TERRORISM IN FRANCE
A Descriptive Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Terrorist activity in France is relatively unchanged since the last impressive wave of attempts in 1995 by GIA's movement already suspected to have links with Afghanistan and Al Qaeda

The major threat is the international terrorism which has led recently to a hardening of our counter-terrorism legislation (law of 01/23-2006) and a moving closer of intelligence services.

In practical the activity is monopolised by separatist terrorism: mainly Corsican, and more rarely Basque and Bretons.

In this presentation, we report the results of a descriptive analysis of terrorist events spanning the years 1972 to 1997:

-The geographical distribution of the French events;

METHODOLOGIES

Smoothing by moving average
Principal component analysis and hierarchical classification

FAIRLY DISTINCT GROUPS OVERVIEW

THE SEPARATISTS (Corsican, Breton, and Basque Region)
Most persistent and dynamic groups, simultaneous events, rarely lethal, turned against government properties, relatively supported by population, evolution into criminal organisation.

LEFT WING VIOLENT ACTIVISTS(Action directe)
Operational from 1979 to 1987 (imprisonment of political leaders), more and more violent, assassinations, unsupported by the population

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM
Early confrontation, started since 1981, impressive and murdered bombing in Paris – in control since 1996, costly trial and error experiments, achievement of an accurate knowledge.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

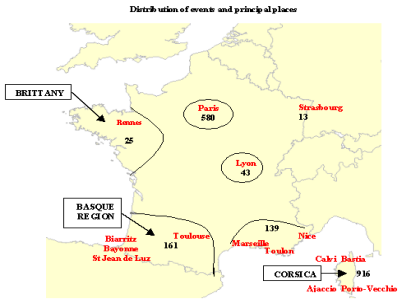
- **WHAT DO THE DATA REVEAL ABOUT OVERALL PATTERNS OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN FRANCE ?**
- **DO SOME GROUPS HAVE SIMILAR OR DISSIMILAR OPERATING MODE ?**

DATA

The data come from the most extensive longitudinal data set of terrorist events spanning the years 1972 to 1997 GLOBAL TERRORISM DATABASE (N= 1989)

WHAT DO THE DATA REVEAL ABOUT OVERALL PATTERN OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN FRANCE ?

- A total of **1,989** terrorist events were recorded in France from 1972 to 1997 : half on the French continent (2 %) and half in Corsica. That is about **70 events by year**.

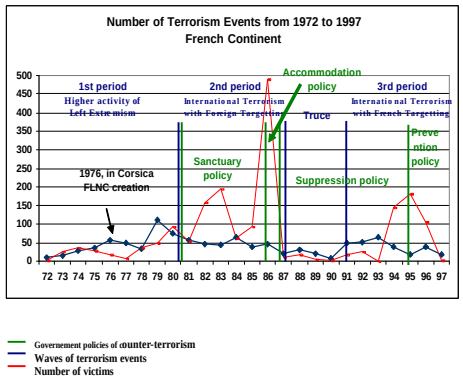


Three waves of terrorism could be discussed:

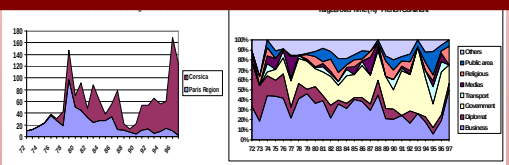
1- Before 1980, leftist extremist groups on the Continent monopolised the terrorism activity. From 1976, separatists appeared, but operated mainly on the Corsican Territory.

2- From 1980 to 1987, the leftist terrorism exhausts itself and the international terrorism emerged motivated by Middle East political issues, settling of scores on the French territory – SANCTUARY POLICY, then ACCOMODATION.

3- From 1990's, the persistence of international terrorism in France conducts to a SUPPRESSION, enriched then by a PREVENTION policy. For the moment, terrorism attacks are avoided on the French soil.



Paris Region an Corsica concentrated about 80 % of French events from 1972 to 1997, an obvious displacement of terrorist events comes out from the data analysis: from Paris to Corsica.

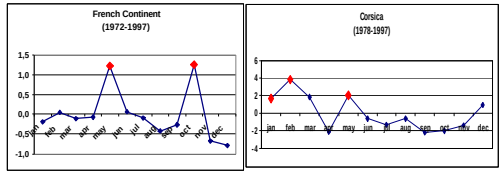


Terrorism is less focused on diplomats, and more often on governments and business targets because of the :
- progressive disappearance of the violent left activists in the 80's;
-changing of targets of international terrorism: foreign then domestic ones.

Favourite operative mean remains bombing (80 % of cases) then facility attacks (14 %) and assassination (8 %)

SEASONS OF TERRORISM IN FRANCE

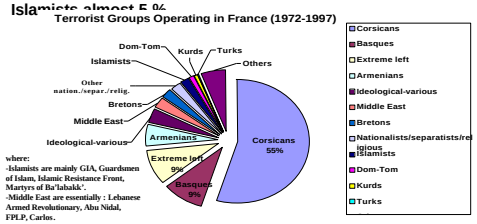
- On the French continent, MAY and OCTOBER are "hot months" ;
- In Corsica, events are more often committed in MAY and during the WINTER (dec. to feb.)



THE GROUPS

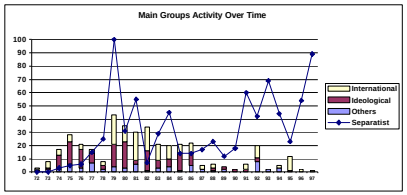
Corsican groups are responsible of half of terrorist events in France. Other separatist groups share 11.7 % of acts.

Extreme Left organsations cover 9 % of events. Among international terrorist groups, Armenian groups for the independence represent 6 % of events, and Middle East and Islamists almost 5 %.



where:
-Islamists are mainly GIA, Guardsmen of Islam, Islamic Resistance Front, Martyrs of Ba'Ishabkh'.
-Middle East are essentially : Lebanese Armed Revolutionary, Abu Nidal, FPLP, Carlos.

The data confirm the more important activity of separatist groups over time after a relative quiet in the end of the 80's. Not surprisingly, international terrorist groups were especially active in the 80's (sanctuary policy) and later less regularly



SIMILARITARIES/ DISSIMILARITARIES BETWEEN GROUPS

FIVE DIFFERENT CLASSES OF GROUPS are enlightened by a PCA analysis with a hierarchical classification. In France, unexpected similarities/dissimilarities between groups appear.

-**MIDDLE EAST GROUPS and ISLAMIST TERRORISM have different operating modes**. They both wound a considerable number of people, but Middle East groups are less murdered, not involved in hijacking, are particularly directed to diplomats, and religious target.

- ISLAMIST GROUPS have a particular liking for business targets.

- CORSICAN GROUPS commit events with few wounded people and rarely killed people. No hesitation to act, mainly by bombing or facility attacks, in public area, camping, houses of holidays, shops.

-**BASQUE GROUPS (as Extreme Lefts activists, Armenians)** are more involved in assassination, kidnapping, few killed people, but are able to make a lot of wounded. A link with Middle East operating mode have been shown notably in the level of violence.

- BRETON GROUPS are linked significantly to Kurd, Turk, and other ideological groups (Anti-Nuclear, Ecologist, Neo-Nazy) : a lot of assaults (contrary to Basque attitude), few wounded, no killed, few bombings, kidnappings or facility attacks. No favorite area.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

What impact have terrorism events on tourism, unemployment and firms creations ?
- Econometric modeling on the Corsican case, with time series data set.

Do the Algerian terrorism have links with French terrorism ?
- Events statistical analysis and possibly an econometric modeling.