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"Nihilist and irrational… an aberrant form of violent activity devoid of any meaning… attempting to understand its logic would be futile" such a sentiment is prevalent in the discourse on terrorism (Neumann & Smith, 2005, p. 572). This paper presents a contrasting portrayal, finding that the above representation misunderstands terrorism's fundamental principles; it is in fact a rational choice. Gambill (1998, p. 54) states "an actors decision to employ terrorism in pursuit of a given objective is not actually based on its utility but on its expected utility". Moreover just because a terrorist attack or campaign is unsuccessful in achieving its ends does not mean that terrorists have made a "priori irrational choice" in deploying it (Chenoweth, et al., 2009, p. 182). The decision to employ terrorism and key components such as target selection are in fact predicated on rational calculations as to the *perceived* or *expected* ability of terrorism to achieve ends. This paper argues on this basis, terrorism is procedurally rational.

Procedural rationality is a manifestation of rationality concerned with the processes that generate action or choices, rather than its consequences (Simon, 1976, p. 131). To be procedurally rational the decision to use terrorism as well as component decisions within it such as target selection must be the "outcome of appropriate deliberation" (Ibid). These deliberations are based on what actors perceive as "credible information about the options available to them, they choose the best ones based on their expected utility calculation" (Nalbandov, 2013, p. 93). As with Gambill's above there is an emphasis on an actor's subjective expectations and perceptions of utility as opposed to some apparent empirical truth. This paper finds this use of rationality prudent owing to a number of factors. Rationality is a subjective phenomenon "confined by human imperfection… each of us has a limited ability to perceive, recall, interpret and calculate" (Ibid). Alluding to this subjectivity Caplan (2006, p. 98) remarks "if you genuinely believe that death in jihad brings infinite reward" terrorism seems rational even if irrational to a non-believer. Scholars of psychology and sociology debate to this very day, the existence of universal rationality, to accord such universality to the rationality of terrorism would profess; wrongly, to have found solved this quandary. Moreover to judge the rationality of terrorism based on its unintended consequences is to argue that actors making the decision to deploy terrorism were in some sense, omniscient. Even Max Abrahms (2004, p. 547), a prominent critic of terrorism's rationality, acknowledges that terrorists are procedurally rational "that is they try to make reasonable cost benefit strategic calculations". Such calculations are based on the expected utility in achieving an end. Hamas commander Mahmud al-Zahar displayed this procedurally rational deliberative process when he stated "we must calculate the benefit and cost of continued armed operations" (Mishal & Sela, 2000, p. 71). This paper further confers this procedural rationality on to groups as well as individuals finding that they "evaluate actions in terms of their consequences for the group and without consideration of their consequences for people outside the group… from the point of view of rational choice, the objective is to increase the aggregate expected utility for the whole group" (Nalbandov, 2013, pp. 93-94). This is simply the individual level deliberative process scaled up to an organisational level wherein the calculations are made on the expected utility for the group and its objectives rather than the individual actors comprising the group. Schelling (1966) would label this "the rationality of irrationality" wherein although an action may appear irrational for an individual it may simultaneously be rational for the group or cause of the group overall.

This paper has specifically chosen the issues of rationality concerning the understanding of the phrase terrorism, the decision to engage in and or cease terrorism, its target selection and the notion of terrorist fratricide for two reasons. Firstly it finds that these are arguably the most important aspects within terrorism and thus to assert a strong case it is the decision to use terrorism and its major elements such as targets that must be addressed. Secondly, these

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elements are the most controversial within the irrational/rational debate on terrorism and were a large part of Abrahm's (Ibid) scathing critique of the rationality of terrorism overall.

The etymology of the terrorism has a considerable impact on discussion of its rationality. Terrorism is the essence of an essentially contested concept, with over 160 definitions in use (Schmid, 2011, p. 91).Contemporarily; it is almost exclusively reserved for the non-state actor. It is a solely pejorative label carrying notions of "evil, savagery and barbarism", one of the most egregious and heinous act an actor can engage in (Jackson, et al., 2011, p. 101). Such connotations are clear within the aforementioned discourse on terrorism with media outlets describing terrorists as "fanatics", their acts as "barbaric", and the former head of the UK's National Counter Terrorism Security Office designating them "mad and bad" (Hughes, 2016) (Ryan, 2016). Crelinsten (1987, p. 8) illustrates that terrorism is such a pejorative and so devoted to the non-state actor that when applied to the state, it undergoes a total ontological revision. The notion of terrorism as inherently deprecatory retards discussion of its rationality, ensuring it is applied only external to the defining actor. To continue to maintain such connotations is to render the discussion on the rationality of terrorism as effectively impossible. Alongside such negative associations terrorism has been imbued with moral qualities. It is synonymous with immorality; Blakeley positing that it always involves a set of moral wrongs (Jackson, et al., 2010, p. 5).

The implications of such connotations are highlighted by Neumann and Smith (2008, p. 13) stating "the objective appreciation of terrorism as a strategic phenomenon has been undermined largely by mixing up terrorism as a coherent description of a particular tactic… with a moral judgement of the actor's methods and objectives". Judith Butler (2002, pp. 57-59) echoes this sentiment remarking moralism has inhibited our ability to think critically about terrorism so much so that it is "impermissible", we fear attributing rationality to terrorism would mean sympathy with terrorists or a "moral equivocation". By approaching terrorism's rationality from a procedural standpoint this paper avoids this tension or engagement with moralism, as Crenshaw (2011, p. 112) underscores "to say that the reasoning that leads to the choice of terrorism may be logical is not an argument about moral justifiability". Instead, discussion of the procedural rationality of terrorism approaches it from a value free position, in the strategic sense as "a bona fide method for distributing military means to fulfil the ends of policy" (Neumann & Smith, 2005, p. 572). This value free strategic conception of terrorism is itself evidence of a tactic or choice that is rationally employed after careful deliberation and serves not only to highlight the notion that terrorism is indeed rational but provides the basis upon which the discussion of its procedural rationality can commence.

Proceeding on this strategic conception of terrorism there is much evidence to denote it as a procedurally rational choice. The most important deliberative process concerning terrorism is the actual decision to deploy it and its timing in aid of a given cause. Pape (2003, p. 350) remarks that this decision is "largely a function of estimate of the success of past efforts". Hamas wholeheartedly incorporated such estimations in their own decision to embark on terrorism with leader Kahlid Mash'al remarking they had learnt from, what they perceived to be, the successes and failures of past action against Israel and only employed successful methods going forward, a decidedly rational course of action (Pape, 2003, p. 355). Hamas are not alone, with various other terrorist organisations declaring that their perceptions of the past successes of terror campaigns such as that of the Irgun or Hezbollah are prominent considerations as to the expected utility of their own terrorism (Chenoweth, et al., 2009, p. 181). The determining factor of this utilitarian potential is not an absolute factual calculation but rather the perception of those making the aforementioned deliberations. Terrorism is utilitarian and thus rational if the observation that it has been utilitarian in the past and will be in the future is "shared by a significant portion of other observers" as this constitutes its expected or perceived utility (Chenoweth, et al., 2009, p. 181). Consequently the procedurally rational calculation for the potential terrorist/organisation is do I/we believe on the basis of the information available, that terrorism will achieve the objective? Hamas commander Ahmed Bakr certainly thought so declaring "what forced the Israelis to withdraw from Gaza was the intifada and not the Oslo agreement" (Cockburn, 1995). Pape (2003, p. 348) agrees with Bakr and asserts that many within the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) felt that one of the most decisive factors in the recognition of the rights of Palestinians by the United Nations was the 1968 plane hijacking by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

Targets of terrorism also contribute to the expected utility of terrorism as evident when in 1994 Yitzhak Rabin stated terrorism "increased the pace" of peace talks (Inbar, 1999, p. 141). Moreover, various Palestinian terrorist groups

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have displayed clearly procedurally rational calculations as to the timings of their campaigns and attacks. The "Oslo offensive" was specifically designed to halt a PLO strategy the perpetrators saw as misguided "violence was timed to coincide with major events in a peace process" (Kydd & Walter, 2002, p. 265). At various times Hamas and Islamic Jihad also halted bombing campaigns when they judged them to be counterproductive to their objectives, a sign of their rational rather than irrational use of terrorism (Pape, Ibid). Abrahms (2004, pp. 539-540) stridently opposes the utility of terrorism arguing that it is "overblown" and its failure evidenced by the PLO's renouncing of violence and Friedman (2002) concurs saying violence was a substantive failure for the Palestinian political cause. The causal links between Palestinian terrorism and Israeli action are altogether irrelevant in determining procedural rationality however. It is clear from the above evidence that terrorism was *perceived* by actors on both sides, as providing utility to the cause of Palestinian terrorist organisations and as a result its *expected* utility outweighed that of other available options. The choosing of terrorism was thus an outcome of appropriate deliberation predicated the actor's *perception* of available information, including the past utility of terrorism. The decision to employ terrorism and its initiation and cessation are thus the result of procedurally rational calculations, whether or not the use of this terrorism resulted in utility for the actors end goal.

Following the procedurally rational decisions to implement and persist with or terminate a terror campaign or operation, one of the most contested aspects of terrorisms rationality is target selection. Abrahms (2008, p. 82) maintains that terrorism is ineffective and thus irrational in its targeting of civilians and Loren Lamasky agrees, that it has "no genuine chance" of achieving political aims through seemingly indiscriminate attacks and thus is irrational (Abrahms, 2004, p. 537). Likewise Bruce Cummings stated that "the 9/11 attack had no rational military purpose" because it lacked the essential connection between violent means and political ends in its target selection (Calhoun, et al., 2002, p. 198). On the contrary these targets are far from indiscriminate or random and are a product of rational calculations. Seemingly indiscriminate targets are a fundamental aspect of shattering the "it couldn't happen to me" mentality of those who have escaped the immediate physical attack (Janis, 1979, p. 23). Terrorists need to sow fear in targets in order that the fear will help accomplish the end objective (Fromkin, 1975, p. 693). Through this fear which is more pronounced should the attacks appear random and thus an ever present potential, terrorists perceive "the will of the target group can be undermined" (Neumann & Smith, 2005, p. 585). By depriving a society of otherwise immutable aspects of life such as relative peace, stability and security the terrorist is hoping to engender the "asset to liability shift" wherein the target society is forced to contemplate if the terrorism a price worth paying to maintain the current course of action (Tugwell, 1981, pp. 14-16). Thus terrorists who engage in seemingly indiscriminate attacks expect*,* on the basis of procedural rationality, that this method will provide utility in undermining the structural supports which give society strength and cohesion and thus the ability to resist terrorist demands more so than other target types (Thornton, 1964, p. 74). The IRA's "England Campaign" was pursued on this basis. They *expected*, based on their deliberative processes, that targeting British citizens in England would increase the public scorn of the already unpopular presence of British troops in Ireland and pressure the withdrawal of troops, a major objective (Neumann & Smith, 2005, p. 587). Likewise, Abdel Karim, leader of the al-Aksa Martyrs Brigade displayed the procedural rationality of his organisations campaign remarking the objective was "to increase the losses in Israel to a point at which the Israeli public would demand a withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip" (Greenberg, 2002).

Terrorists may also seek to promote "target overreaction" via this targeting type (Neumann & Smith, 2005, p. 580). In doing so, terrorists have undergone a deliberate decision making process that leads them to expect that the appearance of supposedly random targets will goad a target society "into using extra-legal methods" which they expect is likely to involve widespread repression of civil liberties of that societies citizens, which will provide utility in the terrorists overall aim (Chenoweth, et al., 2009, p. 184). The terrorist expects a number of outcomes from this including citizen anger at the government and increased legitimacy for themselves. Neumann and Smith (Ibid) point out that this increasing of legitimacy of a terrorist group or cause as a result of target overreaction occurred across Latin America during the Cold War in countries such as El Salvador. Carlos Marighella (2002) professes the rationality of this strategy arguing that largely unpopular responses such as internment without trial are more likely to come about via indiscriminate or anonymous attacks. CIA analyst David McMichael remarked of the agency directed terrorism in Nicaragua that an objective was to force a "clamp down on civil liberties … and thus increase domestic dissent" (Chomsky, 1991, p. 19). Similar reasoning motivated the use of indiscriminate attacks by the Shining Path in Peru (Kearns, et al., 2014, p. 428). Far from being irrational, seemingly indiscriminate target selection is in fact a

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product of procedurally rational calculations. Actors selecting this target type expect, based on appropriate deliberation and information available, such as the perceived successes of terror campaigns by the IRA, that it will produce events such as low public confidence in safety, government overreaction and the asset to liability shift that will aid in achieving their ends.

Alternatively targets of terrorism are specifically chosen on the basis that the expected utility, an outcome of the deliberation process, outweighs that of indiscriminate targets. Such specificity in target selection is evident during the 1976 hijacking of an Air France plane by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – External Operations (PFLP-EO) where non-Israelis were released. Displaying a similarly deliberate and procedurally rational target selection calculation the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) specifically targeted Turkish diplomats rather than civilians, between 1975-1985 (Hoffman, 1998, p. 78). Nalbandov (2013, p. 95) shows that this targeting of diplomats specifically is evidence ASALA were "rational actors" as they had deduced what they believe to be their best course of action for achieving their end goals. Similarly, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) overwhelmingly targeted the military and government installations in El Salvador (Global Terrorism Database, 2016). That terrorism is able to display its targeting choice as the outcome of appropriate deliberation, whether highly targeted or widespread is a testament to its procedural rationality. Terrorists base their target selection much like their decision to engage in terrorism, on their expected utility toward achieving the objective of the campaign. Much like the aforementioned indiscriminate attacks, highly targeted attacks are a display of rationality in that terrorists are seemingly utilising rules of engagement attacking what the IRA would refer to as "legitimate targets" (Kelters, 2013). These attacks are designed to spread terror specifically amongst the decision making strata of society and demonstrate that even the most protected are unsafe whilst giving the perpetrator a form of legitimacy. Whether indiscriminate or highly selective targets actually provide utility or efficacy is moot, the "process that generated" either option is procedurally rationally sound (Simon, Ibid).

Another oft cited indicator of the irrationality of terrorism is inter-terrorist violence or "terrorist fratricide" (Abrahms, 2008, p. 91). Abrahms remarks that targeting groups who hold similar ideological views displays that a terrorist organisation is not motivated by the consistent utilitarian function of their political platform, and are irrational. There is no doubt of course that fratricidal behaviour is present within terrorism, the attacking of various pro-Tamil independence groups by the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) in the mid 1980's amounted to the "systematic annihilation" of these groups (Pedahzur, 2005, p. 81). Likewise the Algerian FLN attacked other Algerian liberation groups rather than French forces during the early years of the war (Abrahms, Ibid). Even the use of fratricide is often a concrete display of procedural rationality. Groups of a similar ideological persuasion are vying for the same attention, concessions, sympathy and recruits as each other (Chenoweth, et al., 2009, p. 185). Thus by eliminating rival groups, terrorist organisations are displaying procedural rationality as they have clearly calculated that the expected utility from eliminating such groups is going to better aid their end goal at that point in time, by affording them greater publicity, more recruits and becoming synonymous with that particular cause. As a result of eliminating virtually all rival groups, LTTE has become "the hegemonic violent nationalist movement in Tamil Eelam" (Ibid). The Sri Lankan government is unable to address any policy concerning Tamil Eelam without interacting with or considering LTTE. The same procedural rationality could be ascribed to the conflict between Daesh and Al-Qaeda affiliates in Africa (Burke, 2016). In the latter case, the organisations in question have engaged in procedurally rational calculations based on the expected utility that eliminating or degrading their rivals is beneficial to their political end goal.

This paper has displayed that arguably the key component elements of terrorism, the decision to employ and halt a terror campaign and its target type are the result of a deliberative process based on subjectively sound rational reasoning. Furthermore, even something as seemingly irrational as attacking fellow ideologically similar terrorists is the result of this same deliberative process. It must be noted that extrapolating procedural rationality as covered in this paper to all acts labelled terrorism, which as aforesaid is a widely used and misused term, must be handled carefully. However this paper has found a plethora of subjectively or contextually rational calculations predicated on information available to an actor and the *expected* outcome of terrorism, to be present in the aforementioned key components terrorism, in various typologies of terrorism be it left or right wing, political or religious and across a large timespan. Substantive results of this terrorism aside, for reasons covered earlier, these acts or campaigns of terrorism have been undertaken on the basis of available information including the perceived past successes of

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terrorism and expected target reaction, by actors who have deemed that the *expected* utility is beneficial to another course of action for achieving their end goals. The clear prevalence of this rationally rigorous deliberative process undertaken by terrorists suggests the necessary revision of terrorism studies to include procedural rationality. The processes that generate action tell much about the action itself, and in the case of terrorism, procedurally speaking it is a rational choice.

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