

## **Adaptive Tactics: Terrorist Targeting and Regime Type**

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**Abstract:** Most work on terrorism in political science has focused on the propensity of different regime types to become targets of terrorist attacks. These studies have presented a debate that has indicated that democracies are safe because their institutions and norms largely negate the need for political violence (Eyerman, 1998), while others have stated that democracies are more likely to be targeted because of their accommodation of diverse political views (Gurr, 1979) and their openness (Marighela, 1971). However, these studies do not evaluate the selection of terrorist targets in terms of the target state's regime type. Using the ITERATE dataset, I attempt to determine whether terrorist targets differ between various regime types by adopting the argument advanced by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2005) regarding selection institutions. Namely, I seek to show that terrorists in democratic states will target the general population while terrorists in autocratic states will target those institutions, like the military, that keep the leader in power.

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The prevalence of terrorism suggests that it is a tool that has been increasingly employed by an ever growing set of groups in order to achieve or advance a wide range of goals or ideologies. The intersection of globalization with the grievances of a variety of groups presents a major explanation of the use of terror; targets and perpetrators of violence have proliferated, access to weapons and tactics have increased, and the process of globalization itself has engendered, on behalf of many groups, a driving force to violence (Cha, 2000). For this reason, the modern terrorist presents an evermore formidable challenge to states because groups have increased their proficiency and their lethality.<sup>1</sup> In this context, it is important to fully develop an understanding of the process by which terrorists evaluate and select their targets.

Terrorism's heightened significance has produced a concurrent increase in interest in the field among political scientists. Most research has focused on determining what regime types are most vulnerable to terrorist attack, while eschewing (c.f. Gurr (1988) for one exception), to systematically evaluate the differences in target selection among groups operating in those different regime types. Terrorists, seeking to provide some sort of political change, seek "not only to destroy, but to be heard" (Stohl 1988, 5). It follows then that targets will be selected "on the basis of what will create maximum impact with a maximum chance of success" (Stohl, 1988: 5). However, the targets that have maximum impact cannot be the same by regime type; as a first cut, democracies and autocracies differ on the importance of the public in the governing process (Buono de Mesquita et al. 1999, 2005). Terrorists, assuming the primary importance of target selection in the advancement of their cause, must take a version of this logic into account.

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<sup>1</sup> From 1998 to 2003, approximately 21,000 people perished as a result of terrorist attacks (State Department, 2003).

This analysis focuses on how terrorists select their targets for maximum impact and adapt their tactics in the face of security concerns. In addition, I will extend this logic to address the empirical gap in the literature, namely that pertaining to the selection of targets in different regime types. In particular, I use the selection institutions argument of Bueno de Mesquita et al. (1999, 2005) as a guide to understand which targets hold the most potential in autocratic and democratic states. Finally, I utilize ITERATE data to test a number of hypotheses regarding the types of targets terrorists select in democratic and autocratic states.

### **EXPLAINING TERRORIST ACTION**

Most quantitative research on terrorism focuses on which states are likely to experience terrorism (Eubank and Weinberg, 1998, 2001; Eyerman, 1998; Li, 2005), but few have focused on who within a state is likely to be targeted (Gurr, 1988). Instead, much of the extant literature has focused on the variety of differences between states that may increase, or decrease, their attractiveness as targets to terrorist organizations. Given that much previous work has established that terrorists do adhere to a form of rationality (Sandler et al., 1983), the targeting of specific entities must follow a coherent logic.

Regime type is one explanation that has been routinely used to explain the propensity of certain states as terrorist targets over others. In particular, this difference is theorized as providing normative and institutional characteristics that directly affect the operation of terrorist groups. The literature regarding terrorism and democracy are divided into two schools of thought. The strategic school argues that democracies are more vulnerable because they inherently reduce the terrorists' operational costs, as evidenced by a democratic society's openness which allows groups of various

persuasions to organize within the state (Eyerman 1998), the electoral and legal constraints on democratic counterterrorism efforts (Hamilton and Hamilton, 1983; Laqueur, 1977), and the reduced costs of making an effective threat since the number of valuable targets vastly outweighs the state's ability to protect them (Li, 2005). On the other hand, the political access school contends that the openness of the democratic state can dampen terrorism by providing opportunities for disaffected groups to vote, to form political parties, and to create interest groups, instead of terrorist organizations, to try to affect political change (for a good review of the literature see Li, 2005).

Because the debate between the strategic school and the political access school may never reach a definitive conclusion, the impact of democracy on terrorism is more nuanced. Li (2005) argues that democratic institutions and civil liberties often work at cross-purposes. He argues that while democracy itself reduces the likelihood of terrorism, the presence of a free and open press is shown to have a positive effect, increasing the probability of terrorism by publicizing the aftermath of an attack and the perpetrating group (Li, 2005). The presence of civil liberties also acts to constrain the effectiveness of counter terror operations, thus lowering costs of operating within the democratic state (Crenshaw, 1981). For Eyerman (1998), newly formed democracies are more likely to be targets than established democracies. This is new democracies are less able at providing signals that non-violent activities are acceptable alternatives to violent ones (Eyerman, 1998).

However, these existing analyses fail to evaluate whether there exist qualitative differences between targets in democratic and autocratic states. Gurr (1988), in an analysis of political terrorism in 87 states from 1961 to 1970, finds that terrorists are most

likely to target “public persons and groups” – a category comprising politicians and other government officials, the military, and police, in all types of states.<sup>2</sup> The public, or “private persons and groups” represent, 17% of all terrorist targets in Latin American states, 18% in “Afro-Asian” states, and 35% in European states. Further, Gurr indicates, through measuring the duration of terrorist campaigns, that terrorism was more common in Europe and Latin America than in Africa or Asia and that democratic states were more frequently targeted than autocratic states. Gurr, in accord with the later findings by Eyerman (1998) and Ross (1993), concludes that terrorism is more prevalent in democratic systems, or, those with a “record of accommodating diverse political views and demands” (1988: 51).

Gurr’s analysis provides a number of insights. While his analyses are preliminary his study supports the contention of the strategic school that democracies are more vulnerable and that there is a qualitative difference between the types of targets terrorists choose and the regime type in which the targets are located. In order for this to be more clearly demonstrated a Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers, 2002) democracy score was included in a revised presentation of Gurr’s results to provide an average democracy measure for the regions that experienced a terrorist attack or campaign during the time period examined.<sup>3</sup>

Insert Table 2 Here

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<sup>2</sup> The percentages are 36 % for European states, 57% for Latin American states, and 71% for “Afro-Asian” states

<sup>3</sup> Gurr analyzes 87 states, self-governing territories, and noteworthy areas in his study. My test includes 61 states. I exclude Hong-Kong (part of the UK during the period), N. Ireland (part of the UK), and Puerto Rico (part of the US) and those states which did not experience a terrorist campaign or episode (23 in all).

As indicated by the table, the European “region” had the highest percentage of attacks on the public and the lowest level of attacks on public figures for the time period in question. In addition, the region also experiences the highest level of democracy; only East Germany, Yugoslavia, and Greece experienced periods below the standard democracy threshold of six.<sup>4</sup> The Afro-Asian and Latin American “regions”, while scoring low on the Polity IV democracy score, provided the highest levels of attacks on political leaders and the lowest on the public. While it is true that autocratic states have the capability to misrepresent the true scope and target of terrorist attacks, the results demonstrate that, at an aggregate level, differences in target type do exist for democracies and autocracies.

This observation notwithstanding, the strategic function of terrorism remains the same – to coerce or intimidate states to achieve a political, religious, or social goal (Hoffman, 1998). Terrorists choose targets in order to raise the costs of an issue to a level in which the target state is overwhelmed and concedes (Pape, 2003). The selection of targets becomes a crucial part of the terrorist strategy; acts need to be visible to garner the attention of the target state and the likelihood of success must be high enough to promote the appearance of proficiency and to maintain the group’s strategy of intimidation over the target state.

Empirical analyses have noted the significant tendency of democracies to be the target of terrorist actions. This regularity can be observed when we consider the two nonexclusive goals of terrorist violence - the coercion of opponents and the recruitment of new adherents (Pape, 2003). These goals are better realized in democracies than in autocratic states due to the presence of a free press, the role of civil liberties, and the

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<sup>4</sup> Greece had 4 years of a 0 democracy score (1967-1970)

vulnerability of democratic leaders to their constituents. While these factors lend themselves towards increasing the likelihood of terrorist violence, they also provide us with a glimpse into which targets are preferred in democratic states.

The presence of a free and open press is a significant contributor towards the terrorist goal of, “propaganda of the deed,” which, in the words of Carlos Pisacane, was an act to “draw attention to...inform, educate, and ultimately rally the people behind the revolution” (Hoffman, 1998: 17). While it is not necessary to have a free press to commit terrorist acts, its presence helps to expand the shock and terror from the initial target to the broader populace. This can also bring issues, normally relegated as unimportant, to the fore of public debate as well as mobilizing third parties to exert pressure on the target government (Pape, 2003).

The role of civil liberties is a central one in the debate between the strategic and political access schools. Li (2005) discusses civil liberties and institutional constraints as both weakening the government and inadvertently strengthening terrorist groups. Democratic counter terror efforts are weakened by the large number of people represented by the government. This is because strict counter terror efforts act to reduce the political support for the government in power. Thus, according to Li (2005) democratic counter terror policy cannot be as strict as that in autocratic states. Additionally, the wider range of people represented by a democratic government also increases the range of available targets to a terrorist group. The range of security needed to counter such a threat is also limited by civil liberties in a democratic state as it would entail an onerous and pervasive security apparatus. Autocracies face no such constraints

and are free to counter terror with oppressive and brutal tactics, thus acting to drive down the occurrence of terrorist incidents (Hamilton and Hamilton, 1983?)

The increased susceptibility of democratic leaders to their constituents increases their vulnerability and the likelihood that they will acquiesce to demands when faced by certain types of terrorism (Pape, 2003). Pape (2003) argues that suicide terrorism has become more prevalent mainly because democracies, unwilling to bear the costs of terrorist violence and the electoral consequences that follow, have yielded to the perpetrators' demands. Furthermore, the perception exists that democracies are "soft" and that their publics, in addition to their ability inflict costs on their leaders, have a low cost tolerance (Pape, 2003). His analysis details that democracies are the exclusive target of suicide terrorism, an indication of the unique vulnerability and opportunity provided by democratic states. The electoral and political consequences that stem from terrorism are real, Hewitt (1993) details that incumbent governments are usually held responsible and suffer the consequences of failed security policy. These rationale are argued to be present in contemporary examples, some have stated that the anticipated negative response due to policy failure from the Spanish public was an underlying rationale for al-Qaeda's March 2004 bombings of the Madrid train system.<sup>5</sup>

These three factors, combined with the arguments regarding terrorist rationality and adaptability, suggest that terrorist targets should be specific types. Li (2005) argues that civil liberties and the vulnerability of leaders to their constituents increase the strategic position of terrorists by providing more numerous targets. An effective threat in a democratic state need only target the people since they play an important role in

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<sup>5</sup> For a discussion on this point see Foster, Sobek, and Braithwaite (2005).

determining government policy. The presence of a free press also acts to magnify the threat of terrorist violence beyond the bounds of the actual threat or incident. Effective terrorist threats in autocratic states should only focus on the winning coalition, whether military or other government officials, that keep the leader in power. Targeting in this situation is fundamentally more difficult and may account for the lower prevalence of terrorist incidents. In particular, this logic seems to most closely follow that provided by selection institutions argument (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005). States in which the leadership depends upon the consent of a relatively large portion of the populace presents a broader range and different set of targets than ones in which the leadership is insulated from the people (Li, 2005). Below, I discuss the theory of selection institutions and how they relate to the terrorist targeting process.

## **SELECTION INSTITUTIONS**

One distinction of particular value between democratic and autocratic states is the size of the group upon which a government draws its power. This concept is important in determining how leaders stay in power and make state policies. In all regimes, leaders rely upon a group of people to gain and hold power. This subset of the population is referred to as the selectorate (*s*). In a democracy, the selectorate can be as broad as everyone who has the right to vote. In autocratic systems, the selectorate is often determined by an individual's position in a highly regulated and selective community like military leadership, ethnicity, wealth, or age. Within the selectorate is a further subset of individuals, the winning coalition (*w*), who the leader directly relies upon for their power and their position over others. In a democratic state, this can simply be the majority of

voters who elected the ruler, while in autocratic states this may be a group of particular generals or a highly insulated and exclusive group of party officials.

When the coalition is small, leaders can allocate private goods to maintain the loyalty of a particular selector. The loyalty norm, or  $W/S$ , in this case would be higher, indicating that the selector is particularly indebted to the leader for their private goods. Because this loyalty is so solid, opposition to new challengers will be strong. As the winning coalition grows larger, the leader is less able to allocate private goods and must turn to public goods to reward his supporters. These goods, since they are non-exclusive in their nature, are not just beneficial to the members of the winning coalition, but rather to the entire society. The increasing size of the winning coalition and the reduced provision of private goods to a particular selector also reduces the loyalty norm and decreases the costs and risks of defecting from the leader. As a result, members of a winning coalition in a democratic society are more able to defect from one winning coalition and to join another with a more favorable distribution of goods. Any challenger with a better allocation of public goods may be able to draw off supporters. In terrorism situations, any challenger that can win over supporters with a better allocation of national security can succeed the incumbent.

The difference in the allocation of public goods between small and large  $w$  states presents an opportunity to terrorists' target selection. Large  $w$  states are vulnerable largely because of the enhanced role of the selectorate in determining policy and in creating costs for leaders for failed policy (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 1999). This vulnerability exists not only because the selectorate can impose costs on the leadership and vote in a successor with a better provision of public goods, but because the provision

of public goods to maintain the support of the populace are the same characteristics that make large w states vulnerable. This includes civil rights, press freedom, and institutional checks and balances that act to restrict the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts (Li, 2005).

Another implication of the private/public goods distinction is the creation of tax and spending policies (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005). Leaders in small w states will institute higher tax rates to provide a flow of private goods to their supporters. In large w states, and those with a weaker loyalty norm, lower taxes will be instituted to discourage defections from the winning coalition to challengers who promise better public goods provisions and lower taxes (Olson, 1993). This difference results in very divergent economic outcomes for the two types of states. A small w state, burdened by an exploitative tax on the public for the benefit of the elite, a condition referred to as the kleptocracy, will have lower levels of productivity. Large w states on the other hand, as beneficiaries of lower tax rates, will enjoy a higher level of productivity since there is incentive for people to earn greater amounts of income and will, as a result, have greater reinvestment in the economy.

The economic advantage of large w states relative to small w suggests a secondary reason for the vulnerability of large w states. States with lower tax rates provide greater opportunities to target the selectorate; citizens have greater wealth and more opportunities in which to use it. This is demonstrated in the continued fear of terrorist attacks on shopping malls, sporting events, tourist areas and other areas in which the general population is known to frequent. The state, also valuing the freedom of the population, will be unable, from either a standpoint of cost or civil liberties, to provide a

security structure that is capable of protecting the entirety of the electorate and the entirety of the places they frequent (Li, 2005). Thus, in combination with the policy making power of the public, we should expect:

*H1: The public will be the target of terrorist attacks more frequently in democracies than in autocracies.*

In a small w state, the potential targets available to a rational terrorist are of a different nature. The limited nature of political participation in such a state dramatically reduces the effectiveness of attacks on the population, since they are of little import towards gaining power for and maintaining the position of the leader. This shifts the vulnerability from the public to the members of more specialized winning coalition.

The depressed economic development of small w states, due to exploitative tax rates and capital flight (Olson, 1993), also acts to further reduce the scope of vulnerability in these states. Instead, the more attractive targets are the institutions that provide private goods to the winning coalition. Such institutions are targeted in the hopes that the resultant “shocks” to the system, which act to severely limit the flow of private goods for the leader and the members of his coalition, provide incentives for challengers who can provide better allocations of goods to arise and remove the leader from power (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005). As a result, nationalized industry may be a target, as profits from their operations can be funneled to the members of the leader’s coalition (Kramer, 1977). Another potential target of terrorists may be the military or security apparatus, since they are often deployed in a kleptocracy to ensure the continued flow of income to the ruler’s winning coalition and to prevent revolutionaries from challenging the government (Grossman, 1999). Thus:

H2. *Government elites, the military, and nationalized industry will be the target of terrorist attacks more frequently in autocratic states.*

## **RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA, AND METHODS**

The hypotheses presented above are tested using the ITERATE (International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events) data on 11,650 transnational terrorist events from 1968-1998 with the terrorist event as the unit of analysis. The data defines international and transnational terrorism as:

the use, or threat of use, of anxiety-inducing, extra-normal violence for political purposes by any individual or group, whether acting for or in opposition to established governmental authority, when such action is intended to influence the attitudes and behavior of a target group wider than the immediate victims and when, through the nationality or foreign ties of its perpetrators, its location, the nature of its institutional or human victims, or the mechanics of its resolution, its ramifications transcend national boundaries.

ITERATE is a dataset of transnational terrorism, and by definition, is an incomplete accounting of all terrorist acts.<sup>6</sup> However, this focus is still of import since it is expected that transnational terrorist groups will have less knowledge of which targets hold importance in a particular state when compared to domestic groups. As a result, ITERATE, and its transnational focus, provides a stricter test of the hypotheses that groups do indeed select different target types by on a regime type basis.

In order to determine whether regime type has an effect on the type of target selected, I first begin with a measure of whether the target is of a public or private nature. This coding was derived from the ITERATE variable of victim type.<sup>7</sup> In order to test

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<sup>6</sup> Engene (2004) provides a dataset of domestic terrorist events, however it is limited to 18 states in Western Europe.

<sup>7</sup> ITERATE provides the following values for the victim type variable:

- 1 Host government officials
- 2 Foreign diplomats or official non-military

more detailed hypotheses about the exact type of target attacked, a second dependent variable comprising the variable of victim type was used. For that test, the full eight categories are included in order to test the effects of regime type on specific target types.

Because the first dependent variable is a simple dichotomy between public and private target types, I employ a logit to test the effects of regime type on target selection. The second variable, since it is divided into eight nominal categories, requires the use of a multinomial logit to test the effects. Since the likelihood of terror attacks differs by the state under attack, I control for heterogeneity by clustering the standard errors on states for both tests.

### **Independent variables**

Several independent variables are included the test the above hypotheses. The first independent variable, *w*, is a measure from Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2005) that records the size of the winning coalition for each respective state. This is an ordinal variable from 1 to 5 corresponding to values of 0, .25, to 1. The second independent variable *demyesno* is a dummy variable constructed from the variable *polity2* in the Polity IV dataset (Marshall and Jaggers, 2002). The construction of this variable is more complete, allowing for interpolation of values during transitions rather than having them

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- 3 Host government military
  - 4 Foreign military
  - 5 Corporation officials
  - 6 Prominent opinion leaders
  - 7 Private parties, including tourists, missionaries, students
  - 8 Suspected terrorists
  - 9 Indeterminate

From this original coding, I code categories 5,6 and 7 as public targets (*privpub*=1) while categories 1-4 and were coded as government (*privpub*=0). Category 8 was excluded, as it did not fit in any category, but will be included in the multinomial analysis. Category 9 could not be categorized and was excluded from the analysis.

coded as missing. Democracies, in this case, are regimes that score a 6 or above on the *polity2* measure while autocracies are those with scores below that value. This measure is included as a robustness check for the analyses. Given that terrorists strike the regimes they believe most vulnerable to the costs they impose (Pape, 2003), we should also see a greater likelihood that they also target the states that harbor the greatest return for their actions (Eyerman, 1998). To this end, an economic variable comprising the per capita gross domestic product in constant 2000 US dollars was included as a third independent variable. States with larger per capita gdp's should present a preferable location, since economic investment provides greater targets and more locations in which the public, and more detailed target types, are likely to be.

A number of control variables were included in the analysis. One necessity in research on regime types is the further delineation of the variation within regimes (Peceny, 2002). The propensity for targets of different types to be attacked is also expected to vary on that basis. For that reason, Geddes' (1999) data is used to classify authoritarian regimes as one of four types – personalist, military, single party, and hybrid. Personalist regimes are characterized by the centralization of power within a single leader (Geddes, 1999). The government, in this case, is the most likely target. Military regimes are those in which the leadership is derived from the military, with support from the military and a security apparatus controlled by the military (Geddes, 1999). We should expect the military to be the most preferable target in this case. Single party regimes are characterized by party's control of policy, access to power and government jobs, and functions on a local level as well (Geddes, 1999). Once again, government should be the preferred target. Hybrid regimes incorporate two or more of the authoritarian types.

The level of repression in a society is also expected to have an effect. This was operationalized using the Political Terror Scale (Gibney and Dalton, 1996). Higher levels of repression are expected to increase the costs of terrorist operation and to lower the probability of attacks. Lastly, I control for the military capability of the state with a state's CINC ratio. As illustrated by Sobek and Braithwaite (2005), higher state capabilities are associated with higher levels of terrorist violence; the greater the power advantage, the more difficult it becomes for groups to use "higher" forms of insurgency – like civil or guerilla war.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Given that terrorists select the targets that yield the greatest impact based on the regime that they operate in, a distinction between the nature of the targets in autocratic and democratic states should be evident. Using a logit analysis and the collapsed target type variable, I expect to demonstrate that terrorists operating in democratic states will more likely target the public, while those in autocracies will target representatives of the government.

[Insert Table 3 Here]

Based on the results, the democracy dummy and the w measure support the hypothesis that the public is more vulnerable in democratic states. The w variable provides a slightly better fit to the data; in this case 56.3% of the cases were correctly predicted compared to 55.5% for the democracy dummy.<sup>8</sup> This difference suggests that the size of the winning coalition, and the ability of the average person to change policy, is

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<sup>8</sup> In addition to the Percent Correctly Predicted, I ran Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) tests on the three models. These results reinforce those in the text. The AIC for the democracy dummy model was 14822.05, for the w model – 14661.35, and for the gdp model – 12718.56

an important calculus in terrorist decision making. As a variable  $w$  is also correlated with gdp, providing some indication that economics may also play a role in terrorist decision making. A separate logit with gdp provided the best fit, 57.4%. This also suggests a role for economics as an incentive or a facilitator for attacks on more developed, more democratic states. In some ways, these findings are not novel as it merely restates that terrorists target those entities which provide the greatest impact, but in this analysis, those entities are made clear.

The predicted probabilities present a clearer demonstration of the substantive effects of regime type, winning coalition size, and gdp on terrorist targeting on the public and on governmental targets. The coefficients from the models in Table 3 were used and the variables were set at their modal value for dichotomous variables or the mean for continuous variables. This resulted in a baseline or “typical” category in which the effect of each variable could be calculated by either adding or subtracting one standard deviation to the continuous variables or by changing the value of the dichotomous variables from the mode. Since the probability of terrorist targeting a particular item should vary according to the regime type of the state, I calculated the predicted probabilities for likelihood of attack on the public by whether or not the state in question is a democracy, the size of the winning coalition, and gdp.

[Insert Table 4 Here]

The predicted probabilities indicate that states with increased gdp and higher democracy scores are more likely, although not overwhelmingly so, to suffer terrorist attacks on public rather than governmental targets. A non-democratic state, as indicated by the democracy dummy, is equally likely to suffer an attack on the public as it is on the

government. This likelihood increases to approximately 59% as the state becomes a democracy. These results are echoed in those for the *w* variable. A state in which the winning coalition is particularly small, coded zero in the data has a probability of attack on the public of approximately 49%. When a state has the largest winning coalition, coded 5 in the data, it has a risk of attack on the public of approximately 61%. For *gdp*, a state one standard deviation below the mean has a 54% chance of attack on the public, while one that is one standard deviation above the mean has a 61% likelihood that the public will be attacked.

The nature of the targets selected in democracies and autocracies should be even more varied than the previous analysis given the different roles that each potential target plays in the ascension and maintenance of power for leaders. Using a multinomial logit, I measure the effects of regime type on the likelihood that eight different target types are selected. In this case, the omitted variable for victim type was that for outcome 7, or that of the public. I included this as the omitted category since I posit that the public is the most vulnerable in a democratic state. As a result, I expect the coefficients for the government, military, and corporate officials to be negative. In addition, I control for political repression, CINC score, and autocratic regime type. The results are presented below.

[Insert Table 5, 6, 7 Here]

The results for the *w* variable, found in Table 5, provides evidence that officials in the host government, the government in which the event is initiated, are more vulnerable to attack in a small *w* than in a large *w* states one. Host military and corporation officials are in the expected direction, but are not significant. None of the relationships expected

with personalist and single party states are demonstrated. Table 6, the results based upon the democracy dummy variable, provides indications that foreign militaries and suspected terrorists are more vulnerable in autocratic states. Corporation officials, on the other hand, are more vulnerable in democratic states. Support is once again also found for foreign militaries and suspected terrorists, both of which are more vulnerable in democratic states. Lastly, the results for the gdp per capita independent variable, as found in Table 7, indicate that foreign diplomats, foreign military, corporation officials and suspected terrorists are all more vulnerable in autocracies than democracies.

The coefficients for the political terror scale were in the expected direction, increased values lead to decreased probabilities of attacks for all target types. This finding is expected, since greater levels of repression should increase the costs of organizing and operating a terror group in a state. Foreign militaries operating in personalist and single party dictatorships are more vulnerable than in other types of autocratic states. This may be associated with the ability of the party or personalist state to mobilize terror groups, either out of nationalist appeals or coercion to act against foreign armies. Throughout the analyses, there is no significant relationship between CINC score and higher levels of terrorism. CINC scores, however, were associated with lower levels of attacks on corporation officials. This may indicate that many of the grievances held by terrorist groups against powerful states are of a political, not economic nature.

The significance of the results is dependent upon the independent variable that one gives credence to. W may provide a better explanation due to its construction as a variable that solely measures the proportion of the populace needed by a leader to gain

and maintain power. Such information is easy to come by, as information about public opinion and voting results provide any observer with a reasonable estimation of the ability of the people to make and change policy. This variable can easily be conceptualized as a calculus in terrorist calculations, the greater the base needed for support and policy, the more likely that attacks on this base have an impact on policy and leadership. The democracy dummy is less straightforward – its construction, based on Polity IV, takes several other factors beside the population’s access to the franchise and their ability to make policy changes. Economics, as represented by GDP per capita, is also less clear. Higher GDP does not necessarily imply that the people have a large role in policy formation and leadership selection.<sup>9</sup>

The results provide mixed support for hypothesis 2, the host government is more vulnerable when  $w$  is low, indicating that as the number of people needed to make policy and choose leaders decreases, the center of that power and the ability to make those changes shifts to a different area – in this case, the “government”. This reasoning is in line with Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2005), in small  $w$  states, the government is most likely to be the cadre of the leader’s supporters – government positions are a private good that can be allocated to supporters. These people have the ability to make changes in policy and, if the need arises, to remove the leadership. As a result, the most logical target for terrorists in an autocracy is not the governed, but the government. However the hypothesis does not hold further, there is no statistical evidence that decreased  $w$  leads to increased attacks on the military or industry. Instead, statistical support is found for the relationship between a smaller winning coalition and increased attacks on foreign military and suspected terrorists.

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<sup>9</sup> The correlation between GDP and democracy is .4128.

In this case, the predicted probabilities for the W variable will be displayed. Once again, this provides a more straightforward interpretation than can be gained by reviewing the coefficients. The results are shown in Table 8.

[Insert Table 8 Here]

The three categories of import in the predicted probabilities are those of host government, foreign military, and suspected terrorists. Based on the predicted probabilities, the likelihood that the host government will be attacked in a large w state is .04, compared to .12 in a small w state, a three-fold increase. Foreign troops also face a slightly higher probability of attack in an autocratic state, a twofold increase from .482 to .397 from the smallest w to the largest w state. Suspected terrorists face much higher probabilities of attack; a substantial increase from .031 to .290.

## **CONCLUSION**

The discussion over the types of targets selected by terrorists has been an area of study largely ignored in favor of discussions over the vulnerability of particular regime types. This has left most studies of targeting, with Gurr's analysis a notable exception, in the realm of discussions of rationality, stating that targets are selected on the basis of their impact on the society attacked. Extant narratives from terrorists of all stripes, as well as contributions from previous scholars has established that the targeting and execution of terrorist acts are dictated by more substantial logics than the need to merely cause destruction.

This analysis, employing the selection institutions argument of Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2005), provides a different explanation for the rationality employed by terrorists in their targeting and attack execution. This analysis posits that the size of the

winning coalition is an important calculus in understanding which targets in particular states holds the most impact and promise for achieving terrorist goals. Large  $w$  states, because of the decreased loyalty norm and the greater number of people needed to provide power to the leader, provides a greater range of targets since more people are involved in the decision making process and the economy is constructed on low taxes and maximizing public investment. Small  $w$  states, since the leadership is supported by a smaller cadre, present a different range of targets. This is because the depressed economic development of the autocratic state and the lack of importance of the general population in maintaining the leader's power mean that the winning coalition and the institutions which provide private benefits to them are targets of greater importance in small  $w$  states.

The results provide some evidence that the targets in democratic and autocratic states are of a different nature. The public faces a decidedly higher risk of attack in democratic societies than in autocratic ones. Namely, this threat arises because of the people's ability to inflict costs upon the leadership. In terms of specific target types, the host government is most vulnerable to terrorist attacks in small  $w$  states. The results do not hold for the military of the host state or for corporation officials, although the coefficients are in the expected direction. One explanation for some of the weakness of the results may stem from the increased prevalence of religious or "sacred" terror, in which perpetrators are not concerned with a political message but rather with the inflicting of mass casualties (Juergensmeyer, 2002; Rapoport, 1998). An avenue for further research in this regard is to include a typology for terrorist groups.<sup>10</sup> While the

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<sup>10</sup> One typology available is in the Engene (2004) TWEED data.

hypothesis is not fully supported, it does indicate that the selection institution argument has some purchase in explaining terrorist target selection.

While the results do not provide unambiguous support of the hypotheses, the findings provide an indication that the selection institution argument, previously used as a second image explanation for state action, can be adopted as an explanation of terrorist targeting and action execution. This analysis suggests that the targets that terrorists select are of a different nature depending on the ability of the governed to affect policy and inflict costs upon the leadership. This represents an important area for further research, as a more thorough understanding of the target selection process can be of benefit towards a more complete understanding of the act of terrorism. Such studies, beyond their significance to the academic community, can also be of value to policy makers as security concerns shift away from traditional actors like states to individuals and groups.

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**Table 1:** Correlation Matrix for Independent Variables Used

	Demyesno	W	GDP	PTS	CINC	Personal	Single
Demyesno	1.00						
W	.6325	1.00					
GDP	.4903	.6905	1.00				
PTS	-.4666	-.6453	-.7323	1.00			
CINC	-.1283	-.1135	-.0906	.0829	1.00		
Personal	-.4142	-.2573	-.2532	.1938	.0873	1.00	
Single	-.3115	-.2193	-.1760	.1235	.0093	-.0755	1.00

**Table 2:** Rethinking Gurr's Analysis of Terrorist Action (1961-1970)  
(N=61 States)

Region	Avg. Polity Score	Number of Incidents	Property Targets	Public Persons and Groups (i.e. Gov't)	Private Persons and Groups (i.e. Gen. Public)
European	8.06568	117	86%	36%	35%
Latin America	2.67835	125	65%	57%	17%
Afro-Asian	2.51706	77	43%	71%	18%

**Table 3:** Logit Results for Public/Private Targeting by Democracy Dummy, W, and GDP

	Model 1 – Democ. Dummy	Model 2 - W	Model 3 – per capita GDP (in thousands)
Constant	.003 (.098)	-.172 (.196)	.145 (.099)
Demyesno	.356** (.122)		
W		.122* (.058)	
Per Capita GDP (in thousands)			.018* (.0086)
N	10842	10734	9353
Log Likelihood	-7409.02	-7328.68	-6357.28
Wald Chi Square	8.48**	4.39*	4.44*
PCP	55.50%	56.37%	57.41%
AIC	14822.05	14661.35	12718.56

Standard Errors in Parentheses, \* p &lt;0.05; \*\* p &lt;0.01

**Table 4: Predicted Probabilities of Attack on Public Targets**

W		Demyesno		GDP	
1 (0)	.487	0	.501	GDP (-1 SD)	.540
2 (.25)	.517			GDP (Mean)	.575
3 (.50)	.548	1 (Mode)	.589	GDP (+1 SD)	.609
4 (.75) (Mode)	.578				
5 (1)	.607				

**Table 5: Multinomial Logit Results for Target Types by W**

	1: Host Gov't officials	2: For. Diplomats	3: Host Gov't Mil	4: For.Mil	5: Corp. Officials	6: Opinion Leaders	8: Susp. Terrorists
Constant	-.043 (.666)	.291 (.348)	-1.73 (.902)	.584 (.497)	-.108 (.376)	-1.38 (.614)	.337 (.789)
W	-.280* (.131)	-.121 (.081)	-.185 (.184)	-.506** (.129)	-.034 (.081)	-.118 (.106)	-.505** (.165)
PTS	-.534** (.121)	-.015 (.086)	-.142 (.191)	-.087 (.125)	-.111 (.084)	-.084 (.104)	-.635** (.146)
Personal	.268 (.311)	-.368 (.233)	-.388 (.383)	-1.27* (.609)	-.154 (.309)	-.448 (.403)	-.188 (.668)
Single	-.692 (.427)	-.505 (.347)	-.383 (.441)	-1.41** (.507)	-.429 (.350)	-.189 (.398)	.015 (.560)
CINC	-3.71 (.427)	-.012 (1.34)	-6.69 (5.18)	-6.49 (4.02)	-6.42** (1.93)	.812 (2.42)	-9.51 (7.08)
N	5838						
Log Pseudo Likelihood	-9385.22						
Wald Chi Square	164.24**						

Standard Errors in Parentheses, \* p &lt;0.05; \*\* p &lt;0.01

**Table 6: Multinomial Logit Results for Target Types by Democracy Dummy**

	1: Host Gov't officials	2: For. Diplomats	3: Host Gov't Mil	4: For.Mil	5: Corp. Officials	6: Opinion Leaders	8: Susp. Terrorists
Constant	-1.00 (.506)	-.232 (.347)	-3.05 (.724)	-1.01 (.534)	-.743 (.350)	-2.14 (.376)	-1.26 (.700)
Demyesno	-.460 (.370)	-.089 (.176)	.330 (.541)	-.827* (.343)	.428* (.215)	.129 (.229)	-.904** (.560)
PTS	-.420** (.116)	.045 (.096)	.013 (.178)	.081 (.143)	-.041 (.086)	.004 (.098)	-.450 (.164)
Personal	.257 (.370)	-.328 (.234)	-.046 (.365)	-1.26 (.682)	.125 (.315)	-.288 (.403)	-.190 (.740)
Single	-.734 (.479)	-.468 (.353)	-.063 (.465)	-1.50** (.557)	-.147 (.340)	-.040 (.400)	.026 (.614)
CINC	-3.27 (3.39)	.159 (1.34)	-5.88 (5.05)	-6.25 (4.42)	-5.86** (1.90)	1.21 (2.40)	-9.05 (7.73)
N	5847						
Log Pseudo Likelihood	-9421.64						
Wald Chi Square	131.76**						

Standard Errors in Parentheses, \* p &lt;0.05; \*\* p &lt;0.01

**Table 7:** Multinomial Logit Results for Target Types by GDP per capita

	1: Host Gov't officials	2: For. Diplomats	3: Host Gov't Mil	4: For. Mil	5: Corp. Officials	6: Opinion Leaders	8: Susp. Terrorists
Constant	-.825 (.457)	1.04 (.415)	-1.84 (.488)	.526 (.680)	.691 (.362)	-1.79 (.498)	-.569 (.503)
GDP per capita	-.0376 (.0277)	-.077** (.028)	-.047 (.034)	-.130** (.046)	-.054** (.019)	.009 (.027)	-.091** (.033)
PTS	-.485** (.122)	-.237* (.112)	-.194 (.157)	-.431** (.161)	-.287** (.098)	-.057 (.121)	-.682** (.168)
Personal	.341 (.307)	-.527* (.253)	-.510 (.410)	-1.58* (.713)	-.417 (.344)	-.295 (.399)	-.393 (.801)
Single	-.421 (.439)	-.799* (.374)	-.442 (.482)	-1.28 (.722)	-.627 (.425)	-.300 (.374)	.229 (.578)
CINC	-4.23 (4.05)	-.335 (1.32)	-6.05 (5.36)	-3.78 (4.07)	-6.87** (2.17)	1.50 (2.40)	-8.27 (8.14)
N	5489						
Log Pseudo Likelihood	-8768.61						
Wald Chi Square	206.13**						

Standard Errors are in Parentheses, \* p &lt;0.05; \*\* p &lt;0.01

**Table 8:** Predicted Probabilities of Terrorist Attack based on Winning Coalition Size

	1: Host Gov't Officials	4: Foreign Military	8: Suspected Terrorists
W (lowest)	.123	.482	.290
W (Mode)	.074	.439	.103
W (Highest)	.046	.397	.031