

Criminology and terrorism

[Society](#), [Terrorism](#)



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Terrorism Introduction Terrorism is defined loosely based on the Latin word *Terre*, which means to frighten. To be considered an act of terrorism, which is a political crime, an act must carry with it the intent to disrupt and the change the government and should not be merely a common-law crime committed for greed or egotism. The discipline of economics has many concepts that are relevant to an understanding of terrorism -- supply and demand -- costs and benefits, etc.

Fully-developed economic or econometric models of terrorism are quite rare, however, and often involve such things as "psychic" costs and benefits (Nyatepe-Coo 2004). More down-to-earth economic theories can be found in the literature on deterrence. Rational choice theory, in particular, has found a place in criminology, and holds that people will engage in crime after weighing the costs and benefits of their actions to arrive at a rational choice about motivation after perceiving that the chances of gain outweigh any possible punishment or loss.

The second theory that can explain the motivation behind terrorism is the relative deprivation hypothesis which is the idea that as a person goes about choosing their values and interests, they compare what they have and don't have, as well as what they want or don't want, with real or imaginary others. The person then usually perceives a discrepancy between what is possible for them and what is possible for others, and reacts to it with anger or an inflamed sense of injustice.

We should be advised that debates exist within criminology regarding relative deprivation and terrorism, on the one hand, with the anomie or strain tradition which finds causal influence in such objectivist factors as Gross Domestic Product, and on the other hand, with the left realist tradition which finds causal influence in subjective experiences of deprivation or discomfort

Crime Characteristics of Terrorism: Terrorism is not new, and even though it has been used since the beginning of recorded history it can be relatively hard to define.

Terrorism has been described variously as both a tactic and strategy; a crime and a holy duty; a justified reaction to oppression and an inexcusable abomination. Obviously, a lot depends on whose point of view is being represented. Terrorism has often been an effective tactic for the weaker side in a conflict. As an asymmetric form of conflict, it confers coercive power with many of the advantages of military force at a fraction of the cost.

Due to the secretive nature and small size of terrorist organizations, they often offer opponents no clear organization to defend against or to deter. The United States Department of Defense defines terrorism as “ the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. ” Within this definition, there are three key elements—violence, fear, and intimidation—and each element produce terror in its victims.

The FBI uses this: " Terrorism is the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the

civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives. " The U. S. Department of State defines " terrorism" to be " premeditated politically-motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience. (International Terrorism and Security Research).

Technological terrorism is defined as actions directed against infrastructure elements critically important for national security or committed with the use of especially hazardous technologies, technical means, and materials. In considering technological terrorism scenarios, the primary impact factors of such terrorist acts initiate secondary catastrophic processes with a significantly higher (tens and hundreds of times) level of secondary impact factors that affect the targets of the attack, their personnel, the public, and the environment. (Nikolai A. Makhutov, Vitaly P. Petrov, and Dmitry O. Reznikov, Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Machine Sciences)Although what we don't know about the psychology of terrorism is more than what we do know, there have been several promising attempts to merge or combine psychology with sociology (and criminal justice) into what might be called terrorist profiling (Russell and Miller 1977; Bell 1982; Galvin 1983; Strentz 1988; Hudson 1999).

This line of inquiry actually has a long history, and includes what rare studies exist of female terrorists. The earliest study (Russell and Miller 1977) found that the following people tend to join terrorist organizations: • 22-25 years of age • 80% male, with women in support roles • 75-80% single • 66% middle

or upper class background • 66% some college or graduate work • 42% previous participation in working class advocacy groups • 17% unemployed • 18% strong religious beliefs

IBLIOGRAPHY NOTE: Characteristics of Technological Terrorism Scenarios and Impact Factors* http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=12490 = 53

The Economics theory of Rational Choice Theory as a theory of terrorism contends that these criminals usually come to believe their actions will be beneficial -- to themselves, their community, or society -- AND they must come to see that crime pays, or is at least a risk-free way to better their situation.

Perhaps the most well-known version of this idea in criminology is routine activities theory (Cohen and Felson 1979), which postulates that three conditions must be present in order for a crime to occur: (1) suitable targets or victims who put themselves at risk; (2) the absence of capable guardians or police presence; and (3) motivated offenders or a pool of the unemployed and alienated. Other rational choice theories exist which delve further into models of decision making. In the few models of collective violence that have found their way into criminology, the Olson hypothesis (source unknown) suggests that participants in revolutionary violence predicate their behavior on a rational cost-benefit calculus to pursue the best course of action given the social circumstances. Bibliography note: (THEORIES AND CAUSES OF TERRORISM) <http://www.apsu.edu/oconnort/3400/3400lect02.htm> . As far as we know, most terrorists feel that they are doing nothing wrong when they kill and injure people.

They seem to share a feature of the psychological condition known as antisocial personality disorder or psychopathic personality disorder, which is reflected by an absence of empathy for the suffering of others. However, they do not appear unstable or mentally ill for this. A common feature is a type of thinking such as " I am good and right. You are bad and wrong. " It is a very polarized thinking which allows them to distance themselves from opponents and makes it easier for them to kill people. It is not the same kind of simplistic thinking one would expect from someone with low intelligence or moral development.

Most terrorists are of above average intelligence and have sophisticated ethical and moral development. A closed-minded certainty is a common feature of terrorist thinking. (Merari 1990). Relative Deprivation occurs where individuals or groups subjectively perceive themselves as unfairly disadvantaged over others perceived as having similar attributes and deserving similar rewards (their reference groups). It is in contrast with absolute deprivation, where biological health is impaired or where relative levels of wealth are compared based on objective differences - although it is often confused with the latter.

Subjective experiences of deprivation are essential and, indeed, relative deprivation is more likely when the differences between two groups narrows so that comparisons can be easily made than where there are caste-like differences. The discontent arising from relative deprivation has been used to explain radical politics (whether of the left or the right), messianic

religions, the rise of social movements, industrial disputes and the whole plethora of crime and deviance.

The usual distinction made is that religious fervour or demand for political change are a collective response to relative deprivation whereas crime is an individualistic response. But this is certainly not true of many crimes - for example, smuggling, poaching or terrorism - which have a collective nature and a communal base and does not even allow for gang delinquency which is clearly a collective response.

The connection is, therefore, largely under-theorized - a reflection of the separate development of the concept within the seemingly discrete disciplines of sociology of religion, political sociology and criminology. The use of relative deprivation in criminology is often conflated with Merton's anomie theory of crime and deviance and its development by Cloward and Ohlin, and there are discernible, although largely unexplored, parallels.

Anomie theory involves a disparity between culturally induced aspirations (eg success in terms of the American Dream) and the opportunities to realise them. The parallel is clear: this is a subjective process wherein discontent is transmuted into crime. Furthermore, Merton in his classic 1938 article, 'Social Structure and Anomie', clearly understands the relative nature of discontent explicitly criticising theories which link absolute deprivation to crime by pointing to poor countries with low crime rates in contrast to the wealthy United States with a comparatively high rate.

But there are clear differences, in particular Mertonian anomie involves an inability to realise culturally induced notions of success. It does not involve comparisons between groups but individuals measuring themselves against a general goal. The fact that Merton, the major theorist of reference groups, did not fuse this with his theory of anomie is, as Runciman notes, very strange but probably reflects the particular American concern with 'winners' and 'losers' and the individualism of that culture.

The empirical implications of this difference in emphasis are, however, significant: anomie theory would naturally predict the vast majority of crime to occur at the bottom of society amongst the 'losers' but relative deprivation theory does not necessarily have this overwhelming class focus. For discontent can be felt anywhere in the class structure where people perceive their rewards as unfair compared to those with similar attributes. Thus crime would be more widespread although it would be conceded that discontent would be greatest amongst the socially excluded.

The future integration of anomie and relative deprivation theory offers great promise in that relative deprivation offers a much more widespread notion of discontent and its emphasis on subjectivity insures against the tendency within anomie theory of merely measuring objective differences inequality (so called 'strain' theory) whereas anomie theory, on its part, offers a wider structural perspective in terms of the crucial role of differential opportunity structures and firmly locates the dynamic of deprivation within capitalist society as a whole. To be completed: Application: Conclusion: Bibliography