Learning from the Lack of Political Violence: Conceptual Issues and Research Designs

by Leena Malkki

Abstract

There is a rich body of literature that has analysed the emergence of political violence from many different perspectives. While various types of methods and data have been used in these studies, some methodological opportunities have remained underutilised. One of these, particularly in the case of qualitative research designs, has been the inclusion of cases characterised by lower levels of political violence. This article discusses how cases with little political violence have been used in qualitative terrorism research thus far, and what kind of opportunities and challenges are related to including such cases in research designs.

Keywords: Qualitative research; research design; negative cases; resilience; restraint; methods

Why political violence occurs is one of the most fundamental questions in research on terrorism and political violence. A rich body of literature engages with this question from a variety of perspectives. These studies have analysed a wide range of cases using a plethora of analytical frameworks, methods and data. At the same time, there are still underutilised methodological opportunities that could be used to deepen our understanding of how and why political violence emerges.

One of the methodological opportunities that could be used more often is the incorporation of cases with low levels of political violence into research designs. This is especially true in research that uses qualitative methods. To date, qualitative studies have overwhelmingly focused on cases in which there have been (often, by European standards) significant levels of terrorism and political violence, whether it is an in-depth case study of a single movement or country or a comparative study of several of them. While these studies have made a huge contribution to the theoretical understanding of political violence, cases with little political violence also have an important role to play in qualitative research. Ignoring such cases may leave us with an incomplete understanding of the dynamics, processes and mechanisms that are relevant for the emergence of political violence.

This article outlines how cases with low levels of political violence could be used more systematically in qualitative studies on the emergence of political violence and terrorism, why it should be done and what can be gained from it. The article starts by explaining why such research is important. This is followed by a brief discussion of how cases with relatively little political violence have been used in terrorism research. Finally, the article outlines the critical questions and key challenges that should be taken into account when designing studies that include cases in which political violence is low.

Why Study Cases with Low Levels of Political Violence?

This article does not call for analysing and explaining the lack of terrorism and political violence for its own sake. Instead, it is argued that such cases should be studied in order to improve our understanding of the emergence of political violence. At the most basic level, this need derives from key principles of scientific research and theory formation. Within quantitative research design, it is often taken as a basic principle that cases should not be selected on the outcome (dependent variable). If the objective is to establish, for example, how various political, economic, social and demographic factors impact the levels of political violence, it is not sound to include only cases with high levels of political violence in the dataset.[1]

When it comes to qualitative research, the role of cases with limited political violence is somewhat different,

as such research typically differs in its explanatory approach and objectives.[2] Instead of establishing the average effect of specific variables, qualitative research often seeks to explain why political violence emerged in the cases under analysis, and eventually in all cases within the scope of the theory under investigation. When the objective is to explain the path to a certain outcome, much can be achieved by analysing cases in which this path has manifested itself. In this kind of research, selecting only cases in which the outcome of interest has occurred is less problematic and, in fact, is a common practice. Even if this practice is not endorsed by all, there are various widely accepted and used case selection techniques in which only those cases with positive outcomes are selected (e.g. typical case, pathway case and most different case strategies).[3]

Much of the qualitative research on the emergence of terrorism has focused on in-depth analysis of individual cases or comparing a small number of cases in which terrorism has emerged. These studies have provided indispensable insights into the events and developments that played a role in the path toward the outbreak and persistence of terrorism. Such rich and detailed analyses have been highly important for understanding this complex and multidimensional phenomenon. At the same time, negative cases have received relatively little attention.[4]

Cases with negative outcomes have an important role to play also in qualitative research. Even if they are not a required feature of all qualitative research designs, they can be used to build hypotheses and to test and further refine the theories under development (e.g. using deviant and most similar case selection strategies). The value of a case study is not inherently dependent on whether the outcome of interest (emergence of political violence) took place. Some research questions are, in fact, virtually impossible to answer without including cases with negative outcomes in the analysis. By studying cases in which political violence has emerged, we can uncover the commonalities between various episodes of violence. What such an analysis does not reveal, however, is whether these commonalities also manifest, in some form, in cases in which no political violence has occurred. In other words, we cannot fully know the degree to which these commonalities are unique to cases with political violence and the causes that are sufficient for the emergence of political violence.

Another argument for analysing cases with low levels of political violence relates to what one needs to look for when searching for explanations for the emergence of political violence. So far, terrorism studies have focused overwhelmingly on the factors and mechanisms that feed into the emergence and escalation of terrorism. In contrast, the factors and mechanisms that restrain or moderate the use of political violence have received far less attention.[5] Terrorism studies have already started to pay more attention to such factors and mechanisms in the context of research on how terrorist campaigns end and how individuals disengage from terrorism. However, restraining and moderating factors and mechanisms do not come into play only when terrorism begins to de-escalate; they are present in some form from the beginning. This means that the emergence of political violence should not be conceptualised merely as the *presence* of certain factors and mechanisms, as it may also partially result from the *absence* of restraining or protective factors and mechanisms.

Fully uncovering restraining or protective factors and mechanisms by only studying cases with political violence is difficult. For this purpose, cases with few or no instances of political violence must also be examined. Studying such cases can improve our understanding of the conditions that may protect certain areas from outbreaks of political violence and, thereby, what may foster resilience against such violence.

This is particularly important when the explanations for the emergence of political violence are sought with the intention of finding ways to prevent and counter it. Rather than drawing insights from major outbreaks of political violence, it may well be that the cases with little political violence provide the most useful lessons. Understanding protective and restraining factors and mechanisms may produce information that will aid in the development of more effective policies, especially for the early prevention of violent extremism.

Previous Studies that Include Cases with Low Levels of Political Violence

Qualitative studies that include cases with little terrorism or political violence have been fairly scarce, but they do exist. In this section, some examples of such studies are presented. The focus will be on methodological issues - research questions, case selection, data, methods and analytical strategies. The examples are chosen from the literature on the emergence of terrorism and political violence in Western countries in the post-war era. The discussion focuses on studies that use either country, region or group/network as the unit of analysis. This means that studies analysing why some individuals engage in political violence while others do not, are not included. Such research is discussed in Bart Schuurman's article in this Special Issue.[6]

There are a number of small-N qualitative studies that explicitly set out to find why there has been so little political violence in certain cases. Some of these are qualitative historical studies, which typically draw inspiration and justification (either implicitly or explicitly) from counterfactual history. One such study is Nick Brooke's study of nationalism and terrorism in the UK.[7] Brooke contrasts the development of nationalist movements in Scotland, Wales and England with that in Northern Ireland, asking why the first three have witnessed much less terrorist violence than the last, even though the development of nationalist movements had many similarities. In essence, his study is about permissive societal conditions for political violence.

Brooke sets to solve this puzzle by providing an elaborate historical account of the political, religious and social contexts surrounding these national movements over the last one hundred years. The answer lies, in his view, in a combination of several issues, which together produced a political and social environment in which there was little public support for political violence. He highlights the importance of two issues in particular: the development of national identity and the availability of non-violent options. The national identity and Britishness were more compatible with one another in Scotland and Wales than they were in Ireland. Moreover, non-violent means of exerting political influence remained a viable option for the overwhelming majority of the population in Wales and Scotland, effectively limiting the legitimacy of, and support for, violent means.

Other studies have sought explanations by conducting a historical multi-level analysis which look at group dynamics, interactions between various actors as well individual pathways. Among these is Luca Falciola's study on the US white radical leftist groups of the New Left wave.[8] His objective is to determine why these groups did not resort to violence against people in the 1960s and 1970s, even though they had the resources to do so, had begun to organise in guerrilla units and were also ideologically prepared for such violence. Thus, what Falciola seeks to explain is not a general lack of political violence but the decision to abstain from violence against people. To track the mechanisms that contributed to the constrained use of violence, Falciola conducts a qualitative multi-level analysis, drawing from primary sources relating to fifteen radical left groups in the US. After casting doubt on several previous explanations (e.g. strict countermeasures), he concludes that the most important reason for the restraint from violence against people was the moderating influence of the radical milieu. The militant groups were initially supported by the larger radical left milieu, but when a group began to move toward targeting people, it was met with criticism and backlash from its supporters.

A similar question about the lack of certain types of political violence is posed in a number of other studies. For example, Jeff Goodwin examines why there was so little anti-white terrorism in the anti-apartheid struggle.[9] Similarly, Pietro Castelli Gattinara, Francis O'Connor and Lasse Lindekilde analyse why there have been so few lone actor terrorist attacks stemming from the neo-fascist milieu in Italy.[10]

Cases with low levels of political violence have also occasionally been discussed in studies that draw on social movement studies' approaches and models to explain the emergence of political violence, although most influential qualitative studies have focused only on positive cases.[11] Among them is the study on dynamics of radicalisation conducted by Eitan Alimi, Chares Demetriou and Lorenzo Bosi.[12] Their main attention is directed towards the interaction between different actors (social movement, counter-movements, the political system and the security forces) as well as the dynamics within the social movement itself. By systematically analysing these interactions, they identify recurring mechanisms that lead to radicalisation into political violence.

Alimi, Demetriou and Bosi, however, recognise that, in addition to mechanisms of radicalisation, there are likely also mechanisms that work against it. The book includes one chapter that focuses on radicalisation in reverse and non-radicalisation. They provide a brief analysis of three cases of non-radicalisation and suggest that there appears to be at least three mechanisms: consensus mobilisation, underbidding and downward spirals of political opportunity. However, their discussion of these non-radicalisation cases and mechanisms is brief.

Negative cases also feature in Jacob Aasland Ravndal's article on why Sweden has had so much more right-wing terrorism and militancy than Norway, Finland and Denmark.[13] Here, other Nordic countries function as negative cases and comparison points to Sweden. More specifically, Ravndal examines how social movement theories can help in understanding the differences between these countries. He concludes that the higher levels of right-wing terrorism in Sweden can be explained by a combination of the arrival of a high number of immigrants and a lack of influential anti-immigration parties. In addition, differences in experiences during the Second World War played a role. What distinguishes Sweden from the other Nordic countries is that it remained largely neutral in the Second World War and did not witness a purge of Nazi sympathisers after the war ended. Consequently, Sweden was left with a significantly stronger extreme right movement. This has contributed to the vitality of its far-right milieu and a number of dedicated militants for decades since, arguably providing better opportunities for the emergence of political violence.

Ravndal's research design was partly informed by his previous comparative study on extreme-right violence in 18 West European countries between 1990 and 2015, which had shown that there had been significantly more extreme right violence in Sweden than in other Nordic countries.[14] In this larger study, Ravndal uses fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) to test the explanatory power of conditions identified as conducive to right-wing violence in previous research (immigration, socioeconomic hardship, authoritarian legacies, radical right support, radical right repression and left-wing terrorism and militancy). The analysis draws from his Right-wing Terrorism and Violence (RTV) dataset, which includes several countries with few or no incidents.[15]

Furthermore, there are a small number of studies that combine quantitative analysis with detailed qualitative analysis of individual cases. The cases in these studies include those in which political violence has emerged as well as those that have witnessed relatively little political violence. Importantly, the negative cases are analysed not only in the quantitative part but also in the qualitative part of the studies. A good example of this kind of research is Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca's study on revolutionary (New Left wave) terrorism in Western countries. [16] The study does not analyse the determinants of all kinds of terrorism but specifically considers lethal revolutionary terrorism. His research includes 23 affluent Western countries [17] and covers the years 1970–2000. The intensity of lethal revolutionary terrorism varied considerably between these countries, and the objective of the study was to find out why. Sánchez-Cuenca describes his method as historical comparative analysis. More specifically, his study consists of statistical analysis, which "is combined with qualitative comparisons and in-depth knowledge of cases".[18]

The main argument put forward by Sánchez-Cuenca is that the intensity of revolutionary terrorism cannot be explained by socio-economic and political conditions at the time of the attacks. Instead, the intensity of revolutionary terrorism in the post-war period is much more strongly connected with developments that took place in the inter-war period. He develops a historical explanation for why and how the interwar period mattered. According to him, this period left its mark on attitudes among the radical left against violence and state repression. These attitudes played a major role in how the radical left reacted to both state repression and initiatives toward violent revolutionary struggle in the 1960s and 1970s. Throughout his study, Sánchez-Cuenca devotes a great deal of attention to carefully analysing what happened in countries with low levels of lethal revolutionary terrorism. In fact, he could hardly have made his argument without doing so.

Other examples of studies that combine quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the emergence of political violence and devote considerable attention to negative cases are provided by Jan Oskar Engene and Luis de la Calle. Engene uses this type of research design to study domestic terrorism in Western European countries from 1950 to 1995.[19] De la Calle uses such a research design to study nationalist violence in Western

Europe.[20] His quantitative analysis of 29 nationalist-driven Western European regions is followed by three sets of case studies, each focusing on a pair or regions, one of which has witnessed political violence and the other of which has been (largely) spared from it (Basque country and Catalonia, Northern Ireland and Wales, and Corsica and Sardinia).

Building Research Designs with Negative Cases

The discussion above offered examples of how cases involving limited political violence can be used to study the emergence of terrorism and political violence. They do not by any means cover the full spectrum of what can be done. Having said that, not all studies on cases with low levels of political violence are equally useful. Making efficient use of such cases requires carefully planning. We will now turn to some of the key questions that should be addressed in that context.

What Qualifies as a Lack of Political Violence?

The first question that needs to be addressed is what is meant by a lack of political violence, and what kind of cases we are looking at. To this point, the expression has been used in this article as a general term simply to refer to cases in which the outcome under study—in this case, the emergence of political violence—has not occurred, or has occurred to a lesser degree. The kinds of cases that fall into this category depend on the exact research topic and question. At a minimum, the following questions are important to consider.

What is the unit of analysis? What a lack of political violence can refer to depends on the level and unit of analysis. It can mean countries/regions that have witnessed relatively little political violence, groups/networks that have committed few acts of political violence, or individuals who have not become involved in groups/networks that commit political violence (or have not committed such acts on their own).

What is meant by political violence? What exactly is lacking in these cases depends on the kind of political violence studied. It can mean a lack of any type of political violence, but could also mean a lack of specific forms of political violence. The study may be limited to the emergence of a certain type of political violence as defined, based on its ideological or political background and focus, for example, on nationalist-separatist or extreme-right political violence. It can also mean a lack of certain kinds of political violence, for example, a lack of terrorist attacks or (indiscriminate) attacks against people. Another issue that may need to be defined is the acts of violence that qualify as political, as this is not always clear-cut, especially in the case of lone actor violence.[21] The same goes for violence - for example, does it refer only to acts against people, or are acts against property also included? Another issue that may need to be solved is how to define escalation and de-escalation. This is important if the lack of a certain type of political violence is taken as an indicator of lower level of escalation. How do, for example, violence against property and violence against individuals relate to each other, and how is the frequency of attacks taken into account?[22]

What are the criteria for absence? The lack of political violence can be defined in absolute terms, meaning literally no political violence. However, setting such a high bar for qualification does not always make sense, especially if the unit of analysis is an entire country. It is very rare for absolutely no politically motivated acts of violence to occur in any large area over any longer period. It is more common to interpret the absence and presence of the outcome in relative terms, such as countries/regions that have witnessed remarkably low levels of political violence compared with other countries/regions. Drawing the border between positive and negative outcomes is not always completely clear and is one of the issues that needs to be defined before the case selection.

How is a lack of political violence defined in temporal terms? The lack of political violence also has a temporal element. It is usually understood as the (relative) absence of political violence within the period under study. Another temporal dimension concerns the duration of political violence. In some cases, it is a quickly passing phenomenon, and no further escalation occurs, whereas in other cases it has continued for years or decades. Cases of short-duration political violence could also qualify as negative case studies. Hence, studying the lack

of political violence would essentially mean studying the quick demise of political violence, intersecting with research on how and why political violence ends.

Connection Between Theory and Case Selection

Studies of cases in which there have been low levels of political violence (however defined) do not automatically make an equal contribution to theory formation. All historical and empirical studies on cases with relatively little political violence can be fascinating in numerous ways. They may offer valuable descriptions of the social world and provide building blocks for more theoretically oriented contributions in the future. Some cases are crucial because of their societal significance and are worth studying simply for that reason.

However, if a study aims to directly contribute to theory formation, the research design and case selection must be carefully considered. The case must not only have a negative outcome but also be relevant. There is no general answer to which historical cases make good case studies. Theoretical usefulness depends mostly on the relationship between the theory and the case. Finding suitable cases is not easy and straightforward. Making informed choices almost always requires detailed knowledge of the cases.

One way to think about potentially useful cases for study is using the possibility principle put forward by James Mahoney and Gary Goertz. According to this principle, "only cases where the outcome of interest is possible should be included in the set of negative cases; cases where the outcome is impossible should be relegated to a set of uninformative and hence irrelevant observations."[23] Mahoney and Goertz suggest that negative cases can be considered relevant when the "value on at least one independent variable is positively related to the outcome of interest" (rule of inclusion), and no other variables would predict the non-occurrence of the outcome of interest (rule of exclusion).

Furthermore, it is crucial to think about the scope. If the purpose is to develop a certain model or theory, the case studies need to be chosen within the range of cases that it is intended to apply to. Case studies can also be used to test whether the theory or model would be more widely applicable. Negative cases are not, however, necessarily the best way to do that.

Maintaining the connection between the theory and the case study throughout the research project is also important. This means that not only should the case selection be justified by theory but also that the theoretical implications of the research results should be discussed. Thus far, especially small-N case studies in the field of terrorism research that have explicitly focused on the lack of political violence have been rather descriptive and have mainly focused on explaining the cases at hand. There is more that can be done.

Case Selection Strategies

Another important issue related to the relationship between case selection and theory is the case selection strategy. Cases with negative outcomes can be used in various case study designs.

The most obvious candidate is the deviant case study design.[24] It allows for producing theoretically relevant studies in a rather short period of time. A deviant case is one that does not fit the causal patterns discovered in a quantitative study or one that runs counter to what a theory would predict. Deviant case studies can help supplement an existing model or theory by providing an explanation for outlier cases. It may also contribute to further theory development by identifying factors or mechanisms that the study or theory in question does not address, thereby helping to develop it further. This means, quite obviously, that deviant cases are useful only if there is already a rather developed theory that can be tested.

In qualitative studies that rely on process tracing, deviant cases can be a useful way to understand causal mechanisms. Negative cases can be of interest as deviant cases when the outcome of interest did not occur even though the causal mechanisms were in place. Detecting the point at which mechanisms break down may be possible by tracing the mechanisms carefully in a deviant case. This can lead to finding contextual or causal conditions that have hitherto remained undetected.[25]

How can good candidates for deviant case studies be identified? Previous large-N or intermediate-N quantitative studies can function as a good starting point.[26] There are often cases which (in one way or another) fit identified patterns poorly. Another way is to start from potential cases and reflect on how different theories of political violence appear to be able to explain them. Of course, cases are always deviant only in relation to a certain theory or model. The same case may be deviant in relation to one theory but compliant with another one.

Cases with low levels of political violence can also be used in comparative case study designs as negative cases. This is a standard practice in social science methodology, and it could be utilised more frequently in terrorism studies.

Negative cases could, for example, be included in most-similar case study designs. It is a research design in which the case studies share similar background factors but differ in outcome. In other words, this would involve studying groups or locations that are similar in many respects that are deemed relevant for the emergence of political violence but different in terms of whether political violence has actually emerged. The cases do not have to be countries or groups—they can also be cities or provinces. An in-depth study of such cases will produce information about what may have caused the different outcomes, regardless of the similarities between the cases (and whether the similarities were truly relevant). While small-N studies do not necessarily produce generalisable results themselves, this kind of research can still make a significant contribution by building new hypotheses about causal factors and mechanisms for further research or helping to refine existing models and theories.

One variant of the most-similar case design that could also be used is a paired comparison in which two similar cases are examined—one in which political violence has emerged and one in which it has not. Some researchers argue that, when the number of cases is limited to two, the study is better placed to generate robust hypotheses, as the number of unmeasured variables is smaller than in larger-N comparisons.[27]

Another type of comparative case study design in which cases with low levels of political violence could be used is the most-different case study design.[28] This means that all cases share the same outcome, in that relatively little political violence has occurred, but they are different in their relevant background factors. The idea behind this choice is not to test theories about what leads to the emergence of political violence as such. Instead, the objective is to supplement these theories by looking for potential restraining or protective factors or mechanisms. Again, there must be a reason to assume that political violence should have occurred in these cases for this research design to make sense.

Transnational waves of political violence provide one potential context for this kind of research design. During such waves, we regularly encounter a situation in which the level of political violence differs significantly from one place to another, even though the ideas and models that inspire the wave are transnational and have supporters in many more places. Furthermore, the conditions conducive to political violence may be more widespread than the political violence actually is. Forming hypotheses about the mechanisms that have protected certain countries or areas from political violence is possible by studying these cases in depth and comparing them with one another.

Besides fully-fledged case studies, cases with negative outcome can also be used as smaller, supplementary cases. These kinds of shadow cases can be used for brief comparisons that further extend the inquiry and allow the researcher to address smaller questions that arise but cannot be analysed using the main cases because they lack the necessary variation. Shadow cases can also be used to further evaluate the conclusions reached in the study. For example, a comparative study that focuses on analysing cases with positive outcomes can be supplemented by shadow cases with negative outcomes. The purpose, then, would be to see whether the conclusions of the study hold when set against negative cases.[29]

Conclusion

This article has made the case for qualitative research within terrorism studies to make more frequent use of negative cases. It has also discussed some key issues that should be taken into account in such research. Studying cases in which political violence has emerged will naturally occupy the central place in the research field. However, cases with low levels of political violence can make a significant contribution to the development of theories and models and provide irreplaceable evidence about the factors and mechanisms that restrain and protect against political violence. The latter is important not only for academic, but also for policy-making purposes, as the conclusions can help to develop efficient evidence-based policies for countering violent extremism—provided that the cases are chosen and the research projects are designed carefully.

Paying more attention to negative cases would also have an important by-product that has not yet been mentioned. It has the potential to improve the academic quality of terrorism studies and help the field move forward. Common complaints among terrorism researchers are that the same questions tend to come up time and again, previous research is too often ignored, theory formation has stagnated and methodological rigour leaves much to be desired.[30] There is a rather broad consensus that the situation has improved significantly during the last two decades, but that there is still room for further improvement.[31]

How could studying negative cases help in this regard? It would broaden the methodological spectrum of the research field and thereby provide more tools for studying this admittedly challenging research topic. What is more important, however, is that it could improve the cumulative academic research on terrorism. In order for scientific knowledge to advance, new studies should build upon the findings of previous studies. So far, this has not necessarily been the strength of terrorism studies, as current events and policy concerns have had a significant impact on research agendas. This is not to say that research should not be timely and policy-oriented. The academic research field of terrorism studies would become more solid by anchoring itself more strongly in previous research. Qualitative studies that include negative cases almost always do so, as their research designs often rely fundamentally and unavoidably on previous theoretical discussions. This is obviously just one of many alternatives for expanding and improving this field of academic knowledge and will not solve all the problems. However, it could help the field to move in the right direction.

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[1] These kind of studies include, among many others, Erica Chenoweth, "Terrorism and Democracy", *The Annual Review of Political Science* 16 (2013); Walter Enders, Gary A. Hoover & Todd Sandler, "The Changing Nonlinear Relationship between Income and Terrorism", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60/2 (2016); Sarah Brockhoff, Tim Krieger & Daniel Meierrieks, "Great Expectations and Hard Times: the (Nontrivial) Impact of Education on Domestic Terrorism", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59/7 (2015); Henrik Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence", *International Studies Quarterly* 50/3 (2006).

[2] On the differences of analytical approaches and case selection in quantitative and qualitative research, see especially James Mahoney & Gary Goertz, "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research", *Political Analysis* 14/3 (2006); Donatella della Porta, "Comparative Analysis: Case-Oriented versus Variable-Oriented Research", in Donatella della Porta & Michael Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[3] See e.g Jason Seawright & John Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and

Quantitative Options", *Political Research Quarterly* 61/2 (2008); Derek Beach & Rasmus Brun Pedersen, "Selecting Appropriate Cases when Tracing Causal Mechanisms", *Sociological Methods & Research* 47/4 (2018); Andrew Bennett & Colin Elman, "Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods", *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (2006); John Gerring & Lee Cojocaru, "Selecting Cases for Intensive Analysis: A Diversity of Goals and Methods", *Sociological Methods & Research* 45/3 (2016).

[4] Strong concentration on cases with positive outcome and a call for more attention to cases with negative outcome has been made e.g. in Erica Chenoweth & Andreas Gofas, "The Study of Terrorism: Achievements and Challenges Ahead", in Erica Chenoweth, Richard English, Andreas Gofas & Stathis N. Kalyvas (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism* (Oxford University Press, 2019); Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[5] This is arguably not typical for terrorism studies only. For example, Scott Straus has put forward a similar claim about genocide studies and argues that a "critical missing dimension" of the study of political violence, in general, "is a methodological recognition of negative cases and a theoretical recognition of the dynamics of restraint that helps to explain such negative cases". He calls for a re-conceptualisation of violence as an outcome of both factors of escalation and restraint, essentially claiming that restraint is not any kind of special case but an integral part of the dynamics of political violence. - Scott Straus, "Retreating from the Brink: Theorizing Mass Violence and the Dynamics of Restraint", *Perspectives on Politics* 10/2 (2012), citations on p. 343.

[6] See also Jamie Bartlett & Carl Miller, "The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference Between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalisation", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24/1 (2012); R. Kim Cragin, "Resisting Violent Extremism: A Conceptual Model for Non-Radicalisation", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26/2 (2014). The need for more studies like this has been recognised, but the use of negative cases remains quite uncommon, as a recent review study confirms: Sarah L. Desmarais, Joseph Simons-Rudolph, Christine Shahan Brugh, Eileen Schilling, and Chad Hoggan, "The State of Scientific Knowledge Regarding Factors Associated with Terrorism", *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management* 4/4 (2017).

[7] Nick Brooke, *Terrorism and Nationalism in the United Kingdom: The Absence of Noise* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

[8] Luca Falciola, "A bloodless guerrilla warfare: Why U.S. white leftists renounced violence against people during the 1970s", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28/5 (2016).

[9] Jeff Goodwin, "'The Struggle Made Me a Nonracialist': Why There Was So Little Terrorism in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle", *Mobilization: An International Quarterly Review* 12/2 (2007).

[10] Pietro Castelli Gattinara, Francis O'Connor & Lasse Lindekilde, "Italy, No Country for Acting Alone? Lone Actor Radicalisation in the Neo-Fascist Milieu", *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12/6 (2018).

[11] See e.g. Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), including her comment on p. 294.

[12] Eitan Y. Alimi, Chares Demetriou & Lorenzo Bosi, *Dynamics of Radicalization: A Relational and Comparative Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). The cases analysed in the study are al-Qaeda, EOKA and the Red Brigades.

[13] Jacob Aasland Ravndal, "Right-wing Terrorism and Militancy in the Nordic Countries: A Comparative Case Study", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 30/5 (2018). Another example of a social movement study which focuses on a case with negative outcome is Martín Portos, "Keeping Dissent Alive under the Great Recession: No-Radicalisation and Protest in Spain After the Eventful 15M/ Indignados Campaign", *Acta Politica* 54 (2019).

[14] Countries included in the analysis are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Jacob Aasland Ravndal, "Explaining Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe: Grievances, Opportunities and Polarization", *European Journal of Political Research* 57/4 (2018).

[15] FsQCA as a method has been used quite rarely in the study of terrorism and political violence. It is actually surprising given that it is particularly suitable to intermediate-N studies on causally complex phenomena. Results of such analysis would also work as an excellent starting point for building further in-depth case study research designs, including studies on cases with negative outcome. One of the very few other studies using this method to study political violence and terrorism is Michael A. Jensen, Anita Atwell Seate & Patrick A. James, "Radicalization to Violence: A Pathway Approach to Studying Extremism", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32/5 (2020).

[16] Ignacio Sánchez Cuenca, *The Historical Roots of Political Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[17] Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. These are all pre-1994 OECD countries.

[18] Sanchez-Cuenca, op. cit., p. 3.

[19] Engene's aim is to determine how levels of terrorism relate to the problems of legitimacy (derived from ethnic diversity or problems of integration or continuation within the political system) that the state has faced in the past or is facing at the moment. His analysis includes a statistical section and a more detailed qualitative discussion of individual countries, including countries that witnessed few acts of terrorism. Through the qualitative analysis, he also seeks to explain why some countries had less terrorism than his argument and statistical analysis would have predicted. Jan Oskar Engene, *Terrorism in Western Europe: Explaining the Trends since 1950* (Cheltenham & Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2004).

[20] Luis de la Calle, *Nationalist Violence in Post-war Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[21] On this, see Leena Malkki, "Amok – private oder politische Gewalt? School Shootings und die Grenzen der Einzeltäterthese", *Mittelweg 36*, Heft 4-5 (2020); Leena Malkki, "Political Elements in Post-Columbine School Shootings in Europe and North America", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26/1 (2014); Jelle van Buuren, "Performative Violence? The Multitude of Lone Wolf Terrorism", *Terrorism: An Electronic Journal and Knowledge Base* 1 (2012).

[22] This is discussed in the article by Rune Ellefsen and Joel Busher in this Special Issue.

[23] James Mahoney & Gary Goertz, "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research", *American Political Science Review* 98/4 (2004), p. 653.

[24] See, e.g., Jason Seawright & John Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options", *Political Research Quarterly* 61/2 (2008). In some cases, the negative case methodology can also be applied, see Rebecca Jean Emigh, "The Power of Negative Thinking: The Use of Negative Case Methodology in the Development of Sociological Theory", *Theory and Society* 26/5 (1997).

[25] See Derek Beach & Rasmus Brun Pedersen, "Selecting Appropriate Cases When Tracing Causal Mechanisms", *Sociological Methods & Research* 47/4 (2018), pp. 860–863.

[26] On using case studies to assess arguments proposed in quantitative analyses and how to pick cases for these, see especially James D. Fearon & David D. Laitin, "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Putting It Together Again", in Robert E. Goodin (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science,* DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604456.013.0052.

[27] On this, see especially Sidney Tarrow, "The Strategy of Paired Comparison: Toward a Theory of Practice", *Comparative Political Studies* 43/2 (2010).

[28] Jason Seawright & John Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options", *Political Research Quarterly* 61/2 (2008). The most-different case selection technique is used e.g. in Eitan Y. Alimi, Chares Demetriou & Lorenzo Bosi, *Dynamics of Radicalization: A Relational and Comparative Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[29] Bob Hancké, *Intelligent Research Design: A Guide for Beginning Researcher in the Social Sciences* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 75–77. A classic example of this kind of research resign is Theda Skocpol's study *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[30] See e.g. Andrew Silke (Ed.), *Research on Terrorism. Trends, Achievements and Failures* (London & Portland: Frank Cass, 2004); Marc Sageman, "The Stagnation of Terrorism Research", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26/4 (2014).

[31] E.g. Bart Schuurman, "Research on Terrorism 2007–2016: A Review of Data, Methods and Authorship", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32/5 (2020); John F. Morrison, "Talking Stagnation: Thematic Analysis of Terrorism Experts' Perception of the Health of Terrorism Studies", *Terrorism and Political Violence* (forthcoming).