused by revolutionary terrorism in 21 countries. Although there is some overlap, the approach here is significantly different to that of Engene (2004), probably the most comprehensive comparative research on terrorism to date. Engene restricts his study to Western European countries, without considering, for instance, the United States or Japan. [1] On the other hand, he analyzes all types of terrorism, whereas I focus exclusively on revolutionary terrorism: the conditions associated with the emergence of terrorism may vary depending on its aims and strategies. More importantly, I provide more accurate figures about fatalities, based on a large list of primary sources in each country, whereas his data come exclusively from *Keesing's Record of World Events*. Besides, I propose a new measure of terrorism intensity that goes beyond the number of fatalities. Finally, I present a more exhaustive statistical analysis of the data.

The paper is divided into four sections. Section 1 contains a short overview of the aims and strategies of revolutionary terrorism, and shows that the terrorist mutation was pervasive

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[1] About Western Europe, see also Jongman (1992) and Zimmermann (1989).

in the 1970s and 1980s. Section 2 presents the hypotheses about why some of these mutations were selected. The statistical analysis of the 21 countries of the sample is in section 3. Section 4 discusses the main findings.

1. Revolutionary terrorism: mutation

Terrorism is understood in at least two different ways[2]: as an action-based concept, or as an actor-one. In the action sense, terrorism is a form of violence (mainly against civilians, often in indiscriminate attacks, trying to instill fear in a wider audience) that can be carried out by different actors (terrorist organizations themselves, guerrillas, armies). In the actor sense, terrorism is what terrorist organizations do. Terrorist groups are different from other insurgencies because they do not control any territory, act within the enemy's territory and hence they have to be secret or underground organizations. Guerrillas, by contrast, liberate some territory from the State's control and act in that area like a proto-State (extracting rents, imposing order). Here I refer to terrorism exclusively in the actor-sense. I am interested in understanding the conditions under which these organizations emerge.

Terrorist violence has high internal variance in terms of aims and strategies. In this paper I am only interested in revolutionary terrorism, whose ultimate aim is to seize political power through a popular uprising (Crenshaw 1972). Violence is supposed to trigger a revolutionary response by the masses. As the Weather Undergound put it somewhat poetically, "a single spark can start a prairie fire". In other words, revolutionary terrorism is about mobilizing the masses for revolution through violence.[3]

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[2] The literature on terrorism is full of conceptual discussions. For an analysis of this debate, see Schmid and Jongman (1988), Weinberg, Pedhazyr and Hirsch-Hefler (2004).

[3] For a formal, rational-choice analysis of the idea of revolutionary terrorism, see McCormick and Owen (1996).

The idea was first developed in the second half of the 19th century by the anarchists, the first practitioners of contemporary terrorism.[4] Their purpose was summarized in the "propaganda by the deed" doctrine. The first formulation of this doctrine was presented in the May 1876 meeting of Bakunin's International, when Errico Malatesta and Carlo Cafiero wrote that the "insurrectionary deed is the most effective means of propaganda and the one which penetrates to the deepest social stratum and attracts the living forces of humanity" (quoted in Jensen 2004: 124).

Marx criticized bitterly the link between terrorist violence and revolution. He referred to terrorists as "alchemists of the revolution": violence could not replace the collective struggle of workers, nor could it contribute to raising class consciousness (Rubenstein 1987: 152). In 1911, Trotsky, in very similar terms, rejected "all methods and means that have as their goal to artificially force the development of society and to substitute chemical preparations for the insufficient revolutionary strength of the proletariat." (Trotsky 1974: 8) However, despite these criticisms, in the 1970s a certain number of the revolutionary organizations that considered themselves Marxists in some way or another, justified violence and armed struggle in terms of the anarchist "propaganda by the deed."

Many post-1968 revolutionaries believed that violence would bring about a mass uprising. It would induce others to join the movement. Violence would set a path and an example that the masses would follow. The shocking power of violence would force people to reflect on the prospects of revolution. Different organizations stressed different consequences of violence. Some focused on class consciousness. The Weather Underground (1974: 4) said that "armed actions push forward people's consciousness and commitment; they are a great teacher and example." Likewise, the Belgian CCC (*Cellules Communistes Combattantes*) wrote that "our primary task is agitation and propaganda and that it is only important to steer a correct political line, to anchor it deeply amidst the masses, and to ensure that it reverberates there." (in Alexander and Pluchinsky 1992: 175) Some other organizations emphasized rather the consequences of violence for the system. Violence would reveal the real face of the system, its repressive foundations, as the German RAF (*Rote*

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[4] On anarchist terrorism, see Jensen (2004), Joll (1980), Miller (1995), Núñez Florencio (1983).

Arme Faktion) insisted over and again in its communiqués and writings. In a similar vein, the Italian BR (*Brigate Rosse*) justified its deeds in terms of "inducing tensions" within the system, that is, conflicts among different groups within the ruling class. This is, for instance, how they justified the kidnapping and killing of Aldo Moro (Moretti 1998).

Violence or armed struggle does not necessarily lead to killing. Most revolutionary organizations in favor of armed struggle approved of bombings against property and street fights, but not killing. As violence was ultimately aimed at mobilizing the masses rather than at coercing the State, it was not obvious that killing was the best means for triggering an insurrection. In fact, one of the recurring features of revolutionary terrorist organizations is that quite often they preferred to kneecap their victims rather than kill them. For instance, the Greek 17 November Revolutionary Organization kneecapped the neurosurgeon Zacharias Kapsalakis on 4 February 1987. The explanation provided by the terrorists was this: "Our act is a protest in practice, an act of dynamic resistance against the hateful, inhuman exploitation by the coalition of the state and the circuit of the big doctors." (in Kassimeris 2001: Appendix A) The organization could have killed the doctor, but preferred not do so. The same pattern was observable in the Red Brigades. For example, in 1978, the worst year in terms of killings, the Red Brigades killed 15 people and kneecapped 13.[5] The death toll could have been almost twice compared to the actual one had they decided to kill all those who were injured.

The fact is that only a few of all terrorist organizations took the momentous step of killing people. They knew that killing meant a higher level of confrontation with the system and therefore harsher repression by the State. But before going into hypotheses about why some organizations went into killing and some did not, it is important to show that the emergence of terrorist groups in favor of armed struggle was pervasive in the developed countries. My point is that this was a sort of political mutation that affected most countries in the seventies, but this mutation only found a niche and evolved into a real threat to the system in certain countries.

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[5] For data on kneecapping in Italy, see the dataset on political violence at www.cedost.it.

It is easy to show that there were clandestine or semi-clandestine revolutionary groups in favor of armed struggle in countries that we do not normally count among those that suffered revolutionary terrorism. These groups were extinct rather soon. In Great Britain, for instance, there was the Angry Brigade, an underground organization responsible for about 25 bombings between 1970 and 1972. Most of its activists were arrested by the police in 1971. On 12 January 1971 there was a strike and a march against the Industrial Relations Bill. The Angry Brigade exploded two bombs in the home of the Minister of Employment, as a complement to workers' mobilization. In the communiqué that accompanied this action, the group explained that the minister would be dead had they wished: they added, "we attack property not people" (Vague 1997: 40).

In the United States there were several of these revolutionary mutations. The best known is the Weather Underground, a very active clandestine group of young radicals that decided not to kill anyone after the death of three of their own activists who were manipulating an explosive device in New York in 1970. Their violence was intended to create an internal front of battle within the US that would reinforce the international battle against US-imperialism. The point was to "bring the war home." It seems that just before the accidental death of their activists, they were planning to kill. Varon (2004: 174) suggests that had they eventually killed someone, the US could have followed the path of Germany or Italy. But this is a dubious counterfactual. For reasons we have to disentangle, these people were uneasy with the prospects of killing. Bill Ayers, a historical Weatherman, writes in his memoirs that "we simply didn't have it in us to harm others, especially innocents, no matter how tough we talked." (2001: 207) Their choices were rather different to those of German or Italian terrorists. In fact, apart from Black terrorism (on which more later), no revolutionary group in the US, except the strange, multiracial Symbionise Liberation Army (SLA), intended to kill people.[6] There were some killings (by the *Venceremos* organization, the Tuller family, the New Year's Gang, or the United Freedom Front), but they were produced either in bank robberies or in fortuitous fights with police forces. All these organizations had very little social support and none of them, not even the SLA, that killed two people, became a serious concern for the Government.

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[6] On leftist terrorism in the US, see Hewitt (2003).

In France, despite the impressive mobilization during 1968, no group went seriously into full terrorist violence until the emergence of *Action Directe* (AD) in 1980.[7] *Gauche Proletarianne*, a Maoist group that attracted the most radical members after May 1968, refused to kill anyone, renouncing armed struggle in 1973, even if one of its own activists, Pierre Overney, was killed in 1972 by a night watchman of a Renault factory in the context of labor disputes (Dartnell 1995: 61-5). There were other groups in the seventies, such as the *Groupes d'Action Revolutionaire Internationaliste* or the *Noyaux Armes pur l'Autonomie Populaire* (NAPAP), the antecedents of AD, or the *Brigades Inernationales*. NAPAP killed one person and the *Brigades* two, but they were very weak organizations and were decimated by police arrests. Interestingly, some of the most influential French activists who went into armed struggle were of Spanish origin, the sons of exiles who left Spain after the defeat of the Republican Government in the civil war (Phillips 1993: 89-90): Spain has been one of the countries with stronger nationalist and revolutionary terrorism during the last century. It is as if Spain were exporting terrorism (unsuccessfully) to France in the mid 1970s.

It is also possible to detect these mutations in smaller countries. In Belgium, the Communist Combatant Cells, a small, violent revolutionary group that acted in the eighties, did not want to kill anyone either (though in 1985 they killed two firemen accidentally) (Laufer 1988). In the Netherlands there were several ultra leftist groups like the Red Youth or its successor the Red Resistance Front that had radical views and were influenced by Marighella's writings on urban guerrilla warfare, but they did not evolve into lethal terrorism (Schmid 1988).

These examples reveal that there were individuals and groups in these countries with strong anti-system preferences, willing to employ violent tactics, but fell short of full terrorism, or were quickly disbanded after the first killings. Similar groups in other countries had a very different trajectory, bloodier and longer. The difference between revolutionaries in, say, the Netherlands and in Italy does not lie in ideological preferences or in the organizational features of these groups: it has to do rather with the political system. Italian

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[7] On France, see Cerny (1981), Dartnell (1995), Moxon-Browne (1988), Phillips (1993: Ch.4), Schifres (2004).

political conditions favored the development and reproduction of these leftist, underground organizations, whereas Dutch politics constituted a hostile environment.

2. Hypotheses about political selection

The literature on terrorism has contemplated a wide variety of potential causal factors (Bjørgo 2005; Crenshaw 1981; Engene 2004; Ross 1993). I only discuss here hypotheses for which quantitative data exist, that is, hypotheses that are testable given the research design of this paper. I distinguish four types of variables: (i) economic and social indicators; (ii) mobilization (demonstrations and strikes); (iii) political variables (political stability and strength of Communist parties); and (iv) population.

I start with economic and social indicators. The literature has contemplated the possibility that terrorism is associated with a too rapid process of modernization (Bjørgo 2005: 258; Engene 2004: 86-7). This is rooted in a longstanding discussion about the impact of modernization on social instability and political violence (Olson 1963; Tilly 1973). The basic idea is that the strains of modernization might lead to violence if the social transformation brought about by this process occurs too quickly. This argument sounds slightly functionalist, for violence is understood as the escape valve of the tensions to which the system is subject during modernization.[8]

Taking 1973 as the end of the previous expansionary cycle, I have selected the mean GDP growth of the period 1960-1973 as an indicator of the speed of modernization. The higher the mean GDP growth, the more likely that the terrorism mutation survives.

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[8] Note that this hypothesis is not necessarily incompatible with the finding that terrorism tends to occur in periods of economic weakness (Blomberg, Hess, Weerapana forthcoming). It could be that terrorism emerges in countries with high economic growth when a recession occurs.

This hypothesis can be refined. It has often been said that part of the turmoil of the late 1960s and early 1970s has to do with the rapid expansion of higher education in the developed world and the incapacity of the system to integrate the masses of new students who entered into university (Suri 2003: 88-94). Both in the case of Italy (Ginsborg 2003: 298-9) and France (Seidman 2004: Ch.2), it was obvious that the spread of radicalism and violence was crucially linked to the overcrowding of the universities. The frustration of the emerging intelligentsia created fertile terrain for the emergence of terrorism.[9] To measure the expansion of higher education, I calculate the difference between percentage of people enrolled at the university in 1975 and 1965. The hypothesis is that the greater this difference, the greater the impact of revolutionary terrorism.

Economic growth and expansion of higher education are variables that reflect economic and social change during the period under study. I want to consider also more permanent or structural factors that reflect the relative position of each country. On the one hand, I include the level of economic development. Following what we know about other forms of political violence, I hypothesize that the higher economic development, the less likely that we will observe terrorist violence. This variable is simply the log of GDP per capita in 1975. On the other hand, economic inequality: since revolutionary terrorists tried to redress what in their view was the exploitation and injustice of the capitalist system, it makes sense to check whether countries with greater economic inequality were more prone to develop this kind of terrorism (see also Engene 2004: 87-8).

The second group of variables deals with mobilization. Mobilization has been deemed a clear condition for the emergence of terrorism. Although it could be argued that the workers' and students' mobilization of 1960s and 1970s was itself a consequence of rapid modernization and expansion of higher education, it can be taken as variables with their own causal influence on terrorism (Della Porta 1995). To test this hypothesis for the 21 countries of the sample, I have simply considered strike volume and demonstrations. I want to check separately the influence of labor conflicts and political movements on terrorism. The period covered is very wide in both cases: 1965-1982. I end in 1982 simply because this is the last

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[9] Rubenstein (1987) pursues this hypothesis qualitatively for many other instances of terrorism.

year of the *World Handbook of Social and Political Indicators, III*, the source I use for demonstrations. I also end in 1982 in the case of strikes for the sake of comparison. Given that the cycles of terrorism and of labor and political mobilization were not the same in every country, it is crucial to take a long period of time. For instance, participation in strikes in Spain skyrocketed after the death of Franco in 1975, just like terrorism. Had we stopped in that year, Spain would have had a very low participation rate.

Taking strike volume as an indicator of labor unrest (days lost per one thousand workers), I simply assume that the higher the mean volume in the period 1965-82, the greater the impact of revolutionary terrorism. The same assumption is made for demonstrations: the higher the rate of participation in demonstrations, the greater the impact of revolutionary terrorism.[10] Neither of these variables, strikes and demonstrations, correlates significantly with rapid economic growth or expansion of higher education, casting some doubt on theories that interpret mobilization as a consequence of deeper structural changes. On the other hand, the correlation between strikes and demonstrations is not significant either. This implies that each variable separately is a potential explanatory factor beyond underlying processes of modernization.

The third group of variables relates to political features of the countries. On the one hand, I include past political instability. Several authors have pointed out that countries with a Fascist or dictatorial past were more prone to develop terrorism (Cerny 1981; Engene 2004;

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[10] The construction of the rate per thousand of participation in demonstrations is problematic. It is based on the "daily events" version of the *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, III. 1948-1982*. I have selected three types of events: (i) protest demonstrations, (ii) demonstrations met by police violence, and (iii) demonstrations that turned into riots. This means that I have not taken into account regime support demonstrations.

The first problem is that in the 21 countries chosen for this paper, around 50% of all cases have missing values in the number of participants variable. To deal with this problem, I have proceeded as follows: I have calculated the median value for each country, and I have assigned this median value of participation to all missing values. Then I have multiplied each event by the mean value of the intervals (for instance, the mean value of the interval 21-100 participants is 60 participants). I have added these products and I have aggregated them by year and country. Then I have calculated the mean value of participants for each country for the period 1965-82 and I have calculated the rate per thousand of participation by dividing among total population in 1975.

I have tried other specifications. For instance, I have counted the number of demonstrations in each country, regardless of their size, but the resulting figures do not have any association with the variables of terrorist violence.

Katzenstein 1998). Although all the countries of the sample were democracies when revolutionary terrorism emerged (except for a very brief period in the case of Spain), it is possible to distinguish countries in terms of their political past. Thus, I classify countries depending on whether they went through some transition from dictatorship to democracy during the 20th century.[11] More concretely, the group of countries with some dictatorial period includes Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Portugal and Spain. Note that, unlike Engene (2004: 100), I do not think that the Vichy regime in France can be regarded as a democratic breakdown, mainly due to the exceptional circumstances of occupation. The reasons why past political dictatorship could be relevant for the emergence of revolutionary terrorism in the seventies and eighties is a complex one: I discuss these reasons more fully in section 4.

On the other hand, I take into account the electoral strength of Communist parties (see also Engene 2004). Although revolutionary terrorists bitterly criticized traditional Communist parties, placing themselves to the left of these parties, it still makes sense to consider that countries with stronger Communist parties will more likely develop terrorism. The strength of Communists can be understood as a sign of the political polarization in the country. It reveals to what extent the rejection of the system is spread in the country. Based on the data prepared by Lane, McKay and Newton (1997) for OECD countries, I take the electoral strength of these parties in the period 1975-9 (the years of maximum terrorist activity when all countries in the sample were already democracies).

Finally, I have added as a control the population in 1975. More populated countries offer better chances for the development of terrorist groups, if only because the State faces greater difficulties for the control of the population (terrorists may find it easier to move and to hide in bigger countries), or because in bigger countries the tails of the distribution of political preferences are more populated and therefore it is more likely that a group of radicals in favor of violence is formed.

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[11] Based on the ACLP data set prepared by Adam Przeworski and others, I have tried another specification: the age of the democratic regime in 1975. This numerical variable, however, is not associated with terrorist violence.

Table 1 summarizes the nine hypotheses and briefly explains the sources and methods used to measure the independent variables.

Table 1. Hypotheses, sources and operationalization

Hypothesis 1: The higher the mean of GDP growth (1960-73), the greater the impact of revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: *Historical Statistics* (Paris: OECD, 1999), table 3.1.
Hypothesis 2: The greater the expansion of higher education (1965-75), the greater the impact of revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: *Educational Statistics* (Paris: OECD, 1981), table 18. *Operationalization*: Calculated as percentage of population enrolled in University-type of education, difference between percentage in 1975 and 1965.
Hypothesis 3: The higher economic inequality, the greater the impact of revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: The University of Texas Inequality Project (2001) and the Deininger and Squire World Bank dataset of Gini index (1996). *Operationalization*: Mean index for the period 1963-80. Based on the University of Texas Inequality project, and when data were not available, supplemented by Deininger and Squire's Gini index.
Hypothesis 4: The lower the level of economic development, the greater the impact of revolutionary terrorism.	*Source: World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, III. 1948-1982.* *Operationalization*: Log of per capita income in 1975.
Hypothesis 5: The higher the rate of participation in demonstrations (1965-1982), the greater the impact of revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, III. 1948-1982.* *Operationalization*: It is the mean rate per thousand of participation for the period 1965-1982. For details, see fn. 10.
Hypothesis 6: The higher the mean strike volume (1965-82), the greater the impact of revolutionary terrorism.	*Sources*: *Year Book of Labour Statistics* (Geneva: International Labour Office), several years. *Employment Outlook* (Paris: OECD), several years. *Operationalization*: Mean for the whole period of strike volume (number of days lost per one thousand workers).
Hypothesis 7: The impact of revolutionary terrorism is greater in countries with dictatorial past.	Countries with dictatorial past during 20th century: Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Portugal, and Spain. Alternative specification: Age of the democratic regime in 1975. Source: ACLP data set.
Hypothesis 8: The greater the electoral strength of Communist parties, the greater the impact of revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: Lane, McKay and Newton (1997), table 7.4. *Operationalization*: Mean electoral share of Communist parties in the period 1975-9.
Hypothesis 9: The bigger the population of a country, the greater the impact of revolutionary terrorism.	*Source*: *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, III. 1948-1982.* *Operationalization*: Log of population in 1975.

3. Analysis

Measurement of the impact of terrorism

The analysis of the impact of revolutionary terrorism has been carried out for 21 countries of the developed world. I have excluded countries with less than one million inhabitants, such as Iceland or Luxembourg. More contentiously, I have also eliminated Latin American countries. The reason is twofold. First, most of these countries were plagued by guerrilla conflicts, in which the insurgency was able to liberate part of the territory from the State (Wickham-Crowley 1992). As I am trying to explain terrorism rather than guerrilla warfare, the presence of guerrilla activity can be a confounding factor. Second, the inclusion of Latin American countries would have restricted severely the range of testable hypotheses. There are no data (or the quality of the data is much worse) for several of the independent variables that enter into the statistical analysis.

The measurement of terrorism is clearly problematic, particularly because of the absence of reliable data for domestic terrorism. Most datasets register only incidents of international terrorism. As is usually done in the literature, I focus on deaths (De la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2004; Engene 2004; Fay, Morrissey and Smyth 1999). There is more information about killings than about any other type of terrorist incident. Besides, killings are clear and discrete events, whereas injuries, for instance, cover wide variation, from very serious physical injuries to psychological trauma (the same holds for bombings, which may go from very limited blasts to total destruction). In general, killings are not a bad proxy for terrorist activity.[12]

Engene (2004) collects information about terrorist incidents in Western Europe through *Keesing's Record of World Events*, an invaluable source based on press coverage of international news. However, press coverage has several drawbacks: not all countries receive the same extent of coverage, and some obscure incidents and killings receive very little

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[12] In the case of Basque nationalist terrorism, the correlation between number of deaths and total incidents is 0.79 (De la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2004: 60). In the case of the Troubles, the correlation between the number of deaths and the number of injuries is 0.93 (Morrissey and Smyth 202: 190).

attention even in the national newspapers. Given that the total number of deaths of revolutionary terrorism is not so high (around 360 people), I have made a more systematic search, tracking each of these killings. I have used national primary sources (national newspapers when possible, data provided by terrorist organizations themselves, political chronologies, data provided by associations of victims, national data sets on violence) and secondary sources on domestic terrorism when available.[13] The only country for which my data are less reliable is Japan, due mainly to linguistic obstacles.

The differences between Engene's results and mine are not negligible. For instance, he reports 50 killings by the Spanish GRAPO (*Grupo de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre*), but the actual number is 79. For Portugal, his figure is 7 killings by *Forças Populares 25 Abril*, but this organization killed in fact 15 people. His figures are more accurate for countries that are usually paid greater attention in the international press such as Germany, France, or Italy. This bias generates distortions in the measurement of the relative impact of terrorism in each country.

Once we have the data on killings, we have to devise a global measure of the impact of terrorism in each country. The simplest possibility is just to add all the deaths brought about by revolutionary terrorist organizations within each country (including internal killings, that is, the killing of activists by other members of the same or rival organization). However, this does not reflect the relative strength of each organization. It is reasonable to suggest that the strength of an organization is a function of the number of killings, but also of the number of years that the organization is active. For the sake of simplicity, I consider that a terrorist organization is active during the period that goes from the first killing to the last one. The killings of more active organizations (such as the Red Brigades, the RAF, the GRAPO) should count more than the killings of organizations that disappear after a short span of

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[13] As an example, in the case of Italy I have used the following sources: Curcio (1994), the dataset of CEDOST (*Centro di Documentazione Storico Politica su stragismo, terrorismo e violenza politica*) at www.cedost.it, the chronology provided by the Fondazione Luigi Cipriani (at www.fondazionecipriani.it), the dataset of the *Associazione Italiana Vittime del Terrorismo* (at www.vittimeterrorismo.it), etc.

activity, since the former represent a much more serious challenge to the State and tell something, however indirectly, about their social roots.[14]

Let $i = \{1,...,I\}$ represent the set of active organizations in a country. The impact of revolutionary terrorism in each country can be measured according to this index:

$$Ln\left(\sum_{i=1}^{I} deaths_i \times years_i\right)$$

Thus, if an organization kills 10 people during 7 years, it adds 70 to the total index. Obviously, with this procedure the killings of powerful and long lasting organizations count much more than the others. Yet, this effect is partially reduced by the logarithm of the total sum. The correlation between the sum of all deaths and the index is 0.78, implying that they are not measuring exactly the same thing.[15] In the statistical analysis I have run all the regressions using both measures, the total sum of deaths in each country and the index of impact: the index of impact works much better in almost every case.

Table 2 summarizes the data of the dependent variable. In terms of number of deaths, Italy is on top, with 140 fatalities. However, the index ranks Italy slightly lower than Spain, with 84 fatalities. This can be easily explained. On the one hand, GRAPO in Spain has been active for 25 years, whereas the Red Brigades and their numerous splits lasted 15 years. On the other hand, terrorist organizations in Italy were extremely fragmented (just like parties). There were, for instance, eleven organizations that killed a single person, and seven that killed just two people. Since in Spain GRAPO was responsible for almost all the killings (in fact, GRAPO is the bloodiest revolutionary terrorist organization in the developed world), Spain obtains a very high value in the impact index.

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[14] The relationship between survival and social support is an indirect one, since a terrorist organization can survive if the State is not effective; a case in point is the Greek police, which was unable to arrest a single member of the 17 November Revolutionary Organization for more than 25 years.

[15] I have tried other specifications, for instance $\sum_{i=1}^{I} \ln(deaths_i \times years_i)$, but they perform worse in the statistical analysis.

Table 2. The impact of revolutionary terrorism in the developed world

Country	Number of deaths	Index of impact
Australia	0	0
Austria	0	0
Belgium	2	0.69
Canada	0	0
Denmark	0	0
Finland	0	0
France	15	4.51
Germany	35	6.66
Greece	25	6.35
Ireland	0	0
Italy	140	7.21
Japan	24	4.56
Netherlands	0	0
New Zealand	0	0
Norway	0	0
Portugal	16	4.85
Spain	84	7.63
Sweden	0	0
Switzerland	0	0
United Kingdom	0	0
USA without Black terrorism	11	2.71
US with Black terrorism	23	4.99

The most problematic case is the US, due to the presence of the Black Liberation Army (BLA), responsible for at least 12 killings. It is not clear whether the BLA should be counted as revolutionary terrorism or rather as ethnic/nationalist terrorism. Despite many ideological

points in common with the revolutionary left, Hewitt (2003) classifies black terrorism as a group on its own. In the statistical analysis I have excluded the killings of the BLA, but I have repeated the whole analysis including the BLA: results are basically the same.

Japan is also a difficult case. It is the only country in which the terrorist organization (the Japanese Red Army, JRA) reacted to the State's counter-terrorist policy and to the lack of social support at home by turning into truly international terrorism (Farrell 1990). It cooperated closely with Palestinian organizations. The most horrific deed was the attack at Tel Aviv airport on 30 May 1972, when three terrorists of the JRA opened fire and threw grenades in the baggage claim area, killing 24 people. I have counted only killings that took place on Japanese soil. The JRA is also exceptional because of the high number of killings of its own activists. During an assembly held on a mountain at the end of 1971, they killed 11 of their own people.

Statistical analysis

Table 3 contains the correlations between all variables in the sample. A quick glance at table 3 reveals that in general the index of impact that I have proposed has similar or stronger correlations with the independent variables than the total sum of deaths. The only important exception is strikes, and this is mainly due to a single case with a disproportionate influence, Italy, the country with most deaths and highest participation in strikes. Thus, I am going to use the index of impact as the dependent variable in every case. Of course, I have replicated all estimations employing the total sum of deaths, but results were systematically worse (except for strikes).

Given the small number of cases in the sample, just 21 observations, we have to be careful about degrees of freedom and potential problems of multicollinearity. We cannot simply introduce all the independent variables at once. I proceed sequentially, analyzing in turn each bloc of variables (social and economic indicators, mobilization variables, and political variables). Then I present a combined model with only the best predictors.

Table 3. Correlations for all dependent and independent variables (N=21)

	Total deaths	Index of impact	GDP growth	Expansion of higher education	Strikes	Demonstrations	Population	Inequality	Past dictatorship	GDP per capita
Total deaths	1									
Index of impact	.78***	1								
GDP growth	.35	.64***	1							
Expansion of higher education	.59***	.52**	.18	1						
Strikes	.55***	.29	-.04	.59***	1					
Demonstrations	.40*	.61***	.53**	.14	.03	1				
Population	.44**	.56***	.20	.59***	.37*	.07	1			
Inequality	.42*	.55***	.57***	.20	.25	.44**	.18	1		
Past dictatorship	.62***	.79***	.73***	.29	.03	.52**	.31	.48**	1	
GDP per capita	-.42*	-.50**	-.58***	.07	-.14	-.67***	0.05	-.61***	-.57***	1
Communists	.68***	.61***	.52**	.41*	.46**	.38*	.22	.25	.43**	-.45**

***: significant at 1%; ** significant at 5%; * significant at 10%

Table 4 shows several OLS regressions only with the economic and social variables. Model 1 includes the variables that reflect change: the mean GDP growth for the period 1960-73 and the expansion of higher education between 1965 and 1975. Both of them are highly significant. The fit of the model is indeed acceptable. As can be seen in table 3, these two variables are largely independent of each other: we can then say that each one influences separately the impact of revolutionary terrorism.

In model 2 we have the variables that measure the relative positions of country, level of development and inequality. This regression is problematic, because these two variables are strongly correlated (-.61): the more unequal countries are also the less developed ones. Yet, the two coefficients have the expected sign. As inequality seems to be a more powerful predictor, in model 3 I have combined economic growth and expansion of higher education with inequality. Inequality stops being significant, due to the high association with economic growth. In fact, the coefficient of the GDP growth variable is reduced from model 1 to model 3 because of this relationship.

Table 4 therefore shows that inequality and economic development are not so important. What really matters is the variables that reflect the rapid changes in economic development and higher education that took place during the sixties and seventies.

Table 4. Regression models for economic and social indicators

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	-4.653***	3.135	-10.714*
	(.960)	(14.485)	(5.340)
GDP growth	1.02***	---	.802**
	(.252)		(.280)
Expansion of higher education	.468***	---	.445**
	(.155)		(.161)
Ln(GDP per capita)	---	-1.633	---
		(1.261)	
Inequality	---	.392**	.216
		(.182)	(181)
R^2	.58	.34	.62
N	21	21	21

Robust standard errors in parentheses.
***: significant at 1%; ** significant at 5%; * significant at 10%

The second bloc of variables corresponds to mobilization: strikes and demonstrations. Model 1 of table 5 shows the importance of participation in demonstrations. It explains by itself 37% of variance. In model 2 the effect of strikes is added. Strikes, measured as the volume of strikes, are not significant at all.[16] It is political protest rather than labor protest that is associated with terrorism. Results here depend crucially on the period for which the variables are measured. For instance, when we take the period 1965-1975, participation in either demonstrations or strikes is not significant. This is caused by a number of factors. If we think of the dependent variable, it is worth noting that the cycle of killings is not the same in all the countries. The first killing in each organization shows some variation: 1971 for the RAF and the Japanese Red Army, 1974 for the Red Brigades, 1975 for GRAPO and 17 November Revolutionary Organization, 1979 for the 25th April Popular Forces, and 1980 for *Action Directe*. On the other hand, if we think of the mobilization variables, it turns out that in countries that went from dictatorship to democracy in the mid seventies (Greece, Portugal, and Spain) we observe an impressive increase in mobilization in the years that follow the demise of the dictatorship. It seems logical then to employ measurements for as wide a period as possible. Accordingly, these mobilization variables should be understood not as antecedent causes of terrorism, but rather as indicators of the level of polarization and social and political conflict.

Table 5. Regression models for mobilization variables

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	.662	-.101
	(.500)	(.797)
Demonstrations	.327***	.322***
	(.074)	(.065)
Strikes	---	.003
		(.002)
R^2	.37	.45
N	21	21
Robust standard errors in parentheses.		
***: significant at 1%; ** significant at 5%; * significant at 10%		

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[16] Strikes become weakly significant if we measure them in a non-standard manner (as the number of strikers per thousand workers). However, the literature on labour conflict always uses strike volume (see Hibbs 1978).

The political variables are perhaps the most surprising ones. Model 1 of table 6 makes clear the crucial importance of past dictatorship. This variable alone explains 62 per cent of total variance. Note that, except Austria, all countries that had a dictatorship during the 20th century developed revolutionary terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s. This effect is not well captured when a numerical variable measuring the age of the democratic regime in 1975 is employed. Thus, the distance in the past of the dictatorship is irrelevant. Note that the two countries with higher impact of terrorism, Spain and Italy, have very different trajectories. The first democratic elections of the current democratic regime took place in 1948 in Italy and in 1977 in Spain.

The strength of Communist parties is included in model 2. The coefficient has the expected sign, but it is only significant at 10 per cent. Note that there are countries with powerful Communist parties, such as France, Portugal or Finland, with very little or no revolutionary terrorism. Yet, it is the case that all countries with high scores in the impact of terrorism also have strong Communist parties (except Germany, where the party is banned). This seems to indicate that big Communist parties, taken as a proxy of radicalism, are a necessary but not sufficient condition.

Table 6. Regression models for political variables

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	.565	.147
	(.365)	(.314)
Past dictatorship	4.758***	3.901***
	(1.027)	(1.342)
Communist strength	---	.106*
		(.061)
R^2	.62	.70
N	21	21
Robust standard errors in parentheses.		
***: significant at 1%; ** significant at 5%; * significant at 10%		

So far, we have seen that GDP growth, expansion of higher education, participation in demonstrations, and past dictatorship, are relevant independent variables. But correlations in table 3 indicate that there could be some degree of overlap between some of these variables.

In fact, there seems to be a serious problem between past dictatorship and GDP growth ($r = .73$). The countries that grew faster in the 1960s tend to be the countries that had dictatorships in the past. I think that what really matters is past dictatorship and not modernization or economic growth, both for substantive and statistical reasons. I present the substantive reasons in the next section, in the discussion of the results. As for statistical reasons, I will mention two. First, past dictatorship is more strongly associated with revolutionary terrorism than modernization (with either measurement of the dependent variable, the total number of deaths or my index of impact). Thus, past dictatorship explains 62 per cent of the variance, compared to 41 per cent by modernization. Second, despite high correlation between the two independent variables, past dictatorship keeps being significant when both variables are introduced in the regression analysis, whereas modernization stops being significant.

Table 7. Final regression model

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	-1.555**	-11.802**
	(.556)	(5.076)
Expansion of higher education	.359***	.184
	(.112)	(.116)
Demonstrations	.150	.170*
	(.092)	(.085)
Past dictatorship	3.309**	2.921**
	(1.321)	(1.226)
Ln(population)	---	.679***
		(.327)
R^2	.77	.83
N	21	21

Robust standard errors in parentheses.
***: significant at 1%; ** significant at 5%; * significant at 10%

Having discarded the modernization hypothesis, table 7 presents the final results when we combine the "best" independent variables: expansion of higher education, participation in demonstrations, and past dictatorship. Model 1 shows the results. The three variables are significant and the most important one is, by far, past dictatorship. They explain 77 per cent of the variance.

Model 2 in table 7 introduces a control that, due to the partial nature of previous analysis, we have not used yet: the size of population. It turns out that this is a decisive variable. It explains by itself 32 of total variance. And it affects deeply the significance of other variables: for example, the expansion of higher education stops being significant once we take into account population. The fit of this last model is rather impressive: the four variables explain 83 per cent of the variance in the intensity of revolutionary terrorism.

Studies of civil wars have also found that population matters (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005). We do not understand very well the mechanism: as I said before, it could be that the State is less efficient in policing protest in large countries, or that larger countries have greater numbers of extremist people.

We could summarize as follows what we have learnt from the statistical analysis: revolutionary terrorism is selected in countries with past dictatorship, large populations, and a high participation in political demonstrations.

4. Discussion

Why would it be the case that countries which went through some dictatorial period create favorable conditions for revolutionary terrorism? The question is particularly puzzling if we think of cases like Germany, Japan or Italy, where the dictatorship was already over by around 1945. Why would such a remote event exert an influence thirty years later?

Engene (2004: 38) interprets this finding in terms of legitimacy: "If there are elements of non-democratic periods in the near past, this may contribute to the raising of questions about the true character and legitimacy of the state in the present". But legitimacy is a loose concept. It is difficult to ascertain the legitimacy of the German or the British State: if the only basis for establishing that the former suffers a legitimacy deficit is a turbulent past, then

the explanation becomes plainly circular. Moreover, it is not obvious why legitimacy problems of the past are automatically transmitted to the new regime.

Katzenstein (1998) offers a more interesting interpretation, based on a small-n comparison of the United States, Germany, Italy and Japan: on the one hand, politicians of the new regime react with greater fear and harsher repression to the challenge of collective protest, making it easier for terrorist organizations to find recruits and to sustain a campaign of violence. On the other hand, terrorists fear the recurrence of authoritarian experiences and intensify the violence of their protest. However, it is hard to understand why terrorists would not expect that the intensification of violence could precisely lead to an authoritarian response by the State. Western terrorists could have learnt from Uruguay's experience, where the army, under the pretext of the Tupamaros' terrorist activity, staged a coup that broke a long democratic tradition.

I do not have a definite answer for this perplexing association between terrorism and past dictatorship. Yet I want to suggest three other hypotheses. The first one is related to Katzentein's: terrorism is selected given a certain combination of repression and political history. The second one has to do with social polarization. And the third one is a more "rationalist" one.

According to the first hypothesis, repression was interpreted differently in countries with different political histories. Thus, similar events (like the accidental killing of a radical activist) could produce very different consequences in Germany, Italy, or the United States due to their different past.

One of the founders of the RAF, Gudrun Ensslin, drew the following conclusion from the killing of a protestor by the police in a demonstration in Berlin in 1967: "This fascist state means to kill us all... Violence is the only way to answer violence" (quoted in Varon 2004: 39).

In Italy, Alberto Franceschini, one of the three founders of the RB (the other two being Renato Curcio and Margarita Cargol), went through a similar experience. In a book-interview

he talks about the profound personal and political impact produced by the killing of five youngsters by the police during a demonstration in Reggio Emilia on 7 July 1960. Franceschini was only thirteen years old and had some acquaintance with one of the youngsters. After that event, he became convinced that the system was a farce, that democracy was not real. He describes his political stand seven years later, in 1967, in these terms:

> You could not trust the bourgeoisie and its institutions, democracy was a fake. If you did not bother the system, you were left alone; but if you really wanted to change things, they shot you mercilessly. (Fasanella and Franceschini 2004: 27)

The famous editor Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, the founder of the first Italian revolutionary terrorist organization, *Grupo d'Azione Partigiana*, was persuaded by the connection between fascist terrorism and the State apparatus that an authoritarian coup was about to happen (Feltrinelli 2002). [17] He was certain that he was fighting against an authoritarian regime with a democratic facade.

In other countries there were similar or even worse episodes of repression, but they did not trigger a violent response. Repression was probably harsher in the United States than in Germany. Although we lack reliable cross-country data on repression, it is sufficient to point to some episodes that do not have a parallel in Germany. For example, just in 1970, the National Guard killed four unarmed students at Kent State University (Ohio), and two other students at Jackson State University (Mississipi).

Therefore, it seems that repression confirmed the worst fears of revolutionaries in countries with an authoritarian past. [18] They concluded that the system was unable to process their demands and went into armed struggle.

According to a second hypothesis, past dictatorship could be understood as a proxy of social conflict and polarization. The collapse of democracy in a more or less remote past

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[17] Feltrinelli was not so alarmist. There were at least two failed coups in Italy in 1970 and 1973.

[18] Marwick (1998), based on the cases of the United States, Great Britain, France and Italy, attributes great importance to the role of repression. When he deals with the French case and its absence of intense terrorism, he emphasizes the fact that the police did not kill anyone during May 1968.

would be a signal about deep underlying conflicts. Of course, these conflicts had become less pronounced in the seventies, so that instead of revolution, civil war, or a coup, we find terrorism, in its revolutionary or fascist vein. It is important to remember that during this period we do not only have leftist terrorism. Fascist terrorism was really harsh in Italy and to a lesser extent in Spain; Portugal also suffered this kind of terrorism before the appearance of the leftist organization *Forças Populares 25 Abril*.

This hypothesis about past dictatorship as a signal of unresolved social conflicts is consistent with the effect of some other independent variables. For instance, a high rate of participation in demonstrations, or the strength of Communist parties, could be taken as indicators of social polarization. Thus, the greater the polarization, measured by past political instability, popular mobilization, or radical parties, the more likely that terrorism will have a big impact in the country.

Finally, a third hypothesis is still possible, according to which countries with a dictatorial past are less stable and therefore insurgents think it is easier to bring about the collapse of the system. Przeworski et al. (2000: 127) show that past instability is a powerful predictor of the survival of the regime. Regimes that have suffered several transitions in the past are less likely to survive. The emergence of revolutionary terrorism could be understood as a further confirmation of this trend, even if all terrorist groups failed in their attempt to provoke the collapse of the system.

The mechanism in this case is quite simple: people learn from history that the regime can be overthrown and therefore they think seriously of its demise. While the Weather Underground could not expect that the democratic system would collapse in the United States because of the killings of some policemen, revolutionaries in Germany, Italy, Japan or Spain believed that democracy was fragile and could be brought down with some violence. Terrorists thought it was possible to break the system because they knew that this had happened before.

From this point of view, terrorists thought that they had different chances of achieving their goals through armed struggle depending on the country in which they acted. Insofar as

past dictatorship was a clue about the weakness of the system, terrorists in countries with a tradition of political instability believed they had better prospects of creating a revolutionary movement.

3. Conclusions

This paper has shown that despite the role of contingency in terrorism, it is possible to find some of the determinants of political violence when the research design is based on a cross-country comparative analysis. I have avoided talking of the causes of terrorism. Rather, I have framed the question in terms of the conditions that make terrorism more likely. This is necessary if, as I believe, terrorism is a mix of chance and necessity. Terrorist groups are created for purely idiosyncratic reasons and can be taken as political mutations that happen in the system. Only some of these groups survive and reproduce themselves through time. The key question is what country features create a favorable niche for the development of this type of terrorism. Or to put it in another way, the key question is what determines the "political selection" of these violent groups.

In order to find the determinants of "political selection", I have created a data set of deaths produced by revolutionary terrorism in 21 countries of the developed world. Moreover, I have created an index of the impact of terrorism that works considerably better than other indicators often used in the literature such as the total number of deaths.

Most empirical studies of terrorism are either case studies or large-n cross-country comparisons. Case studies, valuable as they are, do not produce general conclusions. Large-n comparisons suffer from the bad quality of the data. Although there are several data sets with incidents of international terrorism, we still lack data sets of domestic terrorism. Based on my own data set and a detailed study of the cases in the sample, I have provided new results about the determinants of domestic, revolutionary terrorism.

The statistical analysis shows that revolutionary terrorism was selected in countries with a dictatorship period during the 20th century, in highly populated countries, and in countries with high participation in demonstrations. Substantively, the most important factor seems to be past dictatorship. But it is not obvious why this variable is so relevant. In the discussion I have suggested three hypotheses, based on repression, polarization, and the chances of producing a collapse of the system.

The results of this paper could be extended in several directions. On the one hand, a more ambitious study should try to include the Latin American experience. Whereas some countries seem to fit rather nicely the logic of the argument (the presence of terrorism in Argentina, and its absence in Chile), some other cases, such as Uruguay with the Tupamaros, with a democratic regime going back to the early 1940s, may be harder to explain.

On the other hand, it would be interesting to check whether the same independent variables also explain nationalist, domestic terrorism. There is ample evidence that in most of these countries there were radical groups in favor of violent politics, but only in a few cases did they evolve into lasting and powerful terrorist organizations (ETA in the Basque Country, the Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, Hamas and other groups in Palestine). Is it also a matter of political mobilization, past instability, and size of population?

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