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A Peaceful End? Exploring the Correlates of When Terrorist Groups Negotiate

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A Peaceful End? Exploring the Correlates of When Terrorist Groups Negotiate

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ABSTRACT

Despite significant advances in the terrorism literature since the September 11th attacks, there remains very little research into the processes by which terrorism might come to a peaceful end. The present study addresses this gap in the literature by investigating politicization, a process by which terrorist organizations negotiate with authorities and the two parties enter a peace agreement or otherwise agree to cease hostilities. The study explores the politicization outcome as predicted by important organizational and behavioral characteristics that prior literature identifies as affecting how terrorist groups end, including group size, organization lifespan, target type for terroristic activities, and the breadth of organizational goals. The key contribution of the current study is a focus on the presence of a non-violent political affiliate (NVPA) within a broader terrorist organization and the role these affiliates play in predicting politicization. Multivariate logistic regression analysis finds strong evidence of a relationship between the presence of a NVPA and politicization, as well as between group size and political cessation of terrorist activities. To elaborate on those findings, a brief case study/typology illustrates these linkages using both historical and contemporary terrorist organizations as examples. I conclude by discussing the role of NVPAs in understanding the terrorist organizational life cycle broadly, as well as directions for future research that extend key themes identified by the current study.

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INTRODUCTION

In the years since the September 11th attacks, most Americans have viewed terrorism as necessarily destructive and inherently unforgivable. Indeed, the American public has recently ranked terrorism as its number one foreign policy concern (Pew Research Center, 2016). This should come as no surprise given the immense scope, both temporally and geographically, of terrorism: major terrorist incidents have featured prominently throughout U.S. history, while recent deaths related to terrorist attacks internationally have more than tripled since 2001 (GTD, 2020). Given the heightened threat posed by terrorist organizations in recent history, governments and police agencies in the United States and abroad are increasingly pooling their resources to develop successful counterterrorism strategies (Belasco, 2018). These strategies have been varied in their results (Jones and Libicki, 2008), but point to an important – and somewhat under-developed – question: when and under what conditions do terrorist groups end/abandon violence?

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Despite advances made in describing why terrorist groups arise (Crenshaw, 1981; Newman, 2005), how they attract resources (Crenshaw, 1981; FitzGerald, 2004; Rushchenko, 2019), and the geographic spaces in which they operate (Gruenewald, Drawve, and Smith 2019; Onat and Gul, 2018), there remains little consideration of the process by which terrorist groups end through negotiation. Indeed, policymakers often negotiate with terrorist groups (Cronin, 2011), and for good reason: globally, 43 percent of terrorist groups eventually decide to negotiate, either with the state or with subnational groups, for a peaceful end to hostilities (Jones and Libicki, 2008). However, empirical research exploring the creation of political channels through negotiation remains relatively scarce. Particularly lacking is scholarship that engages the

roles that novel organizational features and unconventional group affiliations play in facilitating negotiation between the state and subnational authorities.

Such an empirical gap stems from a broader dearth of knowledge regarding the non-violent means through which terrorist organizations are incorporated or connected to local, regional, or state political institutions. Many terrorist organizations, for example, abandon violence in exchange for legitimate political representation through a political party or a parliamentary body (i.e. when the IRA agreed to cease its terrorist campaign in exchange for representation in a reformed Irish government). Others negotiate a peaceful settlement with authorities in exchange for political concessions without representation. The proposed study builds on these observations and asks the following: *how does non-violent political affiliation (or the non-violent political affiliates of a terrorist) relate to politicization, or the negotiated end of terrorism?*

Answering this question has important implications for academic research and global counterterrorism policy. First, examining the role played by non-violent political affiliates in ending terrorist groups advances extant research by moving beyond the singular focus on the violent end that has dominated prior studies (Abrahms, 2011; Kydd and Walter, 2006; Nilsson, 2018). Second, the current study also provides a foundation on which future research could build by exploring the intricate ways in which terrorist groups are embedded in larger political structures. Third, addressing this research question highlights the conditions under which negotiation serves as a viable counter-terrorism strategy. Notwithstanding the philosophical constraints of negotiation, should policymakers deploy strategies of negotiation judiciously, the result could be considerable savings in terms of money and lives that would likely be lost in military or anti-terrorism policing strategies.

I propose an analysis that builds from prevailing narratives of terrorist group longevity, including explanations that center on group size, target types, and breadth of goals across 112 international terrorist groups. At the same time, I move beyond prior research by also investigating politicization – the process by which terrorist groups enter into a peace agreement or other cessation of hostilities with a governing entity. Broadly, I seek to explore the role of ancillary, non-violent political affiliates as a part of the politicization process, which speaks to the ways in which terrorist groups court (or fail to persuade) constituents at the local or regional levels in order to increase their bargaining power and leverage their popularity.

The project unfolds as follows. First, I draw on the terrorism literature to describe foundational patterns of terrorism globally. Second, I provide a brief overview of the theoretical underpinnings of my study rooted in organizational sociology/criminology, social movements research, and political science. Third, I survey the relevant literature with particular attention to the gaps in knowledge that remain unaddressed within empirical research. Fourth, I outline the parameters of the current study, including my hypotheses, data, analysis, and results. This includes particular attention to the existing secondary terrorism databases, including the End of Terror, Global Terrorism Database (GTD), and Non-Violent and Violent Campaign Outcomes (NAVCO), that form the centerpieces of the current project. Fifth, I elaborate upon the results of the quantitative analysis by providing a brief typology of terrorist groups relative to their politicization and non-violent political affiliation, using case studies as contextual examples of these processes. Finally, sixth, I conclude with a discussion of key findings relative to prior research, directions for future empirical work, and their value for key stakeholders.

THE EMPIRICAL BOUNDARIES OF TERRORISM

      I begin the literature review with a brief overview of some of the recent criminological literature on terrorism, both within the United States context and abroad. This literature, like that of social movements and political science (discussed below), often investigates terrorism at the event level, including evaluating the effectiveness of the counterterrorism strategies that law enforcement agencies use. In general, criminologists find that certain law enforcement strategies adopted by U.S. officials, when applied in suitable circumstances, can be effective counterterrorism tools (Dahl, 2011). Recent research suggests that human intelligence (or information gathered from community members or other law-enforcement agencies) is vital to successful counterterrorism initiatives by law enforcement, especially when the terrorists are of far-right ideology (Dahl, 2011; Difo, 2010; Klein et. al, 2019). Other counterterror actions tend to be less effective: targeted killings or assassinations of major terrorist leaders, for example, do not seem to meaningfully change the overall frequency of terrorist attacks, at least not in the contexts of global jihadist terrorism and the Irish republican conflict (Carson, 2017; Gruenewald, 2017; LaFree, Dugan, and Korte, 2009). Still others find that terrorist groups tend to commit attacks more frequently in areas that are characterized by high levels of social disorganization (LaFree and Bersani, 2014).

      Others find similar evidence when examining terrorist groups across the world. On the one hand, this research generally shows that counter-terror strategies can be effective measures for preventing terrorism when applied in the proper context. On the other hand, poorly managed counterterror actions may actually increase terrorist groups' capacity and willingness to carry out attacks. LaFree, Dugan, and Korte (2009), for example, find that British counterterrorism initiatives resulted in further terrorist attacks in Northern Ireland. Likewise, Dugan and

Chenoweth (2012) argue that deterrence strategies that focus on punishments for committing terrorism tend to be less successful than strategies that reward terrorists for abstaining from violence. Recent research by Asal, Rethemeyer, Phillips, and Young (2018) notes that governments which use force against larger terrorist groups increase the likelihood of future terrorist attacks, whereas conciliatory counter-terrorism strategies tend to result in fewer attacks.

More broadly, this growing body of interdisciplinary research that includes criminologists, political scientists, economists, and sociologists, explores the conditions under which terrorist groups end. While this area remains somewhat underdeveloped compared to other facets of terrorism research, recent studies yield important findings. For example, researchers note that the ecosystem of violent non-state actors where a terrorist group is active condition how and when terrorist groups end (Young and Dugan, 2014). They conclude that young terrorist groups tend to end more frequently than more established groups, that groups in more populous states tend to last longer, and that terrorist groups motivated by a religious ideology tend to be more durable than others (Blomberg et. al, 2010; Blomberg et. al, 2011). Additionally, Young and Dugan (2014) find that terrorist groups tend to survive longer in low-competition environments (in environments that have fewer rival terrorist groups) and that the terrorist group which is most active in a given environment is the most likely to endure. Taken as a whole, this prior research demonstrates the importance of organizational activity and environmental characteristics as they impact the ends of terrorist groups.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Rational Choice Theory

The present study focuses on the features that make terrorist groups more likely to achieve politicization, the process by which terrorist organizations negotiate with authorities and

agree to cease hostilities. That characteristics of organizations and their actions affect reception and reaction dovetails with theories of organization-structure, including open-systems theory, which is itself a variant of rational choice theory (Southerland and Potter, 1993). Pioneered in the late 18th century by Cesarre Beccaria, rational choice theory argues that individuals are logical and that they undergo some form of cost-benefit analysis in the decision-making process (Clarke and Cornish, 1986; Pratt 2008). The theory continues to enjoy widespread use, particularly in the fields of economics and criminology. Rational choice theory is perhaps best summarized by Ronald Clarke and Derrick Cornish in their observation that social behavior (in their case, crime) is "the result of broadly rationalized choices based on analyses of anticipated costs and benefits" (Clarke and Cornish, 1986, 6). Contemporary researchers have tested the theoretical groundwork laid first by these scholars across numerous quantitative studies of non-normative action with mixed results (Gul, 2009; Hedstrom and Swedberg, 1996; Wright et al., 2004). While some scholars find persuasive evidence of rational-decision making, at least in specific contexts such as cheating and white-collar crime, others hold that rational choice theory withers under careful empirical scrutiny (Gul, 2009; Hedstrom and Swedberg, 1986; Paternoster and Tibbets, 2016; Tibbets and Myers, 1999; Wright et al., 2004.)

More specific to the current study, terrorism researchers often draw on rational-choice theory in their studies of terrorist activity (Abrahms, 2008; Crenshaw, 2017; Shughart, 2011). In particular, they argue that, while a terrorist organization's goals and methods may not themselves be rational, their resource allocation schemes are often designed to maximize rewards with minimal costs and that they tend to respond to counter-terrorism initiatives by modifying their behavior so as not to be caught or killed (Shughart, 2011). Others argue that, while individual

decisions may not be rational, the collective sum of the decisions made by terrorist organizations may be rational (Crenshaw, 2017).

Open-Systems Theory

In turn, those scholars working at larger aggregations within the sociology of organizations have subsumed key insights from the rational choice perspective, including within the study of terrorism. Much of this work coalesces under open-systems theory. Rather than treating organizations as self-contained entities (Bastedo, 2004), proponents of open-systems theory hold that organizations are affected by changes to their environments, including various social, economic, and political forces (Southerland and Potter, 1993). Organizations that adapt to environmental changes by modifying their behavior and/or organizational structures are more likely to survive and achieve their goals, whatever those goals may be (Abrahms, 2008; Southerland and Potter, 1993; Ullrich and Wieland, 1980). In contrast, those organizations with structural and behavioral models poorly suited to particular social, economic, and political environments wither and ultimately collapse (Mintzberg, 1979; Southerland and Potter, 1993; Thompson, 1967). In short, open-systems theorists analyze organizations according to their structures and activities in order to identify organizational configurations that are suited to specific locations and contexts (Cressey, 1972; Lampe, 2016; Schelling, 1971).

Of particular relevance to the current study, a limited body of research establishes that terrorist organizations operate within this open-system framework, especially when considering how they begin, persist, and end. To be sure, until the 1990s, scholars and policymakers had, for the most part, failed to consider the ways in which terrorist groups met their ends (Crenshaw, 1991). Martha Crenshaw's groundbreaking (1991) analysis of the mechanisms that lead to the demise of terrorist groups, unlike prior research, suggests that environmental factors (i.e.,

government action against a group) are not always the determinants of organizational outcomes. Instead, Crenshaw (1991) finds that, at least in some cases, terrorism defeats itself. Her insight, in keeping with open-systems theory, introduces to terrorism research the possibility that the behavior of terrorists and of their organizational structures impact how and when those terrorist groups disband. Such insights have been most notably built upon by Seth Jones and Martin Libicki (2008), as well as Audrey Cronin (2006), all of whom attempt to answer questions that were first introduced by Crenshaw regarding how different facets of terrorist organizations correlate with the longevity of those groups. I turn now to a brief review of the literature with a particular focus on empirical scholarship examining how terrorist groups end.

REVIEW OF PRIOR LITERATURE

Research on the end of terrorist organizations can generally be divided into two areas. The first includes the work of researchers who suggest that the factors that lead terrorist groups to end are primarily environmental, regardless of organizational structure or actions taken. The second area of research tends to posit that the behavior and organizational structures of terrorist groups are directly linked to the manner in which they end. There exists some overlap between these subsections, as several of the researchers (e.g., Crenshaw [1991, 2011], Cronin [2006, 2011], Jones and Libicki [2008], and Tompkins [2015]) tend to prefer behavioral to environmental explanations, but acknowledge that environmental factors (such as the response by a state to terrorism) influence how and when a terrorist group ends.

Environmental Factors Condition Terrorist Longevity

Proponents of the first school of thought claim that environmental factors, or factors that are external to the terrorist group, are directly linked to the manner in which a terrorist group "ends." This might include a host of different processes, like the political landscape or regime

type of a given state, the counter-terrorism initiatives of a government, or even the physical landscape of an environment (Jones and Libicki, 2008; Kydd and Walter, 2006; Nilsson, 2018; Pape, 2006). Core to this strain of the larger terrorism literature is the supposition that terrorist groups will generally survive until they are acted upon by an external actor or social force (Berman and Latin, 2008; Kydd and Walter, 2006). Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter (2006) elaborate this school's argument: terrorism is a form of "costly signaling" in which terrorists, who are too weak to impose their wills on state actors, communicate their resolve to achieve their goals by accepting and inflicting heavy costs in lives and resources (p. 50; see also Berman and Laitin, 2008). They and other researchers propose a causal logic summarized as follows: terrorism succeeds when terrorists persuade a target audience to make concessions.

This involves two countervailing processes. On the one hand, terrorists compel concessions when they demonstrate that they are capable of imposing heavy costs if their demands are not met. Berman and Laitin (2008) reinforce this premise, contending that terrorist violence consumes the resources of a target state. In this view, terrorists tend to be more successful when the population or governing body that they target lacks the resources necessary to defeat terrorism or when a governing entity or target population realizes that negotiating with or even, in rare cases, capitulating to the terrorist organization might be "cheaper" than entering a potentially protracted conflict. On the other hand, the specific response of the state to acts of terrorism also has an effect (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Cronin, 2011; Tompkins, 2015).

Related research indicates that the extent and severity of a government or police department's response to terrorism can either extinguish or, in some cases, galvanize support for the terrorist group among potential constituents (LaFree, Dugan, and Korte, 2009; Tompkins, 2015). For example, if a government responds to acts of terror with indiscriminate violence, it

might alienate citizens and increase the likelihood that it will need to grant concessions to the terrorist organization as compared to if a government responds with appropriate, precise force less likely to foster widespread discontent among non-combatants (Jones and Libicki, 2008; Thompkins, 2015).

Others argue that the political structure of the state is directly linked to its capacity to defeat terrorism (Eubank and Weinberg 1994; Wilkinson, 2006). The findings of the literature here are more mixed. While some scholars hold that democratic governments are uniquely equipped to defeat terrorist organizations, others argue that authoritarian governmental structures are better suited to quashing violence and political dissent when and where it arises (Eubank and Weinberg, 1994; Nilsson, 2018; Wilkinson 2006). Still others see the political structure of the state as a conditioning factor of the behavior of terrorist organizations. Pape (2006), for example, argues that terroristic suicide aims to coerce specifically democratic countries to render concessions, just as Nilsson (2018; see also Choi and Piazza, 2016; Wade and Reiter, 2007) finds that the political structure of the state influences the targets that terrorists choose to attack. Still others argue that the social conditions that prevail in a given context condition terrorism. Fahey and LaFree (2014) find evidence that terrorist groups tend to be more active in states in which there is a high degree of social disorganization. In summary, a sizeable literature emphasizes a milieu of external features – including the nature of state and governmental structures and responses to terrorism by them – that shape the life cycle of terrorist organizations, including how they ultimately end.

Behavioral and Organizational Factors Condition Terrorist Longevity

In contrast to the perspective above, other scholars hold that a terrorist organization's choices and organizational structure are directly linked to how and why a terrorist

group ends. That is, the behavior and organizational features of the terrorist organizations themselves are the primary factors that shape the life cycles of those groups. Many of these analyses focus on the targets of terrorist organizations. For instance, Abrahms (2011) notes that terrorist organizations end because attacks on civilians cause policymakers to "dig in their political heels" and deprive terrorists of their "preferences" (Abrahms, 2011, 584). Still others, namely Jones and Libicki (2008), emphasize that a group's size, the breadth of its goals (from broad to narrow), in addition to its preferred targets (either civilian or non-civilian), are directly related to the outcomes it will attain and, therefore, to the longevity of the group. Those terrorist organizations that are larger, with narrower goals, and which avoid attacking civilians are more likely to achieve victory and/or last longer; in contrast, smaller groups, with broader goals, that attack civilians are more likely to end via either policing or military intervention (Jones and Libicki, 2008).

Critically, it is the behavior and structure of the terrorist organizations themselves that shape their life cycles as groups. Their size (Asal et al, 2018; Crenshaw 2010; Cronin 2011), target choices (Abrahms, 2011; Kydd and Walter, 2006), ideology (Bloomberg et al, 2011) expected goals (Jones and Libicki 2008) determine how a group ends. Indeed, Jones Libicki (2008) observe substantial variation in the last stages of terrorist life cycles: over 40 percent of such groups dissolve as a result of political incorporation (politicization), roughly 40 percent end because of policing, while victory in achieving terroristic goals accounts for only about 10 percent of all organizational ends. Cronin (2009) reinforces Jones and Libicki's (2008) research, finding that most terrorist groups end due to some combination of coercive counter-terror strategies and the mutual decision of terrorists and authorities to negotiate. Some researchers find evidence that the use of terrorism itself conditions outcomes: terrorism tends to prolong the

conflicts, but terrorists very rarely achieve their goals (Fortna, 2015). Terrorists simultaneously decrease the likelihood that combatants will achieve durable peace agreements and increase the duration of conflict (Asal et al, 2018).

Others hypothesize that the popularity of the goals a group pursues are related to how and when that group will end. Cronin (2011) finds that certain goals, especially religious and ethnonationalist objectives, tend to be more popular than others and that groups which pursue these goals are more likely to be long-lasting and compel concessions from a target audience. Some scholars find that non-violent political groups are more than twice as likely to achieve their goals as are violent groups, reinforcing Abrahm's contention that attacks on civilians tend to end terrorist groups (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011). Thompkins (2015), for example, finds that non-violent political movements that host a radical wing are slightly more likely to achieve their goals than are purely violent political movements.

Gaps in Knowledge

While the literature reviewed above makes important strides in describing the lifecycle of terrorist organizations, including how they end, several important issues remain unresolved. To that end, I identify three gaps in the existing literature. First, no study to date has thoroughly explored the organizational features and behaviors that lead terrorist groups to politicize. The absence of research on this topic likely owes to the lack of data related to politicization. To my knowledge, only Jones and Libicki (2008) have developed a dataset that includes measurable behaviors related to political incorporation or engagement. This gap is critical because politicization is the most common process by which terrorist groups end (Jones and Libicki, 2008). Understanding the causes of organizational and behavioral correlates of politicization will

enable policymakers to better anticipate and potentially exploit politicization opportunities when they arise.

Second, no study has investigated the role that non-violent political affiliates (NVPAs) play within a broader terrorist organization. Rather, most of the prior literature on terrorism has focused on violent, as opposed to non-violent, terrorist activities. As a result, not only has research on politicization as an end to terrorism remained under-developed broadly as noted above, but scholarship devoted to untangling how terrorist groups leverage other organizations and political actors is specifically lacking. Yet, should NVPAs play an important role in the politicization process, they may be key to counter-terrorism policies that specifically focus on negotiation.

Third, very little previous work has applied open-systems theory to the politicization process. Instead, much prior research focuses on the individual actions of specific terrorist actors rather than on incorporating the broader open-systems framework that encourages careful consideration for the structures and behaviors of the groups to which those individuals belong. Filling this gap is critical as applying open-systems theory in the context of terrorist politicization may enable researchers to explore the organizational features and behaviors that can explain terrorist negotiation, while encouraging governmental actors to better understand the circumstances under which terrorism ends (potentially non-violently through political means).

This thesis attempts to bridge these gaps by identifying some of the organizational features, focusing in particular on the non-violent political affiliates of terrorist organizations that are linked to politicization. In short, the current study clarifies the politicization process by synthesizing existing secondary data to create a new, unique dataset for analysis into the politicization process for many terrorist organizations. This analysis is guided by an open-

systems perspective, which puts the focus on the internal and external structures and processes affecting when and how terrorist groups end.

PARAMETERS OF THE CURRENT STUDY

Building on prior empirical research and theory, the current project aims to identify some of the organizational features and behaviors that lead a terrorist group to politicize, or to enter a negotiated settlement with the state or governing body. Specifically, my research question is as follows: *how does non-violent political affiliation relate to politicization (negotiated end)?*

Data

To answer this question, I draw from three existing databases, listed in Table 1 below (see also the appendix for more information on specific coding schemes in each database). First, I draw on Jones and Libicki's (2008) "End of Terror" dataset, which provides information on group size, breadth of goals, and politicization for 648 terrorist organizations. Second, I use the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) 2.0 dataset to create designations for NVPAs. Third, I draw on data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) to determine a terrorist organization's preferred target type. Because most of these datasets are derivatives of the GTD, the data that I use refer to terrorist groups from around the world for the period extending from 1970 through 2019.

Table 1. Description of Secondary Data Sources

Database	Author(s)	Key Variables Provided
"End of Terror"	Jones and Libicki (2008)	Politicization (DV) Group Size (IV) Breadth of Goals (IV) Group Lifespan (IV)
NAVCO 2.0	Chenoweth and Orion (2013)	NVPA (IV)
Global Terrorism Database (GTD)	LaFree and Dugan (2007)	Target Type (IV)

Unit of Analysis

The current study's unit of analysis is the individual terrorist organization. Here, I borrow the definition for terrorism used by Jones and Libicki (2008, 3): "terrorism involves the use of politically motivated violence against non-combatants to cause intimidation or fear among a target audience." Similarly, terrorist groups are defined as: "a collection of individuals belonging to a non-state entity that uses terrorism to achieve its objectives" (Jones and Libicki 2008, 3).

I select the organization as the unit of analysis for four reasons. First, organizations are commonly treated as the unit of analysis in studies of social movements, which generally aim to determine why certain social groups mobilize, how they garner resources, or clarify what happens after a group or movement mobilizes. Second, I am working within an open-systems theoretical framework. Open-systems theory is predicated on meso-level analysis. This framework is well-suited to analysis at the group level. It moves beyond consideration of how individual people may contribute to organizational outcomes and instead emphasizes the ways in which those individuals operate collectively. Third, because organizations are frequently treated as the unit of analysis in studies of international terrorism, there exists widely available data surrounding terrorist organizations. Finally, fourth, the outcome of interest – politicization – involves multitudes of different actors that, alone, lack the authority to establish political outcomes. Instead, the study of politicization requires an organizational lens.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for the proposed study is *politicization*, which is coded dichotomously (1 = terrorist group politicized) and defined as a terrorist group entering a negotiated settlement with a governing authority and ceasing violence. Thus, every organization included in the analysis is treated as either having politicized or as having failed to politicize.

As indicated above, the definition of politicization draws heavily on the open-systems/organizations perspective, while building directly on the work of Jones and Libicki (2008), Crenshaw (1991, 2011), and Cronin (2006, 2011). This definition treats politicization as a process of negotiation in which a terrorist organization rejects violence in exchange for legal political status and/or state-rendered concessions. In my dataset, I evaluate politicization in binary terms: each group I include is listed as either having politicized or as having not politicized. I determine whether a group has politicized using the "End of Terror Dataset,[1]" which lists the ways in which 648 terrorist groups ended (Jones and Libicki, 2008). If a group rejects violence after securing a settlement with a state, I classify that group as having politicized. The final dataset contains 200 terrorist groups. However, not all of the terrorist groups included in the set have ended. Because of this, the regression analyses performed in the present study draw on a sample of the 112 terrorist groups that have ended.

Focal Independent Variable: Non-Violent Political Affiliates

For the purposes of the current study, the focal independent variable is the presence of a *non-violent political affiliate (NVPA)*, coded dichotomously (1 = NVPA present) and defined as the presence of ancillary organs or affiliates of terrorist organizations, including affiliated political parties or courts, that pursue political objectives through non-violent methods. This definition for NVPA derives from Chenoweth and Stephan (2011: 6), in which such affiliates pursue "a series of observable, continuous tactics in pursuit of a political objective."

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[1] Accessible via download at the following URL:
https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG741-1.html

In order to practically identify NVPAs, I rely on the NAVCO 2.0 dataset. The creators of this database collected information on the political affiliates and allied institutions of over 2,718 social movements and terrorist organizations (Chenoweth and Orion, 2013). If the NAVCO dataset lists a terrorist group as having either an affiliate political party or an affiliate court, I code that group as having an NVPA. Thus, an NVPA is coded as being present only if a relevant affiliate is listed by the NAVCO dataset.

Additional Control Variables

Drawing from prior research on terrorist organizations, I also include several important covariates of politicization specifically, or terrorist group longevity more broadly. These include the *group size* of the organization (categorical from 0 – 100; 100 – 1,000; and more than 1,000) as estimated in the "End of Terror" database; the *breadth of goals* for each terrorist organization, which is defined using Jones and Libicki's (2008) designation of narrow goals (e.g., regime change, specific policy change) versus broad goals (e.g., establishment of an empire, social revolution, etc.); *target type*, which uses the definitions employed by START and is coded in my dataset as a ratio-level measure that corresponds to the proportion of a terrorist group's targets that were civilian. More specifically, civilian targets include any attacks on non-combatants that are unaffiliated with the state (including facilities like airports, educational institutions, public transport, businesses, and private citizens/property). Non-civilian targets commonly include government officials, police, military personnel, infrastructure, other terrorist groups, or unknown targets. Finally, I also include a control for the *number of years* that the organization has been/was active.

Given the review of prior literature and operationalizations of my key variables, I also generate the following guiding hypotheses.

- H_1: A terrorist organization is more likely to politicize when it contains an NVPA.

Non-violent political affiliates serve three crucial functions. First, the political affiliate contextualizes and legitimizes the terrorist group's violent actions by crafting a narrative, distributing propaganda, and delivering the group's message and mission to potential constituents. Second, the non-violent political affiliate is a prerequisite for diplomatic dialogue – the state cannot communicate with a group that lacks the institutional infrastructure to answer its calls. Third, the non-violent political affiliate provides civic and organizational connections in otherwise barren areas. Furthermore, by identifying opportunities to achieve goals through diplomacy, a NVPA simultaneously tempts the terrorist organization to politicize.

- H_2: Larger terrorist organizations are more likely to politicize than smaller terrorist organizations.

A terrorist group's constituents must believe that the group is capable of achieving its goals. Smaller groups tend to be more fragile (e.g., losing members has a larger impact on the overall stability of the group). Therefore, a larger group is more likely to be seen as a stable, capable arbiter of local affairs. Larger groups are also more likely to be perceived as having the military strength to defeat the police or the state. Furthermore, neither the terrorists nor the legal authorities will make concessions if they do not believe that they need to. If a terrorist group is very small, authorities may not believe that its threats are credible; the state and the police are unlikely to perceive any benefit in negotiating with a group that they believe they could defeat through other means (i.e., without negotiating). Moreover, larger terrorist groups are more likely

to develop NVPAs. As terrorist groups acquire more resources, they become more likely to invest some of these resources in political wings.

- H$_3$: Terrorist groups that pursue narrow goals are more likely to politicize than those that pursue broad goals.

The terrorist organization's goals must offer a plausible solution to the problems (or the grievance) that its constituents face on the ground. If a group's goals are broad (i.e., establishing a transnational caliphate), the state is unlikely to grant the group a mutually acceptable settlement. In contrast, if an organization's goals are narrow enough that authorities can plausibly grant it concessions, while simultaneously serving the desires of a community or movement, the odds of politicization increase. Additionally, some of the effect of goals on politicization may work in conjunction with NVPAs such that terrorist groups that contain NVPAs are also more likely to pursue narrow goals. Because NVPAs are more sensitive to opportunities for negotiation than is the militant wing on a terrorist organization, NVPAs are likely to advocate for narrow goals that authorities can plausibly acquiesce to.

- H$_4$: Terrorist groups that primarily attack non-civilian targets are more likely to politicize than those that mainly attack civilian targets.

Per this last hypothesis, a terrorist group that mostly targets civilians risks ostracizing its constituents. In turn, this underminesthe economic support and recruitment efforts needed to sustain the political aspirations of a terrorist group, thereby undermining the peaceful, political activities necessary for politicization (and the NVPAs who might be helpful in attaining politicization). Terrorist groups that chiefly attack the state and others that its constituents consider legitimate targets are more likely to muster popular political support. In other words, I hypothesize that civilian targets are negatively correlated with politicization.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

    I begin by describing the sample of 112 terrorist organizations that have ended (i.e., are no longer active) and that are the focus of my analysis. These are displayed in Table 2. For the categorical variables, I present proportions/frequencies within each category, while means and standard deviations are presented for all continuous variables.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Sample of Terrorist Organizations (n = 112)

Variable	%	Mean	Std. Dev.
Dependent Variable:			
Politicization	27.7%	-	-
Focal Independent Variable:			
Non-Violent Political Affiliate (NVPA)	33%	-	-
Additional Control Variables:			
% Civilian Targets	-	55.3	31.8
Group size: small [a]	51%	-	-
Group size: medium	25%	-	-
Group size: large	24%	-	-
Breadth of Goals: Narrow	85%	-	-
Longevity [b]	-	10.5	13.6

a Serves as the reference category for multivariate analyses
b Provided in the original metric here but is logged for subsequent multivariate analyses

    I note five key findings. First, most terrorist groups do not politicize. In the sample of 112 groups used in the present study's regression analysis, only 27.7 percent of groups politicized. This indicates that, while politicization is not an especially rare outcome for terrorist groups, it is not the norm. Most terrorist groups end through mechanisms other than politicization. Second, most terrorist groups (67 percent) do not contain a non-violent political affiliate. Like politicization, the presence of an NVPA within a terrorist group is relatively uncommon.

Third, terrorist groups tend to be small. In the sample, 51 percent of groups contained fewer than 100 members. Twenty-five percent contained between 100 and 1,000 members, and only 24 percent contained over 1,000. Fourth, while the mean value for percent civilian targets (55.3 percent) suggests that terrorist groups target civilians about as often as they target non-civilians, the high standard deviation (31.8) indicates that there exists a high degree of variation between targets. This suggests that terrorist groups differ greatly in their selection of targets with some groups primarily carrying out attacks on a single target type (including some that overwhelmingly target civilians), while others disperse attacks more evenly between civilians and non-civilians. Still others rarely attack civilians. Fifth, most terrorist groups tend to last two years or fewer (not shown), but the average for duration (10.5) is driven up by outliers that, in some cases, include groups have lasted more than 50 years. The standard deviation of longevity (13.6) is higher than the mean, indicating that there is a very high degree of variance that is largely attributable to the aforementioned outliers.

Bivariate Analysis

I turn next to an analysis designed to illustrate the one-to-one relationship between my key outcome – politicization – and each of my focal independent variables. Table 3 displays these results of chi-square tests for all categorical independent variables and binary logistic regressions for the continuous variables (percent civilian, longevity). My focus here is on how politicization varies across each unique dimension of a terrorist organization.

Table 3. Bivariate Relationships Between Politicization and All Independent Variables (n = 112)

	Frequency Politicized (%)	Test for Diff.
Non-Violent Political Affiliate (NVPA)		
Yes	20 (54%)	
No	11 (15%)	19.20 p < .001
Additional Control Variables:		
% Civilian Targets	-	-1.11 p > .05
Group size: small	5 (16%)	
Group size: medium	10 (32)%	
Group size: large	16 (52%)	24.39 p < .001
Breadth of Goals: Narrow	29 (94%)	
Breadth of Goals: Broad	2 (6%)	2.39 p > .05
Longevity	-	0.63 p < .001

Note: The statistical significance of politicization differences for categorical variables (NVPA, Group Size, Breadth of Goals) are estimated using chi-square tests, while the relationship between continuous variables (Civilian Targets, Longevity) and politicization are estimated using bivariate logits.

I note five key findings. First, most of the terrorist groups in the sample that politicized contained an NVPA (54 percent). Only 15 percent of groups politicized but did not contain an NVPA. The chi-square test yields a value of 19.2, which is statistically significant at the .001 level, indicating that there exists an association between NVPA and politicization: those groups with a non-violent political affiliate are more likely to politicize. Second, the bivariate logit regression coefficient for percentage of civilian targets (-1.11) is not statistically significant at the .05 level. The percentage of group's attacks on civilian targets is unrelated to politicization.

Third, larger groups tend to politicize more often, as indicated by the frequency politicized column in Table 3. Groups containing more than 1000 members politicized more frequently that did groups of any other size, followed by those group between 100 and 1000, with smaller groups (less than 100 members) politicizing less frequently. The chi-square statistic here (24.39) is also significant at the .001 level, again suggesting a statistically significant association between group size and politicization. Fourth, the chi-square value for breadth of goals (2.39), is not statistically significant at the traditional p<.05 level, indicating that breadth of goals is unrelated to the likelihood of politicization. This may be due to a lack of variation in the breadth of goals with most groups seeking more modest changes and, therefore, reducing the comparisons against groups with broader goals in terms of their politicization. Finally, the logistic regression coefficient for longevity (.63) is statistically significant at the .001 level, suggesting the existence of a positive and statistically significant relationship between longevity and politicization. As the number of years a terrorist group is active increases, the likelihood of politicization increases.

Multivariate Models: Predicting Politicization

While instructive, the bivariate relationships described above fail to consider important differences across terrorist groups that might simultaneously impact the likelihood of politicization (e.g., larger groups may be more likely to include a non-violent affiliate in ways that increase politicization generally). Thus, to address my primary research question – how does non-violent political affiliation impact the likelihood of politicization? – I focus now on building a series of multivariate models that predict politicization as a function of NVPA and other critical terrorist group characteristics that might affect also impact politicization or non-violent political affiliation. These results of which are shown below in Table 4.

I present the models in two steps. The first model replicates Jones and Libicki's (2008) study by including group size (medium and large categories), civilian target proportion, breadth of goals, and longevity. The second model includes the same variables with the addition of NVPA as the focal independent variable of the present study.

Table 4. Logistic Regression Models Predicting Politicization Among Terrorist Organizations as a Function of NVPA and Additional Control Variables (n = 112)

	Model 1	Model 2
Non-Violent Political Affiliate (NVPA)	-	3.748*
% Civilian Targets	0.406	0.243
Group size: medium	4.229*	3.804
Group size: large	10.042**	6.301*
Breadth of Goals: Narrow	0.559	1.537
Longevity (ln)	1.178	1.028
Psuedo R^2	0.177	0.245
Model X^2	27.42	33.04

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Model 1 reveals statistically significant, positive relationships between group size (both medium and large versus small) and politicization, such that both medium and large groups are more likely to politicize than are small groups (p<.05 and p<.01, respectively). In the sample, terrorist groups of medium size are over four times more likely to politicize than groups of small size (the reference category), while large groups are over ten times more likely to politicize than

small groups. No other terrorist group characteristics are statistically significant in model 1. The R^2 value for Model 1 is .177, indicating that just under 18 percent of the variation in politicization can be explained by accounting for civilian targets, group size, breadth of goals, and longevity of terrorist organizations.

Model 2, which incorporates NVPA into the previous model, also finds statistically significant relationships between group size and politicization. However, unlike model 1, the second model does not yield a statistically significant odds ratio for the medium group size, and the odds ratio for the large group size decreased from 10.042 to 6.301 (and the statistical significance declines to p<.05). That is, large groups are over six times more likely to politicize than small groups, net of other key group characteristics and the presence of non-violent political affiliates. Most importantly, model 2 also reveals a statistically significant relationship between NVPA and politicization (p<.05). The odds ratio is 3.748, indicating that terrorist groups that contain an NVPA are almost four times more likely to politicize than groups that do not contain an NVPA, net of other important terrorist group characteristics. The model R^2 value also increased from .177 (model 1) to .245 (model 2), indicating that the model explains an additional 7 percent of the variation in politicization with the inclusion of non-violent political affiliation (this is confirmed by chi-square model fit statistics).

Overall then, the current study finds strong evidence of a relationship between NVPAs and politicization, as well as group size and politicization. Table 2 yields insight as to what the average group in the sample looks like – the typical terrorist organization did not contain an NVPA, did not politicize, targeted mostly civilians, contained 100 or fewer members, and lasted for about 10 years (though this value is driven up significantly by outliers). The bivariate statistics find that NVPA, group size, and longevity are associated with politicization. The

multivariate statistics reveal that NVPA and the large group size share a statistically significant relationship with politicization, indicating that these two IVs as especially important to the politicization process.

A TYPOLOGY OF TERRORIST GROUP ENDS: NVPA AND POLITICIZATION

To illustrate the lifecycle relationship between NVPA and politicization described in my quantitative models above, as well as how different environmental and organizational conditions might contribute to the politicization process, I create below a typology of the terrorist organizations included in this dataset. This is illustrated in Table 5. This typology contains four categories with the overall goal of providing specific examples of the ways that terrorist organizations do (and do not) engage non-violent political affiliates and do (and do not) politicize as a means of ending. The first cell includes terrorist groups that contained an NVPA and politicized, a condition met by 23 groups (16.5 percent of all groups that officially ended at the time of this study). The second type includes terrorist groups that contained an NVPA but did not politicize, criteria shared by 19 groups (13.7 percent of all groups examined). The third type includes groups that did not have an NVPA but did politicize. This cross-classification contains only 14 groups, making it the least common scenario in this data (10.1 percent of all groups examined). The final type includes terrorist groups that did not have an NVPA and did not politicize. This is by far the most common scenario, present for 83 groups (59.7 percent of all groups examined). In the pages that follow, I briefly describe the organizational features and events that led to the end for some specific terrorist groups in each cell of Table 5.

Table 5. Typologies of Terrorist Groups by NVPA and Politicization

Contained an NVPA and Politicized N=20 (17.9%) *Irish Republican Army (IRA) Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO)*	Contained an NVPA, Did Not Politicize N=17(15.2%) *National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) Khmer Rouge*
Did Not Contain NVPA, and Politicized N=11(9.8.%) *Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) Self-Defense Groups of Cordoba and Uraba (ACCU)*	Did Not Contain an NVPA, Did Not Politicize N=68(57.1%) *Andres Castro United Front (FUAC) Aum Shinrikyo*

Type One: Groups That Contained an NVPA and Politicized

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) (active as a terrorist organization from 1969 to 2005) waged a near 30-year violent campaign to end British rule of Ireland and establish a reunified Irish republic. The organization carried out attacks in Northern Ireland, as well as in England, on both civilian and government targets. The IRA grew out of a non-violent political group bearing the same name and continued to enjoy the original IRA's political affiliates despite being officially independent from them. Chief among these NVPAs was Sinn Fein, an Irish political party that shared the IRA's objectives. After a years-long (and largely unsuccessful) campaign by the IRA to establish an independent, unified Irish state, Sinn Fein entered negotiations with English officials in 1997 that would ultimately lead the organization to abandon violence for political representation in a reformed government. Drawing on the themes of my quantitative analysis, the IRA may have been able to politicize for four reasons. First, the organization's NVPA, Sinn Fein, established the conditions that enabled the IRA to negotiate, making politicization possible. The IRA also mostly refrained from attacking civilians (60 percent of its attacks were against non-civilian targets), which may have helped it win popular support. Third, the IRA pursued narrow, achievable goals, which made negotiation with English officials

tenable. Fourth, the organization was sufficiently large that the English government saw its threats as credible.

Similarly, the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) also exemplifies this organizational type. RENAMO, a right-wing opposition movement, was founded in 1976 in a bid to overturn leadership of Mozambique by a Marxist political party (FRELIMO). Despite targeting mostly civilians (63 percent of attacks), RENAMO maintained several NVPAs both in the territories it controlled and abroad. In 1992, after a nearly 15-year terrorist campaign that had resulted in civil war, FRELIMO and RENAMO, through non-violent affiliates, reached a peace agreement that granted RENAMO legitimate political status in exchange for agreeing to abandon violence. The ability of RENAMO to achieve politicization may rest on three characteristics of its organization and activities. First, and perhaps most importantly, RENAMO used several NVPAs that helped initiate negotiations with FRELIMO. Second, the organization pursued a relatively narrow objective in the form of regime change. Third, RENAMO contained over 1,000 members at its peak, making it a large enough group that opposition may have been forced to take it seriously.

Taken together, both the IRA and RENAMO are examples of what my own quantitative analysis finds to be an important process. That is, terrorist groups that engage non-violent political affiliates leverage them strategically to end through politicization. Indeed, the two examples illustrate that other features still matter (including groups size and the breadth of goals), even when some factors (e.g., civilian targets) differ more prominently.

Type Two: Groups That Contained an NVPA, but Did Not Politicize

The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) launched a three-year campaign of terrorist violence that would encompass most of Liberia in 1992. The NPFL's violent attacks,

which targeted civilians in nearly 70 percent of cases, catalyzed the Liberian Civil War, which lasted until 1996. Despite its large membership (estimates place its membership at over 1,000) and a host of NVPAs established mainly in the territory the group conquered, the NPFL did not politicize. This may owe to the fact that the group usually attacked civilians, often committing massacres and using torture in ways that alienated Liberian civilians. In turn, the Liberian government was less willing to negotiate with NFPL leadership and the group ended in 1995 when it defeated the government across most of Liberia and achieved victory.

As another example of this type, the Khmer Rouge began its terrorist activities in 1951. Initially doubling as a Cambodian communist guerilla movement and political party, the Khmer Rouge had an NVPA from its founding. The organization overthrew the Cambodian government in 1975 and became the ruling party of Cambodia. As Cambodia's governing faction, the Khmer Rouge continued to use terrorism to maintain control of the country. The organization's attacks targeted civilians in 72 percent of cases according to the Global Terrorism Database, which may have alienated the Cambodian public and international spectators. The Khmer Rouge were expelled from Cambodia after a Vietnamese invasion of the country in 1979, which caused the organization to rapidly lose power and support. After a protracted period of decline, the organization ceased its terrorist activities in 1998 without ever politicizing. Like the NFPL, the Khmer Rouge was a large organization with a built-in NVPAs (including most of the Cambodian government itself from 1975-1979.

The cases of the NPFL and the Khmer Rouge exemplify some of the means by which terrorist groups might fail to politicize even when NVPAs are present. For the NPFL, politicization may not have occurred because the NPFL did not have to negotiate. The group did not need to leverage its NVPAs in order to achieve a compromise because compromise itself was

unnecessary. Similarly, the Khmer Rouge may not have used NVPAs during its early years because it did not need them to gain control of most of Cambodia, at least temporarily. Both the NPFL and the Khmer Rouge were large enough to gain control of their respective countries as well as very willing to engage in brutal attacks on civilians, highlighting group size and target type as potentially important characteristics of terrorist groups that contained NVPAs, but did not politicize.

Type Three: Groups That Did Not Contain an NVPA, but Politicized

Northern Ireland's Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) emerged in 1996 in response to attacks by the IRA and related Irish republican groups. The LVF aimed to thwart Irish republicanism and to undermine the IRA's efforts to unify Ireland and Northern Ireland. Unlike the IRA, the LVF did not have NVPAs and did not exercise restraint in its target selection. The LVF targeted civilians in nearly 90 percent of its attacks (who were disproportionately Catholic). The LVF began to commit attacks less frequently in the months following the IRA's politicization. The LVF managed to similarly politicize in spite of its relatively modest size (between 100 and 1,000 members), its propensity to target civilians, and its lack of NVPAs because the organization agreed to a ceasefire following the Good Friday Agreement. The organization also pursued relatively narrow goals, which may have made mutually acceptable negotiation with the authorities more possible. Most importantly, the opportunity for negotiation opened by IRA affiliates enabled the LVF to enter a ceasefire agreement in spite of its civilian targets, modest size, and lack of NVPAs.

The Self-Defense Groups of Cordoba and Uraba (ACCU) was a Colombian terrorist organization formed in 1994 in response to frequent kidnappings carried out by left-wing guerilla movements operating in the country's rural regions. Ostensibly a group concerned with defense

of territory, the ACCU often collaborated with Colombian drug traffickers and carried out attacks on left-wing activists. The group contained over 1,000 members at the height of its power and selected civilian targets in 69 percent of its attacks. While ACCU did not have NVPAs, its predecessor organization had collaborated with Colombian police to track down and ultimately kill Pablo Escobar. The ACCU formally politicized and came to an end in 2006 after negotiating a peace agreement with the Columbian government. Key for my purposes, the ACCU may have managed to politicize for three reasons. First, it was composed of a large and powerful network of paramilitary groups, many of which were deeply tied to Columbian drug traffickers, presenting a substantial threat to the Colombian government. Second, ACCU members had opened diplomatic channels with the Colombian government when they collaborated with police to kill Pablo Escobar, which may have offset the group's lack of NVPAs. Third, the organization pursued a relatively modest goal (protecting rural regions of the country that were tied to the Colombian drug trade), which made negotiation with the Colombian government tenable.

The LVF and the ACCU present interesting cases for the purposes of this analysis. Despite the fact that neither group contained a NVPA, they both politicized. Moreover, while the ACCU was a large organization, the LVF only contained between 100 and 1,000 members, indicating that a large group size is not a prerequisite to politicization. The two groups share a set of relatively narrow goals, as well as external circumstances that may have offset the absence of an NVPA. For the LVF, the Good Friday Agreement may have provided access to the negotiation that would otherwise have never materialized. Similarly, the ACCU had previously collaborated with authorities, which may have enabled leadership to open communication with the Colombian government.

Type Four: Groups That Did Not Contain an NVPA and Did Not Politicize

The Andres Castro United Front (FUAC) was a Nicaraguan terrorist organization that was active from 1995 to 2002. One among many Marxist guerilla organizations active in Nicaragua at the time, FUAC aimed to improve the living conditions of residents of the country's poorest regions. FUAC was of medium size, containing over 100 members at its peak. The group targeted non-civilians in the vast majority of its attacks (75 percent). Despite the organization's relative restraint in its target selection and moderate size, FUAC did not politicize. Relative to my own study, the group lacked an NVPA and remained relatively small. When the Nicaraguan government did attempt to initiate peace talks with the FUAC, the organization kidnapped negotiators and peace talks were subsequently discontinued. Following years of targeted assassinations of FUAC leaders by the Nicaraguan government after the failed peace talks, FUAC eventually disintegrated in 2002.

Aum Shinrikyo was a multiregional terrorist organization that was active from 1984-2000. Initially a Japanese spiritual movement or religious organization, Aum Shinrikyo expanded quickly, spanning seven countries and containing over 10,000 members at its peak. Members began to carry out terrorist attacks in the late 1980s, mainly targeting civilians. The group attempted to manufacture chemical weapons through the early 1990s, which culminated in a sarin gas attack on a Tokyo subway in 1995. Following the attack, the Tokyo police launched an aggressive policing campaign that resulted in the arrest of much of the organization's leadership. The group had largely abandoned terrorist activities by the end of 2000. Aum Shinrikyo likely failed to politicize for three reasons. First, the organization's goals were extremely broad in trying to initiate Armageddon through its chemical weapons attacks. This naturally made it difficult for authorities to propose an acceptable settlement to the organization.

Second, Aum Shinrikyo targeted civilians in over 60 percent of its attacks, which made them unpopular among Japanese civilians and left the Japanese government with little incentive for negotiation. Third, and central to my own analysis, Aum Shinrikyo did not have any NVPAs and lacked the institutional infrastructure through which authorities could have initiated negotiations.

The two groups differ significantly across the independent variables that are identified as important in this analysis. Whereas Aum Shinrikyo was a massive group that pursued broad goals and frequently targeted civilians, the FUAC was a medium-sized group that pursued narrow goals and mainly targeted non-civilians. For this analysis, that the groups both lack an NVPA is key to understanding their inability to politicize: while the two organizations vary significantly in terms of other key variables, the lack of an NVPA may be the common factor that prevented either from politicizing.

DISCUSSION

Terrorism remains a top foreign policy concern in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2016), an unsurprising observation given the specific resonance of the September 11th and other recent attacks, as well as the tripling of deaths related to terrorist attacks internationally since 2001 (GTD, 2020). In turn, terrorism research has grown tremendously (Freilich, Grunewald, and Mandala, 2019), both domestically and abroad, including scholarship devoted to understanding when and under what conditions terrorist groups end. Much of this recent literature has focused on the environmental conditions, most notably counter-terror initiatives by authorities, that lead terrorist groups to end. Yet, no study to date has explored the role of politicization as a key mechanism by which hostilities may cease, particularly as the structure of terrorist organizations and the decisions that terrorist groups make might shape the politicization process. By applying an open-systems framework to the end of terrorism literature, the current

study sought to highlight the importance of organizational structure and behavior within the terrorist lifecycle. My own analysis identified two key features of the politicization process: group size and the presence of a non-violent political affiliate (NVPA). In so doing, the current study sought to extend current research by introducing the possibility that novel organizational structures and terrorist political affiliates contribute significantly to the way in which terrorist organizations end.

I noted six key findings. First, both politicization and non-violent political affiliation were found to be uncommon. For example, politicization – the negotiated end of a group through a peace agreement or other cessation of hostilities with a governing entity – was observed for only about a third of all groups. Instead, the majority of terrorist organizations ended through other means (e.g., policing, military force, victory). Likewise, non-violent political affiliates were also found to be somewhat uncommon: only about a third of all terrorist groups affiliated with a non-violent political party or organization.

Second, most terrorist organizations were small and attacked a diverse array of targets. Over half of all groups had fewer than one hundred members, while targets were civilians more than fifty percent of the time for the typical terrorist organization (though with substantial variability across groups). Meanwhile, the average group lasted just over a decade.

Third, and central to my specific research question, multivariate logistic regression models revealed that *NVPAs play a crucial role in the politicization process*. Specifically, terrorist organizations with a non-violent political affiliate were substantially and significantly more likely to politicize, other organization and behavioral covariates held constant. This finding moves forward the current literature by identifying a vital indicator of politicization that, to this point, has been absent from discussion. The importance of NVPAs to the political process

corroborates the more suppositional conclusions of prior research that emphasize the end of terrorism and violent social campaigns through negotiation and politics (Cronin, 2009; Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Thompkins, 2015).

Fourth, other factors were also found to impact the likelihood of politicization. In particular, larger groups (especially those containing over 1,000 members) appeared to be much more likely to politicize than smaller groups. This conclusion supports that of prior researchers who argue that terrorists tend to be more successful when they are capable of inflicting heavy costs on their targets (Kydd and Walter, 2006; Berman and Laitin, 2008). Here, politicization can be understood as the recourse of states who are unable to defeat terrorism through policing or military strategies as a function of terrorist group recruitment and membership reflected by larger groups.

Yet, fifth, I did not find evidence that the targets a terrorist organization chose to pursue were related to politicization. While this conclusion does not suggest that targeting civilians is a successful strategy relative to other tactics, it does indicate that the targeting of civilians does not necessarily affect the possibility of successful negotiation once other factors are taken into account. This finding is somewhat at odds with Abrahm's (2011) contention that the targeting of civilians discourages authorities from making concessions. In the present study, terrorists who targeted civilians were not found to be significantly less likely to politicize net of NVPA and other factors. At the same time, it was beyond the scope of the current study to examine whether terrorism is a more successful strategy than other tactics that do not involve attacks, including on civilians (such as peaceful protest). Instead, the conclusion here cannot adjudicate the notion that terrorism might be a less effective strategy than more peaceful alternatives (Chenoweth and

Stephan, 2011; Thompkins, 2015), though my findings also suggest that other factors may offset the target selection of these groups.

Similarly, sixth, I found that the nature of the goals a terrorist organization chose to pursue, be they narrow or broad, were unrelated to politicization. This is not to say a group's goals do not affect the manner in which it will end, but it does suggest that other organizational features are more important to the politicization process. As such, this conclusion does not necessarily contradict Jones and Libicki's (2008) finding that terrorist groups that pursue narrower goals are more likely to achieve victory as politicization is a distinct outcome.

Revisiting the Typologies: Exceptions to the NVPA-Politicization Link

These findings were further clarified by disaggregating terrorist groups into a typology of NVPA and politicization in order to illustrate specific instances (or not) of non-violent affiliation and politicization. It demonstrates, for example, that while NVPAs can be crucial to the politicization process, *an NVPA does not guarantee politicization*. The typology revealed that while the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) leaned heavily on their NVPAs in order to start negotiations, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and Khmer Rouge did not need to negotiate using their own NVPAs as they were strong enough to achieve victory (though temporary in the case of the Khmer Rouge). Moreover, of the four groups listed above, only the IRA refrained from targeting civilians in most of its attacks. This suggests that groups that are powerful enough to achieve victory might have a greater propensity to attack civilians. The discrepancy in terms of outcome between these two scenarios indicates that, while NVPAs can facilitate negotiation, some groups that are sufficiently large and/or powerful might forego negotiation if they believe they can achieve their

goals without needing to compromise. This, in turn, suggests that larger terrorist organizations might favor strategies of victory rather than politicization.

Other groups managed to politicize without the help of an NVPA, suggesting that an NVPA is not a prerequisite to negotiation either. For example, the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) and Self-Defense Groups of Cordoba and Uraba (ACCU) both managed to enter dialogue with authorities despite lacking non-violent affiliates. The ACCU and the LVF resembled RENAMO in terms of their targets, size, and goals, but they lacked an NVPA. For these groups, diplomatic channels were opened by other means. In the case of the LVF, the Good Friday Agreement, secured in part by the IRA's NVPAs, enabled the group to seek reconciliation with authorities. In the case of the ACCU, the group had previously cooperated with authorities and likely retained access to government contacts. These observations also mean that, although NVPAs often create opportunities for negotiation, there exist other methods of initiating the peace process. That both the LVF and the ACCU targeted mostly civilians reinforces the quantitative finding that target type is unrelated to politicization.

The final scenario included in the case study, groups that did not contain an NVPA and did not politicize, further reinforces the notion that NVPAs are vital to the politicization process by illustrating those organizations that neither engaged affiliates nor peacefully negotiated their ends. For instance, even when groups pursue relatively narrow goals and avoid attacks on civilians (as was the case for the Andres Castro United Front), the lack of an NVPA can still undermine the potential for negotiation. Interestingly, of the eight groups included in the case study, only one (Aum Shinrikyo) pursued broad goals. While it is difficult to observe patterns related to breadth of goals due to the rarity of broad goals, the case of Aum Shinrikyo indicates that broad goals may similarly diminish the prospects of negotiation.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The current study makes several important contributions to the terrorism literature, but there remain at least three ways to extend this line of inquiry. First, the total sample size for the study is small, with only 112 international terrorist groups included in the final regression analysis. While studies of terrorist groups frequently rely on relatively small samples, the current study would generate more robust findings were the sample larger. This small sample owes mainly to the lack of data surrounding NVPAs and politicization, which require detailed studies of the organizations and their histories to construct. Future studies might benefit from drawing on alternative data that can be used as a proxy for NVPA.

Second, the current study lacks diversity for the measurement of breadth of goals. Only 14 of the 112 total groups pursued broad goals, which makes it difficult to assess the effect of broad goals on politicization. Researchers who seek to continue investigating the politicization process may wish to identify and include more groups that pursued broad goals or to delineate organizational objectives with more variability.

Third, the relationship between NVPAs and politicization is undermined by a potential issue with time. While the regression analysis offers evidence of a relationship between NVPAs and politicization, it is not clear whether the NVPA precedes the politicization process. It is possible, for example, that NVPAs often develop during politicization rather than being the catalysts of it. Future researchers might offset this problem if they can identify the time frame in which the terrorist developed an NVPA relative to when negotiations with authorities began. Alternatively, using time series methodology and lagged predictors might similarly provide advantages in characterizing this process within the proper order.

The present study offers two important insights for policymakers. First, negotiation with terrorists is a relatively common and often successful strategy for ending terrorist campaigns. There may exist a political cost to negotiating with terrorists, but politicization offers an opportunity for authorities to end terrorism peacefully. While philosophical and political costs to negotiation will remain a concern, the negotiated ends of terrorist organizations constitute viable routes for stakeholders to take.

Second, negotiations are more likely to be successful when a terrorist organization is large and contains an NVPA. These two variables constitute valuable indicators that successful negotiation with a terrorist group is possible and should be considered by policymakers who are contemplating strategies involving negotiation. Policymakers might more comfortably assume the risk of negotiating with terrorists when these conditions are met, as the potential philosophical/political costs of negotiating with terrorists are offset by the possibility of negotiating a peaceful end to the violence.

The current study has explored the process of politicization, an important dimension of the scholarship on the end of terrorism that has heretofore gone underdiscussed. While the present study offers a starting point for researchers who are interested in the politicization process, there remains a great need for additional research into the conditions under which terrorist groups end peacefully, including through their political and organizational strategies. Should future researchers continue this investigation, they will enrich our understanding of the terrorist lifecycle and, in so doing, arm policymakers with the information they need to combat terrorism with as little loss of life as possible.

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APPENDIX: DATA SOURCES, CLASSIFICATION, MEASUREMENT

Variable	Source	Type	Coding	Name in Politicization Dataset
Politicization (DV)	● End of Terror Dataset	● Dichotomous ● Categorical	● 0: Did Not Politicize ● 1: Did Politicize	● Politicization
Non-Violent Political Affiliate (FOCAL IV)	● NAVCO 2.0 ● How Terrorism Ends Dataset	● Dichotomous ● Categorical	● 0: Group Does Not Have NVPA ● 1: Group Has NVPA	● NVPA
Group Size (IV)	● End of Terror Dataset	● Ordinal ● Categorical	● 0: 1-100 ● 1: 101-1000 ● 2: 1001-10000 ● 3: >100000	● Size
Breadth of Goals (IV)	● End of Terror Dataset	● Dichotomous ● Categorical	● 0: Narrow Goals (Regime Change, Policy Change) ● 1: Broad Goals (Empire, Social Revolution)	● BoG
Target Type (IV)	● GTD	● Ratio		● Targets
Group Lifespan (IV)	● End of Terror Dataset	● Interval		● Lifespan