The Business, Economics, and Psychology of Organized Violence and Terrorism
Emory University, Spring 2014

Goizueta Business School, BUS 457/658
Department of Economics, ECON 490

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Meets: Tue, Thu (10am – 11.15pm) GBS Room 421

Course description and objectives. This interdisciplinary seminar examines the psychological and neuroeconomic underpinnings of political violence and terrorism, and explores the implications for business (e.g., conducting business, considering risk). Topics include (but are not limited to) defining terrorism and political-religious violence, preconditions, recruitment, domestic and international terrorism, as well as case studies and analysis of terrorist organizations. We will examine a variety of sources drawn from multiple disciplines. Through a combination of critical discussions, short videos, games, short lectures, analysis of current events, and cases, you will develop a core base of knowledge about terrorism, political-religious violence, the neurobiology of decision making, and the implications for business decision-making.

We will also have several guest experts (in-class or remote) that will address specific topics. Scheduling such individuals can be quite a dynamic and uncertain process, so we will have to be somewhat adaptive in our plans in order to take advantage of these opportunities. When the opportunity occurs, we will assign specific readings or other material to prepare, and teams will be responsible for presenting relevant questions to the guest.

Relatedly, it is essential to bring up two important aspects of this seminar that will make it work well:
1. The topics can be flexible, in response to current events.
2. The topics can be flexible, in terms of interests and goals of the participants.

Class Procedures. You will be expected to read the assigned material, be prepared to intelligently discuss the material in class, and complete any assigned exercises before class. This class, as an upper level/graduate elective, will be highly interactive and require your presence and informed participation. More importantly, there is a significant class project that allows you to mold aspects of the course to your specific interests.

Attendance & etiquette. As this class is conducted as a seminar, your participation is essential. Much of the learning will occur through interaction, and dialog that is based on a combination of shared readings, individual insights, experiences, and contributions. If you need to miss class, please let us know ahead of time. Unexcused absences will negatively impact your grade. Since some of the topic matter here is of a sensitive and quite difficult nature – there are bound to be some disagreements. Here, we will handle our discussions with mutual respect. We will treat disagreements as launching points for further critical inquiry where it is warranted. Finally, please do not use laptops (etc.) during class unless requested to do so by the instructor. Turn off all audible alarms and ringers on cellular phones.
Cold Calls. The policy for the class is to assume you are prepared and we will call on you to summarize, lead the class on a topic, or generate discussion questions. If you are not prepared, please inform us prior to the start of class.

Grading.

- Final Project 50% (25% video presentation, 25% written report, team project)
- Briefing 1 15%
- Briefing 2 15%
- Participation 20%

There will be one team Final Project and two smaller briefings. These will be explained in class. Grades will necessarily follow the recommended GBS distribution, but “A” grades will be based on comparatively excellent performance that demonstrates initiative, innovation, and understanding in class and in the assignments. Participation will include “informed student led” discussions. The purpose is for you to demonstrate understanding and lead a discussion of an assigned topic. Preparation may include finding on your own relevant articles on the topic that will be discussed in class.

Rules of Presence

- You are expected to participate in class discussions.
- You have a right to your opinion and may express it.
- You must grant that right to others.
- You must respect others by not disrupting the class.

Ethics and Code of Conduct

All students are expected to adhere to the GBS Honor Code.

BlackBoard(BB)

You are expected to monitor BB for important (and not so important) information via Announcements and Meeting Documents.

Readings

Most will be handed out or posted via BB’s Course Readings.

Contact

Please use the BB mail option, contact me (MJP), and not my regular email. There are two reasons for this. First, I get way too much email and generally will check it only periodically, sometimes missing them. Second, this cleanly assembles are related emails for the class.
Schedule (May be modified as necessary)

Meeting 1. (Jan 14)

**Episode:** “Who am I and Why am I here?”
Introduction to The Course and what it will cover; Introduction to each other. The general form of the course will be conducted as a highly interactive seminar.

**Guide**
1. Understand the general goals of the course; recognize and note the requirements and schedule for achieving them.
2. Introduce yourself to the class and explain what your objectives are for the course (okay, what they are today).
3. What are your personal goals? How does this course contribute to achieving them? How can you tune the course to your own goals (suggested readings, websites, course project)?
4. As the course unfolds, what specific additional topics would you like to see addressed?
5. You must attend to the Guides, Questions, and Resources, and be prepared for each discussion for this class to maximize its collective value. You must bring something to the table.

**Discussion Questions**
1. What acts of political violence or terrorism have affected you in any way? How? Why?
2. Are there situations when deliberate attacks against government or business buildings & resources are justified? If not, why not? If so, what are the situations?
3. Are there situations when deliberate attacks against government or business personnel are justified? If not, why not? If so, what are the situations?
4. Are deliberate attacks against civilian resources (e.g., economic, medical, food) legitimate acts?
5. Are deliberate attacks against civilian population legitimate acts?

**Resources**

Meeting 2. (Jan 16)

**Episode:** “Defining Terrorism”
To some, defining terrorism can be tricky. To others, it may be quite easy and definitive. We quickly get into defining associated terms and related acts, with the ever-present thorny issues of perspective and consequence.

**Guide**
1. Try to find definitions of “terrorism” and “terrorists” from different types of websites/sources.
2. Create your own definition of the following: terrorism, political violence, religious violence.

**Discussion Questions**
1. What definition of terrorism/terrorist do you prefer and why?
2. How might definitions impact policy?
3. Is violence a necessary part of terrorism? Can speech be a terrorist activity?
4. How would you describe “political extremism”?
5. Would you consider any religious beliefs “extreme”?
6. What would you consider “hate groups”?
7. Would you consider hiring or working with members of groups you would classify as “extreme”?

Assignment
1. Access these. Do you find these groups as “extreme”?
   a. http://www.americannaziparty.com,
   b. http://www.kkk.com,
   c. http://www.bnp.org.uk,
   d. http://topconservativenews.com,
   e. http://www.peta.org,
   f. http://socialistparty-usa.net,
   g. http://www.originalelf.com
   h. http://www.sovereign-citizenship.net/home.html
2. OK, now consider this list. Anything? What about the FBI?

Meeting 3 (Jan 21)

Episode: “Underlying Causes of Terrorism: Some Fundamentals”
Now, obvious and recurring issues involve seeking the causes for violence as a response and why such groups exist. As you may guess, this is not an easy task. However, we can begin to consider some initial theories and ideas that may help us recognize risk.

Guide
1. Examine some of the websites you explored in the previous episodes. Can you find any goals they wish to achieve? Can you find any justification (assumptions, logic) for these goals?
2. Here are a few other organizations... can you find goals and justifications here?
   a. Zapatistas at http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/ (Google translate if you do not know Spanish)
   c. Puerto Rican Independence Party at www.independencia.net (Translate if necessary)

Discussion Questions
1. What is culture? What role does it play in groups?
2. From these, what sort of causes can you suggest for these groups and disruptive acts by these groups?
3. From a group perspective, what would motivate the formation of such groups?
4. From an event perspective, what sorts of significant events have triggered escalated responses from individuals and groups?

Assignment
1. Listen to NPR’s interviews on What Makes A Terrorist here.
Meeting 4. (Jan 23)

Episode: “Do Ideologies Matter?”
Ideology has many interpretations, but let’s consider it as referring to some organized and definable set of beliefs that are related to public policy and expected behaviors derived from those beliefs. Of course, “fringe” ideologies (proportionally speaking) have always existed where the set of believers are quite small (possibly equal to one). The ideological spectrum is wide and relative.

Guide
1. Here we will examine some commonly assumed or encountered ideologies in the United States.
2. Some ideologies are indeed considered fringe (recall the list from Meeting 2). For some, distinctive music can be a part of their culture and recruitment mechanisms.

Discussion Questions
1. What ideologies (examples) do you perceive in the United States?
2. If you are from another country, what ideologies are active there?
3. However, it is not all about the fringes. What larger groups do you see in the United States where there is often (and distinctly) demarcations of a “them” versus “us” connotation?
4. From a business perspective, when might this matter?

Assignment
1. Stormfront is a community of White Nationalists. We can think of it as a “fringe right” group.
2. Consider Occupy WallStreet that people consider as a “fringe left” group. Do you?
4. Of course, there are the Republicans and the Democrats. How do their ideologies differ? How do these ideologies relate to business?
5. Anders Behring Breivik killed 76 people in Norway. He has written a 1,500 page manifesto (ideology) and is claiming to be a member of a terrorist organization here.
6. In the Vietnam War, there was this significant event.
7. Then there was the Unabomber and his manifesto. [No, you do not have to read it.]

Meeting 5. (Jan 28)

Episode: “State-Sponsored Acts, Violence & Terrorism”
By “state” we usually mean “the government of a country”. So, this refers to such acts that are supported and funded (usually) by a country’s government, both directly and indirectly, both domestic and foreign. That is, these acts are part of the government’s policy. At this time, the Syrian conflict is the leading example in its civil war. However, this is preceded by the Libyan uprising. Egyptian events are also of concern.

Guide
1. These are extreme examples, but serve to illustrate the nature of the political, social and religious forces that exist in this particular region where US businesses are involved.
2. We are not examining the details of these conflict, but are viewing them as examples of a type of state-sponsored actions that can have global implications.
Discussion Questions
1. What issues directly and indirectly would concern US businesses in these various areas?
2. Given less extreme measures by a country, would you conduct business with a regime that engages in state-sponsored acts? Does it depend on the act? The number of acts?
3. Does a government have a right to protect its (legitimate) existence through acts of suppression, threat, violence or terrorism?
4. Generally, one thinks of oil as a primary import. Use the resource below to judge the relative risk of oil availability for the countries of concern.

Assignment
1. A United Nations estimate in 2013 places the death toll at 93,000 Syrians.
2. Watch Syria Undercover from Frontline is available here.
3. In Egypt, note the problem with the current government’s rulings and the pressure being applied by the Muslim Brotherhood here. The latter’s English website is here.
4. Go here and figure out (graph) the US import of Total Crude Oil and Products.
5. Now, listen to the NPR story on Mideast oil imports here.

Meeting 6. (Jan 30)

Episode: “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”
Here we will examine the components of this famous, ongoing, and important dispute.

Guide
1. We are not examining the details of the long and complex history of this conflict, but are viewing this as an example of a type of conflict that recurs in the news (it is one of the longest active ones) and can have global implications. More importantly, we are using this as an example to discuss possible solutions.

Discussion Questions
1. In such a conflict, what do you consider the core issues and who are the stakeholders (from both perspectives)?
2. What would you consider a solution to this conflict?
3. What would be your strategies for generating a solution?

Resources
1. One summary discussion of this conflict is the Wikipedia entry here.
2. Here are key websites of associated organizations... can you find goals and justifications here?
   b. Palestinian Information Center of the PLO at http://www.palestine-info.co.uk
   c. Al-Qassam Brigades is the military wing of the Islamic resistance movement Hamas.
3. ProCon.org is one group that attempts to offer non-partisan discussions of this conflict here.

Meeting 7. (Feb 4) Continuation of previous.

Meeting 8. (Feb 6) No class. Assign videos to watch. (Information to be disseminated).

Meeting 9. (Feb 11) Video discussions (Information to be disseminated).
**Meeting 10.** (Feb 13) Guest

**Meeting 11.** (Feb 18)

**Episode:** “Sacred Values and the Brain”
Sacred values include fundamental religious beliefs, core constructs of national and ethnic identities, and moral norms. These values motivate many important individual and group decisions in life. Decisions bounded by them range from purchasing consumer goods such as kosher foods, patronizing Christian businesses, investing in socially responsible mutual funds, to deciding whom to marry. Disagreements over sacred values also contribute to many political and military conflicts and may also underlie some acts of political violence. Thus, understanding how sacred values are represented and processed in the human mind has far reaching implications for policymakers.

**Guide**
1. Sacred values have characteristics, e.g. insensitivity to trade-offs.
2. Many sacred values are codified in religions, but some are not. Some are codified by law.
3. Brain imaging suggests sacred values are processed as rules.

**Discussion Questions**
1. What are the attributes of sacred values?
2. What are typical sacred values in the U.S.? In other cultures?
3. How does the brain make decisions for sacred values, and what does this imply for policy?

**Resources**

**Meeting 12.** (Feb 20)

**Episode:** “Domestic Political Violence, Terrorism & Business Risk”
We see violence playing out in a variety of ways. Some of the most visible are school shootings. Why are schools so vulnerable? Are these at risk for terrorist use? Also, doing business in the United States now bears a risk of violent or disruptive response. We have seen a sample of the types of groups that are potential sources, but it is more complex than that.

**Guide**
1. We can examine a wide variety of types of sources domestically. For example, consider various types of religious, political, ethnic/race, and other types of confrontational occurrences.
2. Also consider “ideological” versus “single-issue” versus “event-reactive” types of terrorism (though these are not always mutually exclusive).
3. We must also consider the role that “lone wolf” agents play in these acts.
**Discussion Questions**

1. Do acts of individuals (pairs or small groups) who commit violent crimes constitute “terrorism” if they are not a member of a known group and are US citizens?
2. What if they are a member of a known “hate group” or “recognized terrorist organization”?
3. What sort of businesses may be at risk for domestic terrorism? Why?
4. What is unique about domestic terrorism and how would it be significant?

**Assignment**

1. Consider these groups: the Animal Liberation Front, the Council of Conservative Citizens, and the Revolutionary Communist Party.
2. Read about lone wolf issues in the Congress Blog here, the Washington Post here, the Chronicle of Higher Education here.
3. A Lloyd’s (UK) report specifically addresses home-grown terrorism and the business implications here.

**Resources**

2. US map of mass-shootings found here.
3. US map of work-place shootings found here.
4. A global map of “incidents” can be found here.
5. An interactive Washington Post map of incidents can be found here.

**Meeting 13. (Feb 25)**

**Episode:** “The Role of Religion”

Religious extremism is often a central component of terrorism in addition to political ideologies and secular nationalism. However, secular nationalism is “local” and there are many variations of ideologies. Religion is global.

**Guide**

1. Religion can be either a primary or secondary belief system serving as motivator/justification for acts.
2. Interpretations of religious text can vary as well as edicts or influence by religious leaders.
3. Political parties or governmental entities can join with religious components for common agendas.
4. At the extremes, we find cult-like doctrines that vary from core religious belief systems and practices.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Are there situations where you think that faith-motivated activism a reasonable justification for violence?
2. What characteristics would lead you to consider faith-motivated activism as extreme?
3. Do you believe that faith-based “natural laws” justify some actions?
4. Why do people belong to religious organizations?
5. How do you see religion and business mixing? Examples?
Assignment
1. Here are some websites that are often mentioned as religion-based activists:
   a. Christian Exodus
   b. Hezbollah (Lebanon Islamic Resistance)
   c. Islamic site that explains the Holy War of Jihad here and examine “The Legitimacy of Jihad” under the First Lecture.
   d. The Muslim Brotherhood is another, and played a role in the Egyptian revolution as it formed, as other such groups are now doing, a political entity to compete for governmental presence: the Freedom and Justice Party.
   e. Al-Qassam Brigades is the military wing of the Islamic resistance movement Hamas.

Meeting 14. (Feb 27) Guest

Meeting 15. (Mar 4)

Episode: “Examining What Terrorists Do”
Here we examine the fundamental tactics and targets of terrorists. Of course, this is the extreme consequences of their actions, but also can result in the most damage as it usually includes physical, economic, and psychological. From a business perspective, this can be devastating.

Guide
1. Here we re-examine some an important but difficult type of question: What is the goal?
2. As we will see, much violence is rarely “senseless” or “random”.
3. We will also examine the “weapons of mass destruction” topic. What are they? What can we do?
4. In general, give the goal, what are the means?

Discussion Questions
1. Is it reasonable to assume that such attacks are “rational”? How would you define this rationality?
2. What types of goals (or sub-goals) have attacks meant to achieve?

Assignment:

Resources:
1. IED (improvised explosive devices) are explained here.
2. Types of chemical weapons are explained here.
3. Biological weapons are explained here.
4. Suicide bomber tactics are explained here.
Meeting 16. (Mar 6)  No class meeting.

Spring Break (Mar 10 -14)

Meeting 17. (Mar 18)

Episode: “Basics of Counter-Terrorism”
He we examine the basic methods, mechanisms, and institutions that are working to prevent these acts. Some critical and controversial methods are domestic surveillance and drone attacks.

Guide
1. Since 9/11, huge amounts have been funded and new organizations dedicated to the defense of the US.
2. The link with business is the emergence of a new “terrorism-industrial complex”.
3. This began with the invention of the Department of Homeland Security.

Discussion Questions
1. What are the basic options for a) the US government, and b) your firm?
2. What do you think of Britain’s use of cameras?
3. Should the US monitor all “public” activity via cameras?
4. Should the US monitor all communication activity?
5. Should the US monitor all electronic activity such as Twitter, Facebook, email, and cell phones?
6. Should drones be used to monitor behaviors domestically?
7. Would you support government surveillance of your employees’ email and other activities?

Assignment:
1. Watch the Frontline video, Are We Safer? here. Read Dana Priest’s story here.
3. Consider the monitoring of your downloads by your ISP here or Google/Apple monitoring you here.
4. Wikileaks suggests facial recognition is widespread in key US cities here.
5. British, of course, have used cameras for years. Consider the increase of HD capacity and subsequent detail to be captured here and discussed here. Now, is it acceptable to have these in school bathrooms/locker rooms as described here?
6. FBI dumped their controversial internet eavesdropping Carnivore project for a commercial option.

Meeting 18. (Mar 20)

Episode: “The Role of the Media in Terrorism”
Communication is at the heart of terrorism. Ongoing tensions over an allegedly blasphemous video trailer and cartoons highlight the critical importance of understanding the interplay between a public, media-driven event and the embedded texts and images that trigger mobilization toward political action and violence.
Guide
1. Consider two contexts when we discuss media: media as a reporting entity (e.g., CNN) or media as a delivery technology (e.g., Internet and applications, such as Facebook, Twitter, websites).
2. Reporting events as they occur or after they have occurred is considered the public’s “right to know” and a primary mission of news journalism – freedom of the press.
3. Websites are used for recruitment for various types of groups.
4. Social media is used for coordination and communication associated with activist behaviors.
5. Social media is used to incite/inform spreading information, rumor, and falsehoods.

Discussion Questions
1. Should journalists be privy to information on national defense strategies, including descriptions of anti-terrorist strategies?
2. Should news media be free to report and broadcast on hostage/terrorist events as they unfold?
3. Do you think that the news media is subject to being manipulated by terrorist organizations?
4. How might social media be used by extremist organizations?
5. How should the government address issues concerning 1-4.

Assignment
1. Select an event and compare how two different agencies (news or specific groups) report on it. For example, the news agencies listed below or the websites of specific (opposing) groups we have listed previously.

Resources
1. Al Arabiya News (Dubai)
2. Al Jazeera (Qatar)
3. Al-Manar (Lebanon)
4. BBC (UK)
5. CNN (USA)
6. China Daily
7. Syria Today
8. Dawn (Pakistan)
9. Times of India
10. New York Times
11. HAARETZ (Israel)
12. Palestine News Network
13. Yemen Times
14. Iraqui News

Meeting 19. (Mar 25)

Episode: “The Neurobiology of Risk and Fear”
Leaders of organizations are supported by the information provided by others, but often retain the ultimate responsibility for making tough decisions. Individuals both within the firm as well as outside the firm may bear the impact of these decisions and make subsequent decisions to act in response. Decisions made by these individuals are influenced by the underlying biological mechanisms under the influence of both risk and fear, whether they are conscious of this or not.

Guide
1. Brain can be described based on anatomy, function, or chemistry.
2. Common distinctions are between cortical and subcortical (evolutionarily older) systems.
3. Fear processing depends on the amygdala and manifests through the autonomic system.
4. Risk is a cognitive (cortical) assessment that interacts with subcortical processes.
Discussion Questions
1. What is risk?
2. What is the evolutionary function of fear?
3. How does the brain keep fear under control?
4. Are traumatic events ever forgotten?

Resources:

Meeting 20. (Mar 27)

Episode: “Cyber-terrorism”
According to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, cyber-terrorism is any “premeditated, politically motivated attack against information, computer systems, computer programs, and data which results in violence against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents.”

Guide
1. Unlike a nuisance virus or computer attack that results in a denial of service, a cyber-terrorism attack is designed to cause physical violence or extreme financial harm.
2. According to the U.S. Commission of Critical Infrastructure Protection, possible cyber-terrorist targets include the banking industry, military installations, power plants, air traffic control centers, and water systems.

Discussion Questions
1. How can you discern whether it is cyber-terrorism or just individuals/groups stealing or disrupting?
2. What have been the primary targets you have noticed in the news? Future targets?
3. What lengths should a business go to mitigate the threats?

Assignment
1. Testimony of G. Snow (Assistant Direct, Cyber Division) FBI on April 12, 2011 here.
2. Testimony of J. Demarest (Assistant Direct, Cyber Division) FBI on May 8, 2013 here.
3. Example threat: Response to Snowden’s apprehension? here
4. Example report: Real or hyped? here

Meeting 21. (Apr 1) Guest
Meeting 22. (Apr 3) Guest
Meeting 23. (Apr 8) Guest
Meeting 24. (Apr 10) Guest
Meeting 25. (Apr 15) Guest
Meeting 26. (Apr 17) Guest.
Meeting 27-28. (Apr 22, 24) Project Time