

Examining the Escalation of Terrorist Violence to Civil War

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Abstract:

This paper examines when non-state actors engaging in low levels of political violence (terrorism) are able to escalate their use of force (insurgency). Drawing on resource mobilization arguments, groups are theorized to escalate violence when they have the resources to sustain and expand their use of force and organization generally. Support from the local population because of perceived utility of the group and indiscriminate use of force by the government are argued to lead to support for the group from a segment of the population. The goal and ideology of a group should influence the group's perceived utility and hinder the ability of the government to act selectively against the group. Competition with existing insurgent groups should also reduce the likelihood of escalation. These hypotheses are tested on all terrorist groups identified by the MIPT-TKB database from 1950-2000. Empirical results provide strong support for the effect of the goal of the group, moderate support for competition amongst groups, and no support for the ideology of the group, though ideology is speculated to have an indirect influence through its effect on the goals of a group.

Why are some groups able to escalate their initial small scale use of force to widespread violence, often challenging the government for control of the state? This is an important question to analyze for several reasons. First, analyzing this question allows for an integration of research on terrorism and civil wars into a broader understanding of patterns of political violence by non-state actors. As will be discussed below, the difference between a terrorist and insurgent and an act of terrorism and civil war are often blurred. One reason for this lack of conceptual clarity is that terrorism and insurgency are both elements of a broader concept of political violence, where groups use violence and the threat of violence to achieve political goals vis-à-vis the government. Also, while the theoretical perspectives on terrorism and the onset of civil wars are very similar, linking these two types of political violence addresses questions that arise in each literature. In the terrorism literature, one important question is when are groups able to induce widespread violence against the state versus being limited to a few isolated (though costly) acts. From the civil war literature, a central question has been when are groups with grievances able to initiate a civil war with the state. Thus, looking at when groups can go from isolated incidents to widespread conflict against the government helps to inform both research agendas. Finally, from a policy perspective, if a profile could be established for terrorist groups that are able to escalate their violence to civil wars, then states could differentiate between groups and more efficiently allocate resources devoted to addressing the threat from particular groups.

While recent research has focused on why insurgents, or those engaged in a civil war, would turn to terrorist acts (Kalyvas 2006; Goodwin 2006), this paper seeks to explain why and when groups that start out using small scale acts of violence (terrorism) are able to engage in large scale political violence and become insurgents. Any individual or group can engage in small scale acts of violence for any reason. What allows a group to sustain campaigns of

violence and grow those campaigns is the ability to mobilize resources. Similar to resource mobilization arguments in the social movement literature, terrorist groups are likely to survive and grow based on their ability to generate resources in terms of labor and capital. This growth allows them to mount sustained campaigns against governments, producing insurgencies.

While resources are one way for groups to sustain and grow, research on terrorism suggests that groups want to mobilize citizenry by pushing governments to undertake indiscriminate retaliation. This type of policy as opposed to selective attacks can generate sympathy from a local population and support for the goals of the group, including additional resources in the form of recruits or material assistance. Three factors should influence the ability of groups to generate resources and force governments to undertake indiscriminate acts. The first is the goal of the group. Non-state actors can have a host of goals, but those seeking secession are likely to be better able to generate resources and provoke indiscriminate government violence. Secessionist groups potentially have a stronger base of supporters who share at least a desire for greater autonomy from the center, which also makes it harder for the government to discriminate between violent and non-violent groups and individuals. Center seeking groups should also have more success than policy driven groups. The former can draw on those who are disenchanted with the existing government, again making it difficult for the government to differentiate amongst violent and nonviolent actors. While policy groups are likely to have a non-violent counterpart, they are likely to be fringe elements of those groups, making it easier for the government to selectively target them. Also, the pool of available supporters is likely to be lower for individual policy groups compared to the other two goals.

A second and related factor is the ideology of the group. Again, while groups are likely to have numerous ideologies, identity based ideologies, whether they be ethno-nationalist or

religious, should provide groups with identifiable and sympathetic societies from which to draw support and easily blend into, making it difficult for the government to discriminate in its use of force. Ideology, similar to goal, should provide groups with the ability to mobilize support amongst societal networks and make it difficult for the government to easily identify and detain violent group members. One final factor that is likely to influence the ability of groups to escalate their use of force is the demand for and supply of violence within a state. Similar to the literature on social movements, the level of group competition should limit the ability of new entrants to be able to compete with existing groups, based on existing demand. Thus, as the number of insurgent groups increases, new groups will be less likely to escalate their use of force.

This paper examines the effect of goal, ideology, and number of insurgent groups on the ability of groups to escalate violence from isolated acts of terrorism to an insurgency by examining all terrorist groups from 1949-2000. Data on the groups is from the MIPT-Rand database and data on whether they were able to escalate to a civil war is from the PRIO Armed Conflict data. Two empirical models are analyzed, one where the group is the unit of analysis and a second where the group-year is the unit. The latter is examined to control for time varying state characteristics that others have argued to be central to understanding when insurgencies arise. Results support the goal and number of insurgent groups arguments, with no evidence found for the independent effect of ideology, though ideology is suspect to act through its influence on the goals of a group. Our results suggest that while opportunities due to state conditions are important for understanding an insurgency, the goal of a group is a central factor bearing on the opportunities available. Thus, it is not just the weakness of the state that explains insurgency, but the ability of the group to sustain itself amongst a population.

The Causes of Terrorism and Civil Wars

There is a sizeable literature on both the causes of terrorism and civil wars. Many of these studies present similar theoretical frameworks for explaining the occurrence of both forms of political violence. Studies of terrorism and civil wars have argued in parallel ways that grievances within society are an important factor for explaining when violence is likely to occur. Numerous scholars of internal conflict have discussed the effects of grievances on the likelihood of internal conflict. One widely studied approach is based on deprivation theory (McPhail 1971; Gurr 1970). This theory postulates that deprivation leads to frustration, which can precipitate aggression against those in power (i.e. those perceived to be the aggressors) when some stimulus releases the pent-up frustration. The deprivation that drives particular groups to violence may be absolute or relative (Gurr 1970; Runciman 1966). Gurr (1970) argued that relative deprivation, the gap between expectations and actual achievements, would contribute to the increased likelihood that rebellions would occur. In addition to relative deprivation, other sources of grievance that scholars have focused on are political, social, and economic inequality. Inequality at any of these levels leads some segment of the population to be dissatisfied with the current status quo, increasing the likelihood that they will rebel, prompting a civil war (Midlarski 1988; Muller and Seligson 1987). Research on terrorism has drawn on these arguments and extended them to theorize about the conditions under which a state is likely to experience terrorist acts of violence (Birrell 1972; Crenshaw 1981; Qadir 2001). Deprivation initially leads to the development of a social movement, which seeks to address the gap between the group's desired state and current state. The formation of terrorist organizations and the use of violence often follow from the inability of the social movement to achieve the desired changes (Gamson 1975; Crenshaw 1981). In addition to deprivation, scholars have argued that the greater the degree of

discrimination and inequality faced by groups in a state, the more likely these groups will resort to acts of terrorism and violence against the state (Crenshaw 1981; Qadir 2001). Similar arguments have been put forward linking grievances and civil war. Gurr's (1970) relative deprivation argument is often extended as an explanation for the onset of civil wars (Muller 1985). Beyond deprivation, the role of variables tapping into general satisfaction with the government and opportunity costs for rebelling have been widely tested in empirical models of civil wars. Some of these variables include economic growth, education spending, GDP/capita, and life expectancy (Collier and Hoeffler 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Esty et al 1998; Thyne 2006).

While grievances may be driven by a variety of economic factors, some have argued that identity politics uniquely motivates political violence within states. Some have focused on grievances across ethnic lines as a precipitating factor for civil wars (Horowitz 1985; Moynihan 1993) with modernization or economic development often being the catalyst for violent action (Gellner 1983). Within the civil war literature, Sambanis (2001) finds that ethnic civil wars have different causal factors than non-ethnic civil wars. Others have focused on the role that religion plays in creating indivisible issues amongst belligerents, making bargaining more difficult and settlements unlikely (Hassner 2003; Svenson 2007; Toft 2007). Religion has also been theorized to be a stronger identity cleavage because of greater differences between religious worldviews and a greater ability to clearly delineate those outside of your religion (Reynal-Querol 2002). Research on terrorism has made similar arguments with some theorizing that religiously motivated groups are driven by different causal processes than non-religious groups and other positing that religious groups are also more violent than non-religious groups. Similar to the arguments put forward in the civil war literature, this difference stems from the divine

motivation of religion, the incredibly long term view of religious goals, and the indivisibility of issues (Asal and Rethmeyer 2008; Hoffman 2006; Jurgensmeyer 2003).

In contrast to this grievance approach, others have argued that resources motivate groups to engage in conflict to reap the economic benefits of controlled territory (Grossman 1999). These resources may come from natural resources, diasporas, or hostile governments (Ross 2004; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). This greed explanation has received less attention in the study of terrorism, though research on some groups and individuals have questioned whether they have turned away from political to economic motivations, with a particular focus on FARC and the drug trade (Chernick 2007). Another form of this economic motivation argument has focused on the monetary incentives for the families of suicide bombers (Enders and Sandler 2006).

In contrast to motivational arguments, whether greed or grievance based, Fearon and Laitin (2003) argue that conditions favoring insurgency are better predictors of the onset of civil war. They present a similar argument as Tilly (1978), who suggests that grievances are always present, and it is the ability to mobilize this dislike of the status quo into an organized movement that actually produces organized political violence. Within the terrorism literature, this opportunity argument is also present with rational choice theories put forward by Enders and Sandler (2002) serving as a good example. They examine a terrorist group's decision to allocate resources towards different types of activities, leading to two important insights about terrorist behavior: 1) decreasing the total resources available to terrorists should reduce all their activities; 2) reducing the probability of success of one type of activity should lead to a shift in the use of other types of tactics (Enders and Sandler 2002). Drawing on their first insight, the size of the total resources available to a group should influence both the likelihood of civil war and level of terrorism. As the availability of resources for a group increases, the overall capability of the

group should rise, providing them greater ability to engage in any type of activity (Enders and Sandler 2002). Because it is difficult to observe the actual resources of a group, it is necessary to examine the factors that influence the size of resources. Opportunity in the form of weak governments is one explanation for the ability for terrorists to generate greater resources. For example, Lai (2007) finds that more trans-national terrorist attacks originate from weak states.

Research on the effect of regime type on terrorism and civil wars has also produced similar findings and conclusions. Research on terrorism highlights the competing effects of regime type on terrorism. First, the regime type of a state can influence the opportunities for groups to mobilize and organize attacks against the government or society. Autocratic regimes are much less likely to permit the formation of non-state groups, using both institutional mechanisms and force to deter or prevent group formation (Booker 2000). As a result, more open regime types like democracies should experience more political violence because of the ease of mobilization (Crenshaw 1981; Eubank and Weinberg 1998; Li 2005). However, others argue that regime type can influence political violence through its effects on the incentives of individuals to form violent organizations. According to this perspective, democracies should experience less political violence because of its ability to channel dissent and increase the expected utility from peaceful mobilization (Li 2005; Hegre et al 2001 ; Crenshaw 1981). Li (2005) suggests that these two approaches are not necessarily at odds with each other, since they are simply examining different aspects of democratic institutions, with the latter focusing on the beneficial effects of participation, and the former on the negative effects of constraints on the use of domestic force.

Within the civil war literature, some have found that democracy plays no role in whether a state experiences a civil war (Collier and Hoeffler 2000), while others have found an inverted U relationship, with highly autocratic and highly democratic states both being less likely to

experience a civil war relative to states with mixed regime institutions (Hegre et al 2001; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Autocratic states dramatically reduce the opportunities for individuals to organize into groups, preventing the development of organized resistance. While it is easy to mobilize within a democracy, access to the government and institutional channels to address societal grievances make it difficult for anti-government groups to generate enough popular support within a state for a rebellion. Thus, as predicted by the inverted U relationship (Hegre et al 2001; Fearon and Laitin 2003), states with mixed regime institutions should be the most likely to experience a civil war.

Explaining the Escalation of Political Violence by Groups

It is not surprising that similar theories have been used to explain the occurrence of civil wars and terrorism as what sets these two concepts apart is often the scale of violence achieved or the scope of organization. Definitions of both terrorism and civil wars are often based on organized non-state groups using violence to achieve political goals, with civil wars occurring when the level of violence exceeds a certain threshold.¹ States that experience civil wars can be thought of as a subset of states that experience terrorism. Another difference between the use of terrorism and the occurrence of a civil war is based on the size and capability of a sub-state actor. Hoffman (1998) argues that the difference between terrorist groups and those engaging in a civil war is based on their size and capability, with the latter tending to be larger and behaving like a traditional military. Differences between the sizes of unsatisfied violent groups within a state may produce additional distinctions between terrorism and civil wars. First, larger and more capable groups are more likely to be able to conquer, control, and govern territory (Hoffman 1998). Because terrorist organizations are likely to be smaller and less capable than rebel organizations, their tactics may be slightly different. Terrorists are less likely to directly engage

military forces in open battle. While these groups may attack military targets, they are not likely to initiate sustained battles. As a result, terrorist targets are disproportionately likely to be non-combatants. Although rebel forces will attack non-combatants², their greater willingness to engage in sustained conflict with military forces reduces their percentage of non-combatant targets relative to terrorists. Also, as highlighted in the definition of terrorism, groups rely on terrorism to convey a broader message to society in order to coerce, recruit, or provoke an unpopular government response (Crenshaw 1981). This contrasts with the motives of larger, more capable forces, which have the possibility of directly defeating a government. While larger groups use force to destroy government capacity and control the state, smaller groups use force to influence the policies of the government and gain the support of the people, allowing them to neutralize the disparity in military capabilities (Crenshaw 1981).

While terrorism and civil wars may be conceptually differentiated by the scope of violence and size and organization of non-state actors, they both describe violent acts taken by individuals and groups against a government, leading to common theoretical explanations. Despite these similarities, differences between the two concepts points to two relationships that have been relatively under-explored compared to the question of why states experience terrorism or civil wars. The first which has started to receive more attention focuses on why insurgents use tactics that may be defined as terrorism (Goodwin 2006; Kalyvas 2006).³ Scholars have analyzed why some insurgents choose to only target agents of the government versus attacking non-combatants or ordinary citizens as part of their civil war, with Goodwin (2006) defining the latter as terrorism. The second question, which is the focus of this paper, is when are groups able to escalate their use of violence against the government? The differences between terrorism and civil wars are essentially based on the abilities of a group; with insurgents, those waging a civil

war, being classified as larger and wielding more force compared to terrorists. This distinction highlights an important relationship between insurgency and terrorism, the latter can often escalate to produce the former. Some groups like the FARC in Colombia grew from a few hundred members in the mid 1960s to having over ten thousand members forty years later, waging a costly civil war against the government (Chernick 2007), while other groups like the many Christian militias in the United States have failed to escalate their use of force beyond a few sporadic attacks with even relatively large groups like the Republic of Texas, a group originally with a few hundred members, declining in number over time and moving from threatening US government officials to pledging support for the US against foreign terrorists (MIPT TKB).

To explain this variation, this paper focuses on the role that ideology and the goal of a group, as well as the number of existing insurgent groups, play in generating resources and influencing a harsh governmental response, both of which should increase the likelihood that a group can escalate its use of force against a government. First, similar to resource mobilization theories in the social movement literature, groups that are able to survive and expand their operations are likely to be those that are effective at generating resources and developing organizational structures (Gamson 1990; Brill 1971; Tilly 1978; Jenkins 1983). Enders and Sandler (2006) present a similar argument about the ability of terrorists to expand their use of violence based on a household production function. They argue that as resources increase, terrorist groups are able to increase all of their activities, including the use of violence and non-violent activities (Enders and Sandler 2006). These non-violent activities could include social services or recruitment which should bolster the organizational capability of a group. While the nature of resources is often debated in the social movements literature (see Jenkins 1983 for an

overview of this debate), groups that employ political violence against the state are likely to benefit primarily from labor and capital. These two forms of resources provide a group with the ability to wage war against the state through greater manpower and the ability to purchase arms. Both of which allows groups to eventually capture land and even set up pseudo governmental institutions like the provision of social services. Groups that are better able to recruit labor and generate capital should have a better chance of sustaining their use of force against a state as well as escalating it to the point of a sustained insurgency.

An oft stated goal of terrorist groups according to scholars is to provoke a harsh governmental response in order to promote sympathy and support from a local population (Pape 2003; Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007). Indiscriminate retaliation against terrorists by states can mobilize support for groups by demonstrating that the government is unwilling to provide concessions and by reducing the perceived costs to supporting violent political groups (Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). For the latter point, indiscriminate government violence can reduce the opportunity costs to a local population for supporting violent acts, as indiscriminate government retaliation may inflict substantial economic damage (Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007). Indiscriminate violence may also address the free-rider problem in collective actions like insurgency. As government attacks do not discriminate between violent and non-violent actors, the cost for non-participation in violent acts may rise to the point where joining or supporting violent groups is less costly than free-riding and not acting (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). Kalyvas and Kocher (2007) argue that rebel behavior may be better understood as providing a club good instead of a public good in the face of indiscriminate government retaliation. The result of this type of government response is to

produce increased support for groups that use political violence, providing them with greater resources and thus greater ability to sustain and expand their use of force.

Thus, this paper argues that factors which increase the resources of a group, including those that make it hard for the government to selectively target groups as opposed to the local population should increase the likelihood that a group will be able to escalate its use of force against the state. Sambanis (2004) states it quite succinctly: “without mass-level support, terrorism cannot grow into civil war.” Some of the existing approaches described above provide explanations for when groups are more likely to gain resources. For example, Fearon and Laitin’s (2003) state strength argument suggests that weak states make it easier for groups to gain resources from the local population. However, most of the existing theoretical explanations, including the state strength argument, focus on state level variation to explain when groups are likely to escalate their use of force against the government. This paper focuses on group level variation to explain differences in the escalation of force by groups across and within states.

One group level factor that should explain variation in the propensity to go from terrorism to insurgency is the goal of the group. Groups can have a variety of goals, ranging from policy changes to taking over the government. Environmental groups like the Earth Liberation Front are a good example of a policy driven group as their goal is to promote environmental policy changes. Two other types of goals are secession and center seeking goals. The aforementioned Republic of Texas is a good example of a group with a secessionist goal, a desire for some part of an existing state to be given its own independence from the rest of the state. Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines and the ETA in Spain are all examples of groups with secessionist goals. Finally, some groups seek to replace the existing government altogether. As opposed to policy groups, who want the government to change existing policies and secessionist groups,

who want to separate from the existing state, these center-seeking groups want to replace the government altogether and rule the existing state. Within the United States, many Christian Identity movements are driven by this goal, perhaps best exemplified by Timothy McVeigh's attack against the federal government in Oklahoma City. Other examples of center-seeking groups are the New People's Army in the Philippines and the First of October Antifascist Resistance Group (GRAPO) in Spain.

Terrorist organizations with separatist goals such as the ETA are more likely than the other two types of groups to escalate their violence to that of a civil war for several reasons. First, groups that seek to secede from an existing state are better able to generate resources from the local population. As Cronin (2006) details, the nature of separatist goals means that groups have support for their political or territorial objectives among those of the same identity, automatically creating a strong base of support. It may not be a majority, but it is strong nonetheless, compared to groups who seek policy or center oriented objectives. These separatist groups are likely to be able to draw on local dissatisfaction with center policies and unlike center or policy groups, they primarily are seeking support from one particular area as opposed to across the entire state. This may reduce the incentives to free ride as non-group members in the potentially independent territory may be better monitored by group members, making it harder for them to simply remain neutral in the conflict. As Kydd and Walter (2006) point out, terrorist organizations that have regime change as a goal face "a significant challenge: they are usually much more hostile to the regime than a majority of the state's citizens." Another related characteristic of separatist goals that leads them to have a higher likelihood likelihood of civil war is their inherent connection between the group and a piece of territory. This connection provides a natural base for a group. This base allows the group to hide among potential

sympathizers who may share the goals of the group. It also provides a tactical advantage not possessed by center or policy seeking groups. While these groups have to fight the government close to its center of power, separatists can fight at the periphery of the state, in areas that they may know better than the government. Finally, if the people living in the disputed territory have a distinct identity from the rest of the state, it may be difficult for the government to differentiate between violent separatists, non-violent separatists, and those either indifferent or wishing to stay in the state. Because the separatism is potentially justified by a different heritage than the rest of the population, determining who supports violence and who does not is potentially more difficult as characteristics that might mark an individual as part of a group are common across the entire area. Also, even attempts to selectively target violent separatists are going to produce destruction entirely within the disputed territory. This may, as previously discussed, reduce the perceived costs for supporting a violent separatist group because of the diminishing opportunity costs for not fighting.

While groups with separatist goals should have the highest likelihood of escalating their use of force against the government, groups seeking the center should be more likely to escalate their use of force than groups seeking policy changes. This is primarily because policy oriented groups are unlikely to mobilize the resources necessary to wage a civil war. These groups face competition for resources from groups using legal approaches, putting them in a position of either seeking an extreme position on policy or being forced to moderate their use of violence in response to small government changes. In the latter case, if violent groups seek moderate policy goals, allowing them to compete with less violent groups for supporters, escalation may be unlikely because governments may grant part of the demands, attributing change to the non-violent groups. This creates a significant free-riding problem for violent movements as the

benefits are fairly low and the costs high, leading people to avoid supporting the group. If a group chooses extreme policy goals to differentiate themselves from moderate groups, their methods and goals may alienate potential supporters, limiting their resource base. Finally, governments may have an easier time selectively targeting policy oriented groups. Unlike secessionist or even center-seeking groups, entire regions of a state are not likely to benefit from policy changes, rather specific groups within regions would benefit, making it easier for the government to identify who to monitor and sanction. The effect of group's goals on the ability to generate resources leads to the first hypothesis.

H1: The escalation of force against a state by a violent non-state actor is a function of the goals of the group, with secession producing the highest likelihood of escalation, followed by center-seeking goals.

Similar to the effect of goals, the ideology of a group should influence its ability to mobilize resources and escalate its use of violence against the state. Similar to the logic underlying the goals of a group, ideologies that provide groups with a natural base of support should allow for resource mobilization and the escalation of violence. The ideology of a group refers to how that group views social, political, and economic relationships. Specifically, two types of ideologies should allow groups to generate more resources than others. First, identity based ideologies should have the greatest effect on the likelihood of escalating violence through the accumulation of resources than other ideologies. Identity ideologies whether based on religion, ethnicity, or nationalism bind a group to a larger community. While this community may be heterogeneous in regards to political beliefs and support for violence, it still shares a similar identity with members of a terrorist group, whether it be a shared religion or ethnicity. Similar to the work on ethnic conflict (Brass 1985; Brass 1997), terrorist leaders can use this

shared identity to create conflict based on identity cleavages. Leaders of Christian Identity movements emphasize the shared heritage of Christians in justifying their goals of pursuing a theocratic United States, drawing on an existing identity to try and mobilize a segment of the population. Also, the existence of terrorist groups with identity ideologies may be part of broader discontent or grievances among that particular identity group (Gurr 1998). The rise of the ETA was facilitated by the repression of the Basque culture by Franco and the widespread discontent amongst the Basque people. This broader discontent among the identity group provides a terrorist group with a ready set of supporters, allowing them to gain recruits and capital to sustain their conflict against the government. Finally, governments should have a harder time distinguishing amongst members of identity groups. The current American foreign policy of emphasizing that the current war on terrorism not as a war against Islam is an example of the difficulty that governments face in trying to demonstrate that its attacks against identity groups that use violence is not an attack on the entire identity group. This may be even more difficult if terrorist groups seek refuge amongst the population, forcing governments to fight terrorists amongst non-violent members of society, generating costs that may lead some to favor supporting the terrorists (Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007).

While groups with identity ideologies should be the ones best able to sustain and expand their violent activities, those with leftist or Marxist ideologies should be more likely than other ideologies to produce greater levels of violence. While Marxist ideologies do not draw on identity cleavages, they do draw on class cleavages, which could be very powerful in certain circumstances. Throughout the Cold War, many groups in former colonial countries mobilized along class based ideologies like Marxism, drawing on discontent created by a legacy of colonialism amongst the local population. While popularly elected, Mossadeq in Iran represents

this type of anti-imperialist ideology that stands in contrast to the more well known religiously oriented leadership that would arise in 1979. So while class is not an identity characteristic that binds people to a broader history, it can serve to link a group to a broader population and more importantly, class based ideologies can provide a powerful mobilizing tool because of the shared perception of inequality that may exist within certain classes. The large scale revolutions in Russia and China provide examples of the ability to organize sizeable coalitions along class lines. This leads to the next hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: The escalation of force against a state by a violent non-state actor is a function of the ideology of the group, with identity ideologies producing the highest likelihood of escalation, followed by leftist/Marxist ideologies.

A final factor that varies across states but is based on groups is the competition faced by violent groups within a state by other violent groups. As previously discussed, waging an insurgency is costly compared to engaging in lower levels of violence, commonly characterized as terrorism. Thus, new terrorist groups in a state face not only higher costs for escalating their use of force, but are likely to face even higher costs if an existing group is already waging a civil war. This is analogous to explanations for the formation and maintenance of monopolies due to economies of scale and high costs to enter a market. When a state already possesses an insurgent group, one waging a civil war, other groups have to compete with that group for resources. While the state is weakened, potentially increasing the potential availability of resources and opportunity to challenge the state, the current producer of violence has little incentive to allow competitors for protection of the people. Just as Tilly (1985) in his classic discussion of war-making and state-making argues that states use protection both internally and externally to justify the creating of state institutions, existing insurgent groups are likely to be similarly disposed to

being the only source of protection in order to maximize their revenues and support amongst the population. Beyond monopolistic desires of existing groups, new groups may be less competitive in attracting supporters and recruits from existing insurgent groups. Existing groups have a proven track record of producing violence, are likely to possess greater group organization, possibly including the provision of services, and are likely to already have strong contacts within society, all of which raise the costs for new groups to enter the violence market. New groups have to demonstrate a better ability to challenge the state (better product), a cheaper ability to challenge the state (lower price), or greater benefits from their group. New groups may be able to capture some of the violence market from existing insurgents due to a larger market and differentiation amongst that market, but as the number of insurgent groups grows, it should be harder and harder for new groups to successfully compete for resources amongst existing insurgent groups. This leads to the final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: The escalation of force against a state by a non-state actor is a function of the number of existing insurgent groups, those waging civil war against the state.

Empirically Examining the Escalation of Violence by Non-state Actors

To empirically examine these three hypotheses, this paper analyzes all terrorist groups from 1950-2000 as listed by the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism's Terrorism Knowledge Base (MIPT-TKB).⁴ This database has a wide range of terrorist groups, including groups that existed for one attack (e.g. the many post Cold War Greek terrorist groups) to those that have been active for several decades like the aforementioned FARC. This provides a useful set of cases of groups that have either used force or threatened to use force against a government for political purposes. Two different dependent variables are used to empirically examine the escalation of violence. Both are based on the identification of Armed Conflict by the PRIO

Armed Conflict data. This dataset examines all state years from 1946 to 2002, and defines civil war as: “a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.” We code an escalation of violence if the Armed Conflict data identifies the occurrence of any level of civil war between the group and a state.⁵ The first dependent variable is simply whether the group (as identified by the MIPT-TKB) is coded as experiencing a civil war against a state by the Armed Conflict data. To insure that the data is a sample of groups that have the opportunity to escalate their use of force, cases where the formation of the group is coded after the start of the civil war or the same time as the start of the civil war are removed from the analysis. These cases are not marked by the potential of a group to escalate, rather they are groups that are already able to reach high levels of violence and thus are not an appropriate sample for analysis. For example, the Taliban’s participation in the Afghanistan civil war is not included in the analysis. The Taliban begin using force during the period of the civil war. Thus, its escalation of violence is potentially driven by a different causal mechanism than groups that exist prior to the start of a large scale use of force. A similar yet slightly different example is that of UNITA. UNITA’s participation in the war for independence occurs several years after other groups like the MPLA had already been fighting. Thus, it is not included in the analysis. Similarly, its participation in the Angolan civil war (1975) is not included because by the time the civil war starts, UNITA is clearly a rebel organization, thus the causal mechanism of a group forming to challenge the government and then escalating its use of force is not the causal mechanism behind groups like UNITA’s participation in a civil war.

The second dependent variable is the duration of time until a group is able to reach the Armed Conflict civil war threshold. For this dependent variable, data from the MIPT-TKB

database on group formation, supplemented by additional research was used to identify a founding date for a group. The start of the civil war (the point at which the group and state cross the 25 fatality threshold) is coded as the termination date. Groups that never experience a civil war are coded as lasting until the last year of data for the independent variables, December 31, 2000. These groups are not coded as having failed and thus are considered censored observations.⁶ As will be discussed below, both time varying and non-time varying models duration models are analyzed.

The first independent variable tests the goal argument. For every group, the goal was coded based on descriptions provided by the MIPT-TKB database, supplemented by additional research. Goals were coded as Secession, Center, Policy, and Other. Secession was coded if the description indicated that the group wanted independence for some territorial unit of an existing state. Center was coded if the groups wanted to replace the existing government. Policy was coded if a group sought specific policy changes by the government or society more generally but had no other goals. Finally, the other category included groups that either had unclear or unknown goals, economic goals, or revenge. Because the Other category is so small, it is combined with the Policy category for analysis. Three dichotomous variables are created from the categorization of group goals: 1) Secession, 2) Center, 3) Policy/Other. For all the empirical models, policy/other is the excluded reference category.

The second independent variable is the ideology of the group. The MIPT TKB provides ideology coding for each group. These ideologies are Religious, Nationalist-Separatist, Leftist, Communist/Socialist, Right Wing (Reactionary or Conservative), Anti-Globalization, Anarchist, Racist, and Other. There are a few problems that had to be addressed with these codings. First, often more than one ideology was assigned to a group. For example, Abu Sayyaf was coded as a

Nationalist/Separatist and a Religious Group because of their Islamic orientation and ties to the Moro population. Since we theorize that these two specific ideologies should not be different, this case was not a problem, but for other cases, where religion or nationalist/separatist was paired with one of the other ideologies, research was conducted to determine if identity or the other goal was the stated ideology of the group. For example, the ETA is coded as both nationalist/separatists and Communist/Socialist. In our analysis, they are coded as Nationalist/Separatists as their initial ideology was Basque oriented and the devotion to Communist principles has varied over time. A second problem is in the coding of nationalist/separatist. We double checked groups coded as nationalist separatist to insure that the coding was based on ideology and not goal. A final problem was what to do with Racist category. This coding encompasses groups that, “select targets based on their ethnicity.”⁷ Generally this includes groups like the Ku Klux Klan or groups where their ideology is primarily based on their targets as opposed to in reference to their own group. This empirical difference is potentially problematic with the conceptualization of ideology. While groups like the KKK use race as the basis for their targets, an argument could be made that their ideology is based on identity lines, providing them with an identifiable base of support. To deal with this problem, we coded racist groups in two ways. The first was to consider them as part of the right wing groups because of their focus on seeking an earlier way of life where their particular race was dominant (as is the case for most of the racist groups). The other was to code groups as nationalist if their targeting was based on their own racial identification, otherwise to code them as right wing. The results are the same regardless of the coding because these groups represent a very small percentage of groups.

The final hypothesized variable is the number of groups already engaged in a civil war. This variable is the number of groups engaged in civil war as defined by the Armed Conflict data prior to the formation date of a terrorist organization.

Several state level control variables are used to measure the opportunity for groups to engage in terrorism because of state weakness. Drawing on Fearon and Laitin's (2003) data, the percent of a state that is mountainous and whether a state has non-contiguous elements are used in all the empirical models. For the duration dependent variable with time varying covariates, Fearon and Laitin's (2003) income per capita, whether the state is a new state, whether the state experienced instability that year, the state's population, regime type, and whether it is an oil producer are also included.⁸ For the dichotomous civil war dependent variable and non time varying covariate duration models, the average income per capita, average population and average regime type of the state since 1950 or independence and when a civil war occurs or the end of 2000 is used. Finally, we include a variable which measures whether a state operates in more than one state. Groups that operate in more than one state are likely to have a stable base of operations free from interference from their target states. These groups may also potentially gain support from their host state, especially if the host state has hostile relations with the target state. RENAMO's attacks against Mozambique are a good example of this type of group and situation as RENAMO was supported by both Rhodesia and South Africa. This variable is dichotomous and coded 1 if the MIPT TKB database lists a group as having more than one base of operations. Bases that are non-state entities are considered part of a state and not counted towards the total number of bases of operations. For example, Hamas is not coded as having more than one base of operation since the West Bank/Gaza and Israel are its two listed base of operations with the former not being a state. For the civil war dependent variable, a probit model is used with

standard errors clustered by states. For both duration dependent variables, a Cox semi-parametric duration model is analyzed.

Empirical Results

For the period of 1950-2000, we have 559 terrorist groups. Of those 559, 65 or about 12% escalate their use of force to a civil war. Table 1 presents three sets of cross tabulations of the three main independent variables and the dichotomous escalation to civil war variable. For the number of groups, the values have been truncated to 0,1,2, and 3 or more. Looking at table 1, the goal and ideology variables seem to be supported as secession and center goals have a statistically higher percentage of cases ending in escalation than policy oriented goals. Similarly, identity and leftist ideologies produce statistically higher percentages of cases escalating than other ideologies (right wing, environmental, anarchist, etc). The final independent variable does not receive as strong support as the percentages are not statistically significant and for 3 or greater, the percentage is greater than the other values, suggesting that more groups may weaken the state, creating greater opportunities for groups to engage in insurgency.

Table 2 presents the results of the probit and Cox models for the group as the unit of analysis. The dependent variable for the probit model is whether at any point after the group formed, it was able to escalate to the Armed Conflict data's definition of a civil war. For the Cox model, the time from formation to the start of the civil war is modeled. For both models, empirical support is found for the goal variables. Groups with secession and center goals are more likely to escalate their use of force and do it more quickly compared to policy oriented groups. Secessionist groups are about 24% more likely to escalate their use of force than policy groups, while center groups are about 11% more likely. Tests on whether the effect of secession is greater than center are a little mixed. For the probit model, the p-value of an equality of

coefficients test is .06, putting it close to being significant, while it is significant at a more conventional .05 level for the duration model. This provides some evidence for the first hypothesis that secession oriented groups are more likely to escalate their use of force, followed by groups with center goals, who are more likely to escalate than policy groups.

While the goal hypothesis was supported, hypothesis 2 about the ideology of the group is not supported in either model. Identity and leftist groups are no different than other types of groups in the likelihood and timing of civil war escalation. This result holds even if we separate religion and ethnicity into two separate variables. One explanation for this lack of significance is that ideology may influence a group's ability to escalate civil violence through the promotion of goals. An ideology may inform the goal of a group and that goal backed by a particular ideology may be what mobilizes support for a group and obfuscates who amongst the population supports that group. Some evidence for this comes from the close relationship between goals and ideology. A simple model predicting the goals of the group, suggests that identity factors predict secession, while leftist ideology predicts center seeking goals.⁹ Also, taking out the goal variables leads the ideology variables to be statistically significant in the models. Thus, ideology and goals are closely related and it may be that particular goals are generated by certain ideologies and the two reinforce each other to allow a group to mobilize resources, increasing their level of violence. A similar explanation might be that ideology has a conditional effect on the likelihood of escalation. Ideology may mobilize resources for certain goals compared to others. Drawing on the previous discussion, identity based ideologies may be better suited at mobilizing support for secession as opposed to center seeking activities or policy because identity groups can draw on a defined area of support, where they may even be in the majority. This may not be the case across the entire state, making it more difficult to mobilize support.

Unfortunately, empirical support is not found for this explanation. Examining a model where the goal and ideology variables are interacted with each other does not find this conditional relationship. The effect of a secessionist or center goal is not significantly different based on the ideology of the group.

The final hypothesis receives some empirical support. In the probit model, it is negative and significant, fitting with the expectation that as the number of insurgent groups grow in a state, the likelihood of additional terrorist groups escalating their use of force is lower. However, this result is significant at a non-standard level (.08) in the duration model. While general support was found for the effect of the number of groups, we suspect from the cross-tabulation, that the effect of more insurgent groups is more complex. As previously discussed, as the number of insurgents groups increase, conflicting processes may be at work. Opportunity may be expanded as the states monopoly over the use of force is broken down by existing groups, allowing more groups to challenge the state. Conversely, as the insurgent market gets more competitive, costs and barriers to entry for new groups should limit their ability to escalate their use of force with existing groups acting as a potential cartel. More nuanced theory is needed to determine how these different processes work and when we should expect an increase or decrease in the likelihood of escalation as the number of insurgent groups increase.

As for the control variables, only the average income per capita and whether the group operates in more than one area are significant. It is not surprising that the other control variables are not significant given that the unit of analysis is the group and not the state. First, two of the variables that are not significant are averages over potentially long periods of time, creating measurement error in their relationships. Second, the other two non-time varying variables, percent mountains and whether there are non-contiguous territories of a state are good indicators

at the state level but not the group level. Groups are likely to vary across these characteristics within a state. For example, Indonesia is a good example of a state that has non-contiguous elements. In general, this suggests that Indonesia should have a higher risk of civil war but for any given group, it will depend on whether they reside in a non-contiguous territory, something this variable does not measure.

Table 3 presents the results of the duration model with time-varying data. In this model, the unit of analysis is group years. Looking at the baseline hazard of this model, it appears that the longer a group lasts, the more likely it is to escalate its use of force. This finding should be treated with some caution as exact end dates are not modeled for groups, rather they are assumed to always exist and simply censor on the last date we have data for all the variables. Similar to the previous results, the goal variables are significant, while the ideology ones are not. However, in this model, the number of existing insurgent groups' variable is not significant. This is likely to be due to a more complex relationship that exists between the number of groups and the opportunity for a new group to draw support and thus increase their use of force. Income/capita is again significant while the base of operations variable is not. Finally, the effect of regime type appears to match the inverted U relationship previously described. When modeling regime type as a trichotomy, groups in both democracies and autocracies are less likely to reach the civil war threshold than groups in anocracies. Finally, some support is found whether a state is a new state, though this result is sensitive to model specification.

Conclusions and Implications

This paper examines when groups are likely to escalate their use of force from small attacks, often characterized as acts of terrorism to larger scale and sustained attacks, commonly thought of as insurgency. Drawing on resource mobilization arguments, groups should be able to

increase their level of political violence when they are able to mobilize resources, both labor and capital. Resources allow a group to sustain and expand their use of violence. While existing opportunity themed research on insurgency focuses on state characteristics that allow groups to more easily organize and extort from the population, group characteristics may also influence group fortunes. In particular, factors that produce support from a local population either due to shared preferences or dislike of the central government because of harsh repressive measures, should allow a group to better recruit and fund itself, allowing it to sustain and expand its use of political violence.

This paper focuses on three factors that should influence support and correspondingly the level of resources for a group. Groups with goals and ideologies that have a natural and pre-existing base of support have an easier time gaining sympathy and support from a local population. Having this pre-existing base of possible supporters also complicates government efforts to selectively target violent individuals from the rest of that local population. The other factor is based on the existing number of insurgent groups within a state. Analogous to an economic market, if groups that use political violence are challenging the state's monopoly on the use of force, as the number of competitors increases, the cost and barrier of entering the market should also rise, suggesting that as the number of insurgent groups in a state increases, the likelihood of new terrorist groups escalating their use of force should decline.

These three factors are empirically examined on a set of all terrorist groups from 1950-2000. Results show that the goals of a group have a strong and consistent influence on the ability of terrorists to escalate their use of force. The number of existing insurgent groups also had the expected effect though these results were sensitive to model specifications. Finally, the ideology of a group had no effect on the ability to escalate the level of political violence.

These findings add to our current understanding of terrorism and civil wars in the following ways. First, they highlight the importance of group characteristics especially how they relate to a potential base of support. While these characteristics have traditionally been viewed as measures of willingness to challenge the state, grievances, they also represent a measure of opportunity. Shared dislike for the government especially when mobilized along around a historic goal or belief can allow groups to gain the necessary level of support to sustain the level of political violence against the state that can produce civil wars. Thus, while it is important to understand sources of state variation that allow groups to thrive, it is equally useful to analyze variation in groups that allow some groups to prosper and escalate their use of violence while others are limited to isolated uses of force. Given that most existing research focuses on states, possibly because data is more readily available, this research suggests that new theories and data on groups need to be produced, particularly on group-society and group-state relationships.

These findings also point to the complex relationship that exists between the state and groups. While the group-state relationship is often thought of dyadically, new work is starting to analyze the dynamics between groups, though this work primarily focuses on competitive dynamics (Kydd and Walter 2006). While this research is supportive of the notion that groups challenging the state are likely to be in competition with each other, this may not always be the case. Similar to research on social movements and interest groups, the ability of groups to sustain and expand is likely to be influenced by environmental factors including the existing number of groups, the cost of entering the market, and the demand for challenges to the government. Thus, this research builds upon this emerging literature by empirically examining competition between groups.

Finally, these findings suggest that while all terrorist groups pose a threat, governments should be particularly worried about groups whose goals or ideologies allow them to identify with an existing segment of society. Groups whose supporters are diffuse, because their goals are not likely to have an identifiable and local base of support, should be more easily targeted by governments and less supported by the population more generally. In contrast, groups whose goals possess a natural base of support and allow them to more easily connect to a grieved population are better able to mobilize support and expand their use of political violence. This suggests that for policy-oriented groups, police or military approaches alone may be likely to succeed as it may be easier to selectively target violent groups and more moderate elements are less likely to feel a connection to these types of groups. For groups with secessionist or center claims, while policies that reduce conditions favorable for insurgency may dampen a group's ability to escalate its use of force, severing the tie between the group and a base of supporters through other approaches may also be useful. This may include some level of concessions in the way of political reforms in order to separate the group's goal from the majority of a society. The decline in ETA support after Spain granted significant levels of autonomy is evidence of weakening a group by separating its goals from that of the populace, making secessionist goals appear to be simply a difference in policy with the government about how best to address societal grievances.

Table 1: Cross-Tabulation Goal, Ideology, Number of Insurgent Groups
And Escalation to Civil War

	No Escalation	Escalation	Total
Secession	92 (76.03)	29 (23.97)	121 (100)
Center	149 (82.78)	31 (17.22)	180 (100)
Policy/Other	253 (98.06)	5 (1.94)	258 (100)

Results Significant at .05 level

Identity	No Escalation	Escalation	Total
	220 (84.29)	41 (15.71)	261 (100)
Leftist/Communist	125 (87.41)	18 (12.59)	143 (100)
Other	149 (96.13)	6 (3.87)	155 (100)

Results Significant at .05 level

	No Escalation	Escalation	Total
0 Groups	289 (87.05)	43 (12.95)	332 (100)
1 Group	103 (89.57)	12 (10.43)	115 (100)
2 Groups	69 (95.83)	3 (4.17)	72 (100)
3 Groups	33 (82.5)	7 (17.5)	40 (100)

Results Not Significant

Table 2: Probit and Cox Model Results on Escalation and Time to Escalation, 1950-2000

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
	Probit: DV= Escalation/No Escalation	Cox: DV= Duration to Escalation
Secession	1.36*** (.350)	2.48*** (.550)
Center	.845*** (.261)	1.60** (.512)
Identity	.074 (.313)	-.271 (.509)
Left/Comm.	.371 (.321)	.158 (.573)
# Insurgent Groups	-.177*** (.054)	-.155+ (.090)
%Mountain	-.002 (.005)	-.0004 (.006)
Non-Contig	-.166 (.259)	-.079 (.362)
AvgLNPop	.023 (.072)	-.028 (.094)
AvgInc/Cap	-.116*** (.027)	-.221*** (.043)
AvgPolity	-.008 (.018)	-.022 (.024)
>1 Base	.477* (.205)	.531* (.252)
Constant	-1.76 (1.20)	--
	N=554 LL=-140.37 Chi2=106.94***	N=552 LL=-310.89 Chi2=80.22***

+p<.1, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001 All Significance tests are two-tailed. Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors clustered by state. Coefficients are reported for the Cox model. They represent the effect on the hazard rate. Positive values increase the hazard rate and make failure more likely.

Table 3: Cox Model Results for Time to Escalation for Time Varying Covariates

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Secession	2.67*** (.575)	2.55*** (.593)
Center	1.68** (.549)	1.650** (.560)
Identity	-.524 (.513)	-.398 (.497)
Left/Comm.	.041 (.565)	.168 (.573)
# Insurgent Groups	-.144 (.148)	-.124 (.132)
%Mountain	-.004 (.006)	-.004 (.007)
Non-Contig	.010 (.420)	.234 (.409)
LnPopulation	-.121 (.111)	-.099 (.120)
Income/Capita	-.307*** (.072)	-.297*** (.074)
Polity	.007 (.024)	--
Democracy	--	-.886* (.417)
Autocracy	--	-1.10** (.395)
>1 Base	.328 (.274)	.372 (.275)
Oil	.366 (.303)	.118 (.345)
New State	.836 (.558)	1.20* (.549)
Instability	.289 (.365)	.041 (.361)
	N=7382 LL=-270.74 Chi2=78.28***	N=7382 LL=- 265.59 Chi2=103.4***

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001 All Significance tests are two-tailed. Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors clustered by state. Coefficients are reported for the Cox model. They represent the effect on the hazard rate. Positive values increase the hazard rate and make failure more likely.

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¹ There are numerous definitions of terrorism that modify this definition by specifying the nature of the target, whether violence or the threat of violence is necessary, the nature of the ideology, and who the perpetrator is.

² Cases like Burundi and Liberia demonstrate that civilians are often the target of rebels during a civil war.

³ Kalyvas (2006) does not refer to terrorism as a tactic, rather he analyzes selective vs indiscriminate targeting, but the focus on attacking civilians is similar to Goodwin's notion of terrorism.

⁴ <http://www.tkb.org>

⁵ Data is available at www.prio.no. The data identifies minor and major wars. This paper uses both to identify civil wars.

⁶ For the start date and end date, if only a year was available, the January 1 was used for the month and day of the date. If only the month and year were available, the 1st was used as the day.

⁷ <http://www.tkb.org/DFI.jsp?page=method>

⁸ Descriptions of these variables are available at Fearon and Laitin (2003). Data was available from <http://jcr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/50/4/508>

⁹ Here we run a probit with either secession or center as the dependent variable and identity and leftist/communist as the two independent variables