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UNIVERSITY of DENVER
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Policy Brief | AUGUST 2015

REPRESSIVE EFFORTS ARE CONSISTENTLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IN REDUCING AL QAEDA-INSPIRED VIOLENCE AGAINST CANADIANS

By Erica Chenoweth and Laura Dugan

Executive Summary

The Canadian government has increased its counterterrorism activities with regard to Al Qaeda-inspired extremism significantly since 9/11. Such activities have included repressive actions such as deployment of armed forces to Afghanistan to support the NATO-led mission there, proscriptions against various terror groups, increased surveillance and criminal justice activities at home, and defensive measures such as increased border protections and airline security procedures. However, Canada has also initiated conciliatory actions that are only indirectly related to terrorism, such as providing economic assistance in Somalia, Afghanistan, and the Palestinian Territories, providing community programs to increase tolerance and awareness of the benefits of multiculturalism, apologies to innocents affected by repressive action, and acquittals of suspected terrorists on civil rights grounds. Which of these measures are more effective in preventing Al Qaeda-inspired terror attacks? We find that repressive actions have been consistently counterproductive in reducing such incidents against Canadians. When the Canadian government has employed repressive measures against Muslims both at home and abroad, Al Qaeda-inspired extremist incidents have increased in subsequent months. The frequency of violent attacks has increased when the repressive measures were indiscriminate, affecting Muslim civilians in general rather than just alleged terrorist targets. The effects of conciliatory actions are less consistent, showing a slight negative impact on violent extremist incidents in the following month but losing statistical significance. However, when the Canadian government adopts a more conciliatory posture toward ending terrorism more generally, we see that the number of violent incidents toward Canadians does decline in subsequent months. This analysis provides evidence for the notion that carrots, rather than sticks, may be effective tools in the continuing fight against violent extremism.

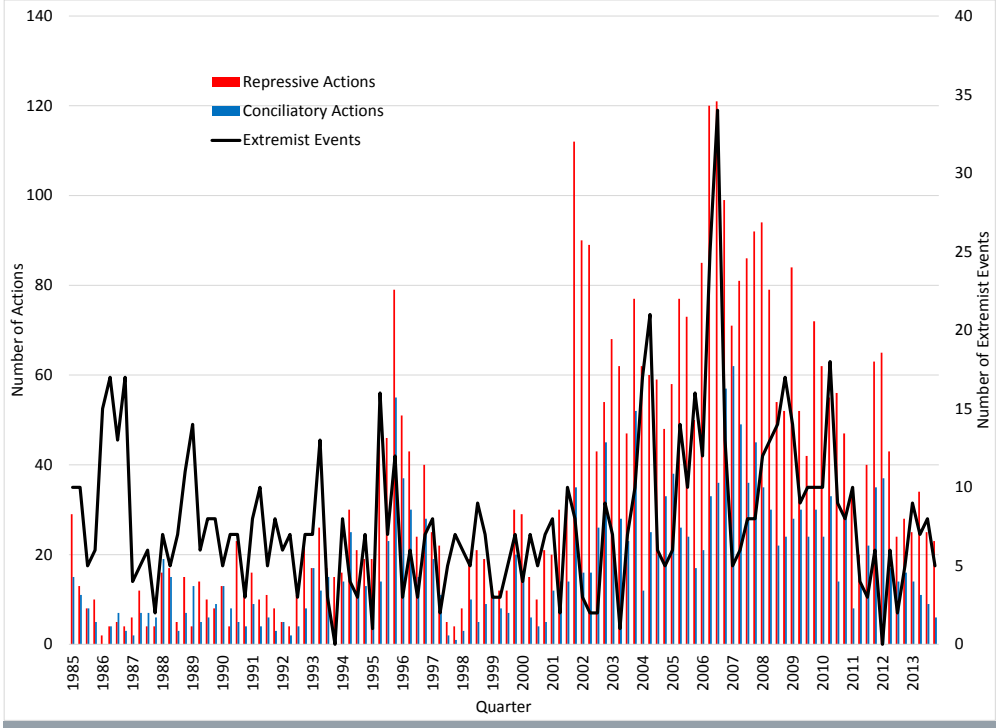


Figure 1. Canadian Terrorism-Relevant Actions and Extremist Attacks, 1985-2013

Trends in Canadian Government Efforts to Prevent and Reduce Terrorism

Data on Canadian government actions relevant to terrorism are from the GATE-Canada database (see Appendix A). Data on extremist events were compiled through three sources: the Global Terrorism Database (GTD; LaFree, Dugan, and Miller 2015) compiled by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism (START), the Canadian Incident Database (CIDB) compiled by the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society (TSAS; Ellis, et al 2015), and qualitative accounts of extremist events, compiled by Leman-Langlois and Brodeur (2005) (see Appendix B). These data suggest that both Canadian terrorism-relevant actions and extremist activity have increased significantly between the 9/11 attacks and 2011, when both began to decline (Figure 1).[1]

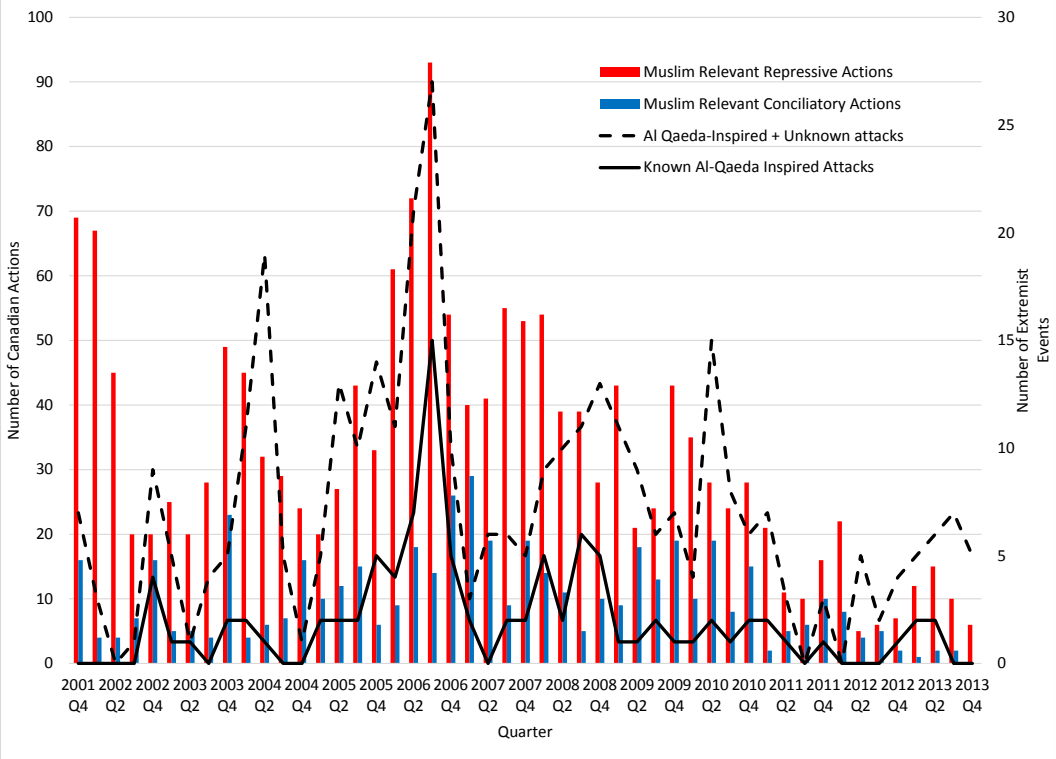
Al Qaeda-inspired attacks against Canadians increased since September 2001, averaging 8 known attacks per year and peaking in 2006 with 31 events. The vast majority of the post-9/11 increase in terrorism-relevant Canadian actions relates to the intensification of counterterrorism activity directed toward Al Qaeda-inspired groups and Muslims more generally (including the Canadian military's campaign in Afghanistan) (Figure 2).[2]

With these fine-grained data on both Canadian government actions and extremist events, we can use statistical procedures to estimate the impacts of different types of government actions on the number of attacks.

Impacts of Canadian Government Efforts to Reduce Al Qaeda-Inspired Attacks against Canadians after 9/11

We model the relationship between different government actions and extremist attacks both parametrically, using a negative binomial regression, and nonparametrically with a GAM smoother. The GAM smoother allows us to visualize the relationship between Canadian actions and attacks. If actions effectively reduce attacks, then we expect to see a

Figure 2. Canadian Government Actions Related to Muslims and Al Qaeda-Inspired Attacks, 9/11/2001-12/31/2013



[1] The dependent variable includes terrorist attacks and other extremist events targeting Canadians inside and outside Canada. For sake of parsimony, we sometimes refer to all of these events as attacks.

[2] Note that Figure 2 includes a solid trend line for known Al Qaeda-inspired attacks and a dashed line for the trend that also includes these attacks as well as other extremist events by unknown perpetrators.

Figure 3. Impact of Indiscriminate Repressive Government Actions Related to Muslims on Al Qaeda-Inspired Attacks, 9/11/2001-12/31/2013

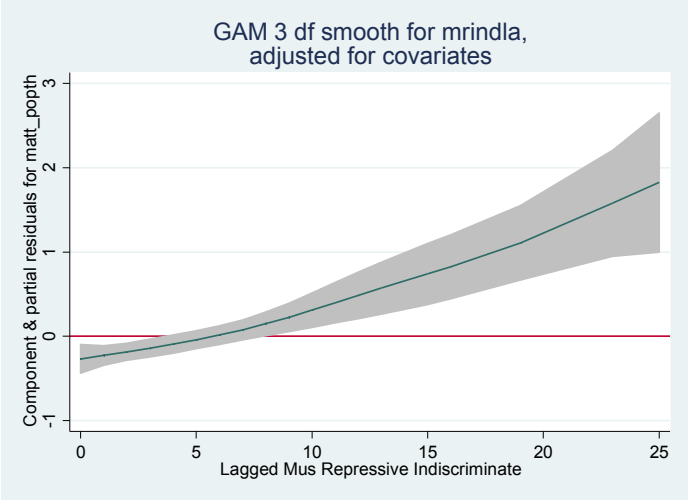
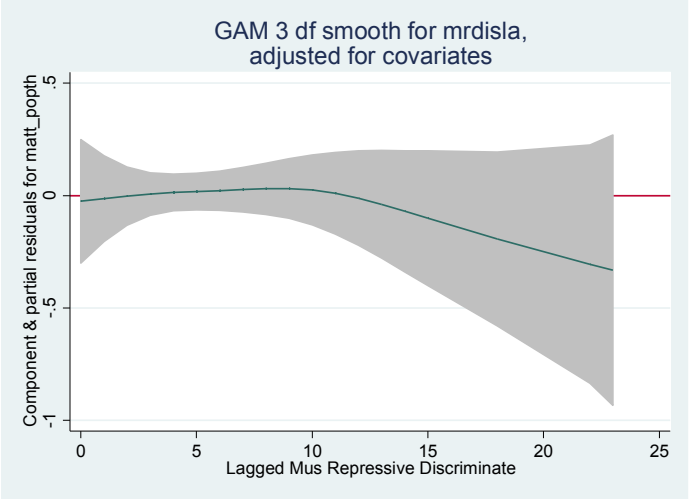


Figure 4. Impact of Discriminate Repressive Government Actions (Targeting Alleged Al Qaeda-Inspired Suspects) on Al Qaeda-Inspired Attacks, 9/11/2001-12/31/2013



downward sloping line. If actions increase attacks, then we should see an upward sloping line.[3]

Repressive Efforts

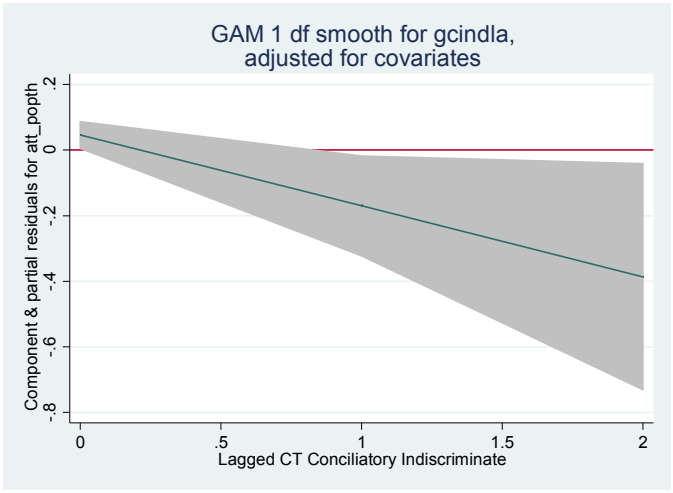
Our results show that indiscriminate repressive actions had a strong positive impact on subsequent Al Qaeda-inspired attacks (p=0.037) (Figure 3).[4] Moreover, in Figure 4, we see that even discriminate repressive actions (where the Canadian government targeted specific terrorists or terror suspects) had no statistically significant impact on subsequent Al Qaeda-inspired attacks against Canadians (p=0.367).

Why Repression is Counterproductive

When governments adopt repressive postures toward terror groups, such repressive actions often affect the general population from which such groups emerge. For example, if the military engages in a sweep operation in Afghanistan, the operation affects the entire population of the targeted village. If such repressive operations threaten or fail to improve the population's security and well-being, the affected population may sympathize with (or even tacitly support) any group claiming to represent them and their grievances. Under extreme circumstances, the population may even seek protection from such groups. With increased public support, terror groups can exploit the population's anger and unwillingness to cooperate with authorities by recruiting new members, eliciting material support, hiding among the population, or inspiring others to engage in violence on their own.

Moreover, discriminate repressive measures (e.g. arresting, detaining, or killing terror suspects, publicly condemning specific suspects, or proscribing specific terror groups) may have little discernable impact because of the ability of Al Qaeda-inspired groups to effectively replace such

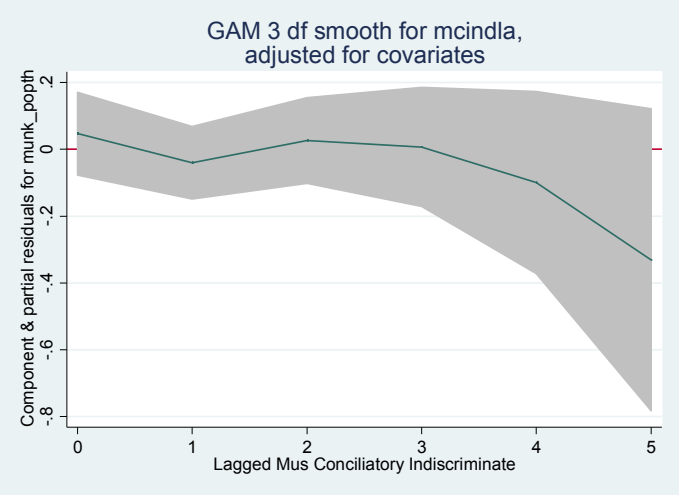
Figure 5. Impact of Conciliatory Government Actions on Extremist Attacks, 9/11/2001-12/31/2013



[3] To reduce the chances that the models pick up the reverse effect (attacks on government actions) we lag government actions by one month and include controls for the previous four months of attacks similar to the strategy used by Dugan and Chenoweth (2012). We also include controls for the administration of each Prime Minister to account for different strategic periods and used the population in thousands as the exposure variable.

[4] Figures 3 and 4 use only known Al Qaeda-inspired attacks as the dependent variable. The findings that include attacks by unknown assailants are substantively similar.

Figure 6. Impact of Conciliatory Government Actions Related to Muslims on Al Qaeda-Inspired Attacks, 9/11/2001-12/31/2013[5]



operatives and replenish their membership from within the larger aggrieved population—a finding consistent with recent research on the perils of "decapitation" strategies in counterterrorism (Abrahms and Potter 2015).

Conciliatory Efforts

On the other hand, our results show that indiscriminate conciliatory measures regarding terrorism more generally (e.g. courts striking down anti-terrorism legislation, admissions of error in the fight against terrorism, or empathetic or compassionate statements toward the communities from which terror groups emerge) have had the most significant impact on reducing subsequent extremist attacks (Figure 5; p=0.034, one tailed). The more conciliatory actions the Canadian government adopts in the prior month, the fewer attacks take place the following month (controlling for other factors as described in note 3). When we turn specifically to Al Qaeda-inspired targets, we see that this slope remains negative, although the correlation is not statistically significant (Figure 6).

Why Conciliatory Actions Can Make Such a Difference

Extant scholarship demonstrates that provision of public services—what one might call "conciliatory" action—is more effective in defeating violent extremist groups than "repressive" measures (Berman and Matanock 2015). In research conducted on Israel (Dugan and Chenoweth 2012), we found that indiscriminate conciliatory actions can be effective in reducing terror attacks for several key reasons. If government actions are indiscriminate and conciliatory, such actions signal that the government is concerned with the well-being of people—a basic feature of the legitimate state—and therefore reduce incentives to support or sympathize with violent actors contesting the government's legitimacy and authority. Moreover, when the government offers conciliation to the general population and thus projects legitimacy and fairness, the population may actively reject terror groups and collaborate with the government on disrupting them as a way to secure the continual delivery of public goods.[6]

Empirical support for this general pattern is surprisingly strong, even in a case as contentious as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. From 1987-2004, when the Israeli government adopted conciliatory actions toward Palestinians in general, terror attacks declined in subsequent months. Yet when the Israeli government adopted repressive postures that affected all Palestinians, terror attacks increased.

Somewhat remarkably given the differing context, we find a similar pattern for the Canadian case. The Canadian government's repressive measures tended to increase subsequent attacks against Canadians. When the Canadian government adopted more conciliatory stances (such as replacing military troops with economic aid for Afghanistan, adopting community programs endorsing tolerance for Muslims in Canada, acquitting an accused terrorist, or striking down surveillance laws as unconstitutional), attacks declined.

Concluding Remarks

Instead of just punishing terrorists and the constituencies they claim to represent, this research shows that engaging in credible, conciliatory actions toward Muslims may reduce terror attacks by Al Qaeda-inspired extremists against Canadians. Examples of such actions include improving living conditions in Muslim communities, admitting where harm has been done, and making sincere attempts to increase tolerance for Muslims at home.

[5] The dependent variable here includes both identified Al Qaeda-inspired attacks and attacks by unknown perpetrators.
[6] This insight is consistent with the works of some criminologists who argue that procedural justice and fairness toward the population encourage people to report violent behavior to authorities and argue against violent behavior within their communities (see Jackson, et al 2012).

Some may argue that such actions will simply embolden extremists, resulting in yet more violence. Our data tell a different story. Contrary to these fears, we find that since 9/11, conciliatory measures generally reduced (or, at worst, had no impact on) attacks against Canada. These findings are consistent with other cases, increasing our confidence in them.

The results also suggest that to reduce Al Qaeda-inspired attacks, Canada must avoid engaging in repressive postures toward Muslims more generally. Instead, the Canadian government should use inducements and concessions to improve the status quo for the average Muslim living in Canada. If our study is correct, such measures may reduce violence, while undermining support for violent extremists (both inside and outside of the country).

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About This Series

The series is produced by the Sié Chéou-Kang Center for International Security and Diplomacy, a center of excellence within the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The views expressed are those of the authors.

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Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge the generous support of Public Safety Canada in funding this research. They also thank Daren Fisher, Quinn Fisher, Michelle D'Ippolito, Zachary Rowan, Mark Tallman, Maureen Handrahan, Heather Randall, Brian Greenlaw, Melody Vinje, Michael Clement, Michael Youmans, Katie Aldridge, Daniel Davis, and Allyson Hodges for excellent research assistance.

Appendix A: The GATE-Canada Data

The GATE-Canada database includes *all* reported Canadian actions toward substate actors from 1985 through 2013 defined only by the requirement that the actor is a member of the Canadian government and the target is a terrorist organization or its constituency. Because Canada has experienced terrorism from a variety of different groups since 1985, GATE-Canada includes government actions relevant to right-wing, anti-abortion, environmental, Al Qaeda-inspired, Sikh, Tamil, and Francophone separatist groups.

We collected the data using Textual Analysis by Augmented Replacement Instructions (TABARI), which searches news articles and identifies observations that match the criteria of an extensive set of dictionaries (called CAMEO codes) designed to capture international and domestic activity (Schrodt 2001, 2006). TABARI is an automated text-coding program that codes news articles based on verb and noun pattern recognition.

TABARI filtered and coded more than fourteen million articles downloaded from fifteen English-language international and Canadian news sources[7] using a defined search string[8] through Lexis-Nexis. For the period January 1, 1985 to December 31, 2013, TABARI identified 1,057,864 relevant news articles and coded the actor, action, and target of the action. We used a SAS program to keep only those actions that the Canadian government actor implemented toward a sub-state target that is relevant to one of the groups listed above. We chose to include all types of actions to guarantee that all unexpected actions would be captured. This method ensures that we capture a wide range of actions that may not immediately seem like "counterterrorism" but may be relevant to ongoing conflicts, such as holding town hall meetings where Somali immigrants can express their concerns and grievances.

Table A1. Seven-Point Guide for the Conciliatory-Repression Scale

1=accommodation
- appeasing or surrendering to adversary
- making full concessions according to opponent's demands
- action required

2=conciliatory action
- making material concessions
- taking action that signals intention to cooperate or negotiate with opponent

3=conciliatory statement or intentions
- expressing intention to cooperate or showing support
- verbal expression short of physical action

4=neutral OR ambiguous
- no clear moves toward or away from resolution of conflict
- includes all attempts to ask for help from a third party to resolve the conflict
- requires more context to determine whether it is conciliatory or repressive
- includes all infighting over terrorist groups (or their constituencies) within the Canadian government

5=verbal conflict
- express intent to engage in conflict or threaten
- decline to cease ongoing conflict; maintain the status quo during conflict
- short of physical action

6=physical conflict
- physical or violent action aimed at coercing opponent
- no apparent intention to kill

7=extreme deadly repression
- physical action exhibiting intent to kill
- torture or severe violence (such as severe beatings), which could kill someone

Further, we autocoded several additions variables for each action. First, we established a Conciliatory-Repression scale, illustrated in Table A1. The scale features distinctions in the intensity of the action as well as its relative placement of the action on a conciliation-repression spectrum, similar to the Goldstein scale (1992).

The conciliatory-repressive scale allows us to organize different actions while maintaining the desired level of disaggregation for policies along the spectrum.[9] Table A2

[7] The sources include Agence France-Presse (AFP), Associated Press (AP), Calgary Herald, Canada Newswire, Canadian Government News, Edmonton Journal, Halifax Daily News, Hamilton Spectator, National Post Financial Post, Ottawa Citizen, The Gazette (Montreal), The Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, Vancouver Province, and the Vancouver Sun.

[8] The search string entered into Lexis-Nexis was: [canad! or ottawa or toronto or vancouver or montreal or edmonton or calgary or quebec or winnipeg or hamilton or ontario or yukon or alberta or nunavut or manitoba or saskatchewan or "british columbia" or "northwest territories" or "new brunswick" or "nova scotia" or "prince edward island" or "newfoundland and labrador" or inuit or cree or inuktitut or ojibway or "first nations" or metis].

[9] Events are discrete actions (e.g., arriving for a meeting is an event, but every word exchanged across the table is not; arresting a suspected terrorist is an event, but we did not count each day he is held in jail a daily event).

Table A2. Examples of Common Actions for Each Scale Item

Accommodation/Full Concessions
- Cancel controversial project
- Approve project
- Hands town to villagers

Conciliatory Action
- Gave financial aid
- Funded environmental center
- Drop language law charge
- Release on bail
- Investigate abuse

Conciliatory Statement or Intentions
- Expressed optimism
- Agreed to hold talks
- Announce plan to support clean energy
- Expressed desire to cooperate
- Admitted mistake

Neutral or Ambiguous
- Infighting over
- Failed to reach agreement
- Plan a visit
- Gave speech at memorial
- Investigating

Verbal Conflict
- Make pessimistic comment
- Dismissed criticism
- Blame for attack
- Announce support of progressive cause
- Threaten military force

Physical Conflict
- Court ruling against
- Banned terrorist groups
- Deport immigrant
- Sent troops to fight
- Arrested

Extreme Deadly Repression
- Killed Taliban fighters
- Fired missiles
- Clashed with
- Raided
- Engaged in gun battle

lists actions found in our data that commonly fell into each category.

Second, we autocoded each observation for whether the target of the action was discriminate or indiscriminate. Discriminate actions are those that attempt to single out "guilty" or "suspected" parties from uninvolved parties. Indiscriminate actions are those that directly affect uninvolved people (i.e., those that are not suspected of involvement in terrorist activity, or what we refer to the broader population), even if the government only intended to affect a specific person or organization of persons. For example, if the Royal Canadian Mounted Police raided a bar in order to capture a known terrorist, we coded the action as indiscriminate because other uninvolved persons could have been drinking in that bar. We also code as indiscriminate any actions that affect the broader population rather than just a terrorist group (e.g. Muslims in general as opposed to Al Qaeda-inspired groups).

Finally, we autocoded for whether the action was material or nonmaterial. Material actions are those that involve physical contact between state and nonstate actors, whereas nonmaterial actions are typically verbal actions, such as a decision or a sentencing.

The filtering and autocoding process removed over 900,000 stories, leaving the research assistants with 138,664 lead sentences to hand-check to ensure that TABARI coded each story correctly and to mark for removal any cases that were irrelevant. Given the large number of stories to review, the coding team first read through the stories to mark the irrelevant ones for removal. We marked nearly 100,000 stories for removal, leaving 38,957 cases for careful review. During this cleaning process, research assistants also attributed each government action to politicians, the military, the judiciary, or the police and corrected any errors. The resulting file contained the date, actor, action, target, and the variables mentioned above for 9,597 Canadian government actions. We then checked each individual entry to eliminate remaining errors and ensure a high degree of intercoder reliability. The resulting file contained the date, actor, action, target, and the variables mentioned above for 7,615 Canadian government actions. This dataset gives a day-by-day view of Canadian actions relevant to conflicts with various non-state actors inside and outside of the country.

Appendix B: How We Measure Extremist Attacks

The dependent variable for this analysis was compiled using data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), the Canadian Incident Database (CIDB) compiled by the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society (TSAS), and from the *Equipe de Recherche sur le Terrorisme et l'antiterrorisme* database (ERTA). Due to the varying definitions of terrorism and political violence used by each of these databases the incorporation of data from all of these sources enabled this project include a wider array of incidents of political violence that occurred in Canada than any single source—what we refer to as "extremist attacks." Further, in cases when data were missing on elements of an attack within one dataset, in cases where there were multiple entries for these events, we compiled these missing values from the other two datasets. Prior to excluding duplicate events, the GTD recorded 52 incidents between 1/1/1985 and 12/31/2014, with TSAS recording 802, and ERTA recording 141 within this time period. All together, these sources yielded 995 events.

Duplicate Entries

After combining the three datasets, we identified potential duplicates based on whether an event was described within 2 days within another dataset. Cases that met this criterion and where the location was different were assumed to be different events. In cases where the location was the same or at least one was unknown, duplicates were determined based on whether the target, event type, and weapon were the same or compatible. In some instances it was found based on looking up original articles that private citizens were sometimes coded for events occurring in religious institutions, and after confirming cases like this, these events were coded as duplicates and removed.

Using these methods, we identified 38 duplicate events, yielding a final analytic sample of 957 events. The vast majority (83.8%) of the attacks included in this dataset were sourced from the TSAS database. The vast majority of the removed events came from the GTD, with 37 out of the original 52 GTD events (71.2%) being determined to be duplicates.

Dependent Variable

The highest number of attacks in a single year was 85 (occurring in 2006). Interestingly this did not coincide with the two years that resulted in the most people killed (n=10) from these incidents of terrorism (2007 and 2008).

The Constituency

We identified the primary ideological motivation for the attack based on the motivation variable from TSAS, the group who perpetrated the attack according to the GTD, and from the narratives attached to the ERTA database. The only exception to this is from the TSAS database whereby all attack that were directed at targets labeled as 'Healthcare/Hospital/Abortion' were coded as Anti-Abortion. We derived the constituencies themselves from the GATE-Canada protocol, and the initial distribution of events attributed to a constituency can be seen in Table B1.

Table B1: Frequency of attacks attributed to a noted constituency

Constituency	Frequency	Percent
Anti-Abortion Extremist	15	3.55
Environmental Extremist	54	12.8
General	2	0.47
Jewish Extremist	3	0.71
Al Qaeda-Inspired	109	25.83
Right-Wing Extremist	116	27.49
Separatist Extremist	41	9.72
Leftist Extremist	58	13.74
Write-In	17	4.03
Sikh Extremist	5	1.18
Aboriginal Extremist	1	0.24
Palestinian Nationalist Extremist	1	0.24
Missing	535	56.5
Total	**957**	**100**

As it can be seen above a total 535 events within this dataset did not have an identified constituency, representing 56.5% of the total number of events. As the majority of these attacks were unattributed to any specific perpetrator, it was difficult to assign an ideological motivation to the attack. For this reason, two terrorist trend lines were included in the above graphs; one representing known attacks by each perpetrator groups (solid line), and those with known perpetrator groups and unknown perpetrator groups combined (dashed line). This was done under the understanding that the true number of attacks likely falls between the two estimates. This strategy was also employed for sensitivity analyses in each of the above models, whereby each model was estimated

for known attacks for perpetrator group, as well as known plus unknown attacks.

We took steps to ensure that we did not exclude any of the events captured by this study, especially for the 48 attacks in Canada (or targeting Canadian nationals elsewhere) unattributed to any specific perpetrator, making it difficult to assign ideological motivation to the attack. For this reason, we produced two attacks trend lines, those with known Right-Wing perpetrators (solid line), and those with known Right-Wing perpetrators and unknown perpetrators (dashed line). We did this with the understanding that the true number of attacks for any constituency likely falls between the two lines.