

## Political Coercion from Within: Theoretical Convergence in the Strategies of Terrorist Groups, Insurgencies, and Social Movements

**Authors :** John Hardy

**Abstract :** The early twenty-first century national security environment has been characterized by political coercion. Despite an abundance of political commentary on the various forms of non-state coercion leveraged against the state, there is a lack of literature which distinguishes between the mechanisms and the mediums of coercion. Frequently non-state movements seeking to coerce the state are labelled by their tactics, not their strategies. Terrorists, insurgencies and social movements are largely defined by the ways in which they seek to influence the state, rather than by their political aims. This study examines the strategies of coercion used by non-state actors against states. This approach includes terrorist groups, insurgencies, and social movements who seek to coerce state politics. Not all non-state actors seek political coercion, so not all examples of different group types are considered. This approach also excludes political coercion by states, focusing on the non-state actor as the primary unit of analysis. The study applies a general theory of political coercion, which is defined as attempts to change the policies or action of a polity against its will, to the strategies employed by terrorist groups, insurgencies, and social movements. This distinguishes non-state actors' strategic objectives from their actions and motives, which are variables that are often used to differentiate between types of non-state actors and the labels commonly used to describe them. It also allows for a comparative analysis of theoretical perspectives from the disciplines of terrorism, insurgency and counterinsurgency, and social movements. The study finds that there is a significant degree of overlap in the way that different disciplines conceptualize the mechanism of political coercion by non-state actors. Studies of terrorism and counterterrorism focus more on the notions of cost tolerance and collective punishment, while studies of insurgency focus on a contest of legitimacy between actors, and social movement theory tend to link political objectives, social capital, and a mechanism of influence to leverage against the state. Each discipline has a particular vernacular for the mechanism of coercion, which is often linked to the means of coercion, but they converge on three core theoretical components of compelling a polity to change its policies or actions: exceeding resistance to change, using political or violent punishments, and withholding legitimacy or consent from a government.

**Keywords :** counter terrorism, homeland security, insurgency, political coercion, social movement theory, terrorism

**Conference Title :** ICISTA 2018 : International Conference on International Security and Theoretical Approaches

**Conference Location :** Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Conference Dates :** November 05-06, 2018