



CoCo Seminar Series Spring 2019

Forcing the Government's Hand: Terrorism, Constituency Reforms and Improvement in Minority Rights

Dr. Seden Akcinaroglu
Associate Professor of Political Science
Binghamton University



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Engineering Building H-9 (Knoll-MacDonald Commons / Watson Commons)

Governments are often averse to engaging in negotiations with terrorists. Offering policy concessions to terrorists can be political suicide for many leaders. It is also difficult to defeat terror groups. We argue that an available strategy for a government is to weaken the terrorists' constituency support by engaging in political, social, and economic reforms, concessions to the constituency, which address the grievances of the people the terror group claims to represent. By using this strategy, the government hopes to sever the link between the terror group and its constituency. While giving in to terrorists is not desirable, bypassing the terror group and undertaking reforms that affect the welfare of its constituency directly strengthens the legitimacy of the government. But, concessions are costly. And, governments find it optimal to target the constituencies of militarily strong terror groups with high constituency support as the recipient of concessions. To test our hypotheses, we use a novel data, Constituency Concessions Data, on ethnic constituency accommodation between 1980 and 2006. We evidence that governments often resort to divide and conquer strategies by rendering terrorism inefficient in the eyes of the constituency, but our results also show that these are often not effective in bringing the terrorists' demise, not unless they result in credible improvements in minority rights.

Dr. Seden Akcinaroglu is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Binghamton University. She specializes in international conflict and rivalries. Her research interest lies in unraveling the linkages between expectations, informational problems, learning and strategic action in the dynamics of civil wars or rivalries.

For more information, contact Hiroki Sayama (sayama@binghamton.edu).

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