PSC/IR 106: Terrorism

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Outline

- Rationality of Terror
- Face of Terror
- Spoiling
- Definition of Terrorism

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Strategy and Terrorism

- Terrorism is strategic
- Common criticism of rational choice modeling of terrorism: "people who kill themselves are not rational"
 - We don't need to understand why people are okay with killing civilians to understand how they behave

A Brief Rant about Mathematical Modeling

- In math world, rational =/= sensible.
- "Rational" means that an actor's preferences are complete and transitive
 - Complete: For any outcomes a and b, the actor prefers a to b, prefers b to a, or is indifferent
 - Transitive: For any outcomes a, b, and c, if the actor prefers a to b and b to c, then he also prefers a to c

Which of these People Is Rational?

Person 1

"I prefer the Los Angeles
Angels of Anaheim to the
New York Yankees. I also
prefer the New York
Yankees to the Chicago
Cubs. And I prefer the
Chicago Cubs to the Los
Angeles Angels of
Anaheim."

Person 2

 "I prefer blowing myself up to kill five people to working a 9-5 desk job. I prefer working a 9-5 desk job than being in Will's class. And I prefer blowing myself up to kill five people than being in Will's class."

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What group is responsible for the most suicide terrorist attacks?



Is religious fanaticism and belief in the afterlife necessary to commit suicide attacks?



Atheists

Are all suicide bombers male?







American Airlines # 11



Al Sugami



Waleed M. Alshehri Wail M. Alshehri





Alomari



Atta

American Airlines #77



Moqed



Almihdhar



Nawof Alhazmi



Salom Alhazmi



Hanjour

United Airlines # 93



Alghamdi



Al Haznawi



Alnami



Jarrah

United Airlines # 175



Al-Shehhi



Alghamdi



Al Qadi Banihammad

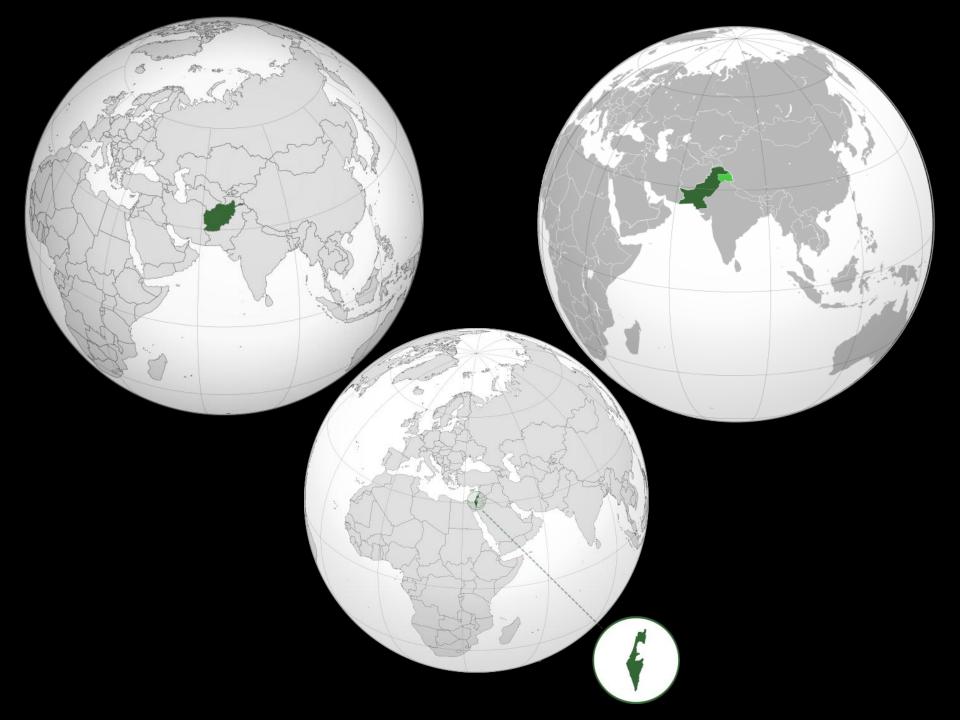


Hamza Alghamdi



Alshehri

Are terrorists poor?



Terrorists come from poor regions, but terrorists themselves are not.

Our biggest problem is the hordes of young men who beat on our doors, clamoring to be sent. It is difficult to select only a few. Those whom we turn away return again and again, pestering us, pleading to be accepted.

—Hamas Leadership

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Puzzle

- Terrorist attacks are not randomly distributed
 - Clumping around peace talks
 - What does this say about terrorists' responsiveness to incentives?
 - Why this clumping?

Preferences

- Home and foreign state negotiate
- Foreign state wants peace
- Foreign is unsure whether home wants peace

Preferences

- If Home wants peace, it will actively police extremists within its country
 - Foreign thus does not want peace with uncooperative Home types

Preferences

- Extremists always want conflict
 - Need to convince Foreign that Home is uncooperative regardless of Home's true type

Monitoring Problem

- Policing is not fully effective
 - Even if a peace-loving Home tries to stop extremists, it might fail
- Policing effort is hard to observe
 - Foreign can thus only make inferences based on whether an attack has occurred, not on what Home did to (possibly) stop an attack

Updating

- Suppose no attack occurred
 - What should Foreign infer about Home?

Updating

- Suppose an attack occurred
 - What should Foreign infer about Home?

Updating

- Suppose an attack occurred
 - What should Foreign infer about Home?
 - It cannot know for sure that Home is uncooperative
 - But its belief that Home is uncooperative increases

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What makes a terrorist a terrorist?

Common Qualities

Violent

Common Qualities

- Violent
- Targeting of civilians

Common Qualities

- Violent
- Targeting of civilians
- Political goals

One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.