

Sports as a purpose of international terrorism

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Abstract

Violence exercised for political purposes transcends national interests very clearly. The opportunism and the desire to obtain a great media repercussion make the sportive objectives are key to launch warnings, threats, sow panic and make the message that is intended to reach the whole world. Sport has been a victim on numerous occasions of these violent acts.

This work aims to make a historical journey from the attacks of Munich'72 to the attacks in Paris on November 13, 2015, trying to determine how terrorists who attempt against sports interests usually act alone (or in small groups) and how the ideological reasons behind each attack are radically different. From the incidents of September 11, 2001 will demonstrate how attacks against sporting goals have multiplied, as to attack against densely populated sports spaces makes the attacks much more profitable: there is a greater number of victims and a great coverage is obtained by part of the media that cover the event. Finally, it will be analyzed how the threat of a terrorist attack against a sport-related objective has led to greater governmental cooperation and the creation of multinational security networks.

Keywords

Terrorism, Terrorist attacks, Sports, Olympic Games, Security, Governments.

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Introduction

International sport has progressively become a mass phenomenon of universal diffusion. This universal diffusion has made sports competitions have been -and are- used as tools for diplomacy. The most obvious example is probably that of the “ping pong diplomacy” of 1971, mythologized as a reinvigorating diplomatic exchange between the United States (US) and the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The Chinese Prime Minister, Enlai Zhou, was of the opinion that it would be good for the PRC, integrate again in the international community (Griffin, 2014, pp.1-2). Zhou communicated on February 2, 1971, that the national table tennis team would begin to compete internationally again. Between March 28 and April 7, 1971, the XXXI Table Tennis World Championship was held in Nagoya (Japan). The PRC policy rejected any body that recognized the two Chinas; however, the International Table Tennis Federation was not one of them. This policy was developed since 1958 and among the agencies affected by the decision of the PRC was the International Olympic Committee (IOC) (Xu, 2008, p.127). Few days before the start of the championship, Zhou himself held meetings with his Ministry of Foreign Affairs and sports officials of the PRC, where he noted the possibility of a future invitation to the US team, which suggests that the prospect of improvement in Sino-US relations was one of the reasons why Zhou wanted to send the table tennis team to Japan (Xia, 2006, pp.15-16). In the same way, he also maintained secret communications with the then American National Security Adviser of the White House, Henry Kissinger. The fact is that these contacts led to an official invitation to the US table tennis team on April 7, 1971 (MacMillan, 2008, pp. xvi-xxii).

This was the beginning of the “Ping-pong Diplomacy”, whose development resulted in the Nixon’s historic visit to the PRC, on February 21, 1972 (Nixon 1972). This visit involved official US recognition of the PRC.

The existence of international sports contacts symbolizes more than just the recognition of other states and their governments. Sport has become by its magnitude, diffusion and universalization, in the best scenario where to be able to represent the international geopolitics and the diplomatic relations. If we refer to this political intervention in the world of sport, we can distinguish up to six categories (Toohey & Veal 2008. p.87):

1. The one concerning the domestic policy of the host nation of the sporting event.
2. The internal policy of the international sports federations or the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which has had a great impact on the world of sports.
3. The use of sporting events by competitors, as a forum for political demonstrations against their national governments.
4. The equation of sports success on the part of nations, with a social, economic and political superiority.
5. The prolongation of international rivalries, based on political or ideological disputes between nations which have manifested themselves in the field of play by making it an extension of the battlefield.
6. Finally, there is a category of those who do not participate in sporting events, as is the case of terrorist groups, who use these occasions to promote their political causes. This last category is going to be, therefore, the object of this work.

Looking for a definition for terrorism and terrorist act

Despite its relatively recent impact on the media, terrorism existed centuries before September 11, 2001 that shocked the world. However, many academics believe that it was 1968 when terrorism really became a transnational concern, due to three factors that helped its global escalation (Kiras, 2017, p.405):

- The expansion of air travel.
- The growing coverage of televised news. The Mexico'68 Games were the first Olympic Games that were broadcasted on live via satellite television around the world.
- The existence of broad common political and ideological threats.

The concept of terrorism is difficult to define. In general terms, the objectives of a terrorist act are not the victims who are killed or maimed in the attack, but the governments among whom the terrorists hope to engender a reaction, such as fear, repulsion or intimidation. Although it is difficult to find a universal definition of terrorism, there are some elements that distinguish them from other violent actions (Cronin, 2003, p. 32-33).

First, terrorism always has a political nature and it involves the commission of acts designed to precipitate political change. Terrorist acts have to do with justice, or at least with the perception of who perpetrated the terrorist attack has of it, be it human or divine justice. Second, although many other uses of violence are intrinsically political, including conventional warfare between states, terrorism is distinguished by its non-state character, even when terrorists receive military, political, and economic means from state sources. It is obvious that states use force for political purposes: when state force is used internationally, it is considered an act of war; When used in the country, it is comes under different names, including terms such as “law enforcement”, “state terrorism”, “oppression” or “civil war”. Although states can terrorize, by definition, they can not be terrorists, although they can promote terrorism. Thirdly, terrorism deliberately targets innocents. Finally, the use of force by states is subject to international norms and conventions that can be invoked or at least consulted. Terrorists do not follow international laws or regulations.

In the same way, we can point out that terrorist acts (regardless of who perpetrated them and against whom they are directed) have four common characteristics:

1. Terrorist acts are used by groups that do not have the political power to change policies or regimes that they consider unbearable.
2. Terrorists often justify their actions for ideological or religious reasons, arguing that they do not respond to existing laws, because they are trying to correct a mistake or promote a greater good.
3. The objectives are selected to maximize the negative psychological effects in societies or governments.
4. This last element is nourished by the culture of fear. For these reasons, terrorists often choose methods of mass destruction in places where people gather, such as sports stadiums.

Terrorists also plan their actions to obtain the greatest possible exposure to the media. This explains why mega-sporting events are attractive targets. As Jenkins pointed out in 1975, “terrorism is theater” (Jenkins, 1975, p.15), and what better theater than a terrorist attack in an international sporting event, and before a global audience...

Deliberate premeditation also distinguishes terrorism from state uses of force, because when a state kills innocents, it is “always inadvertently” and may or may not be seen as justified. Again, this use of force is different from terrorism.

Terrorism at the Olympic Games

Taking into account the above factors, the global prominence of sport has made it a hostage of terrorism. For the purposes of this study, the massacre of Tlatelolco (which took place in October 1968 at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Mexico City, ten days before the opening of the Olympic Games) is beyond the scope of this work, not because it belittles the horror of the incident, but because the massacre was carried out by Mexican military forces and was focused on ending the growing student movement.

It was the attack of the Black September group, a faction of the Organization for the Liberation of Palestine (PLO) directed against Israeli athletes and officials at the ‘72 Munich Games, where terrorism, as a politically motivated action, began to impact on the sport through its most universal event, an Olympic Games. The Munich attack was so notorious that its implications came far beyond sport, being cataloged as the decisive moment in the growth of modern terrorism. The worldwide attention it received showed that terrorism could be an effective tactic to challenge governments and raise international awareness of a political cause.

Before the start of the Munich Games, the West German authorities had already been alerted by reports that provided for political demonstrations related to Israel’s presence at the Olympic Games. While none of these reports specifically indicated that Israeli athletes would be the target of the protest, the German authorities met with an Israeli diplomat to discuss security arrangements for their athletes in the Olympic Village. Despite these contacts, as it was later shown, the West German government was unfortunately not prepared to guarantee the safety of the Hebrew sportsmen and technicians (Dershowitz, 2002, p.420).

On September 5, Palestinian terrorists belonging to the September Black group infiltrated the Olympic Village, taking Israeli athletes and technicians hostage. In the initial attack, an Israeli wrestling coach was killed. Later, a second Israeli was killed. The German authorities tried to negotiate the terms of the release of the hostages. The Black September insurgents demanded the release

of more than 200 Arab political prisoners held by the Israelis. In addition, they searched for a safe place for them and their hostages at an airport of their choice in the Middle East.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir, announced that her country would not accede to any demand. Then he implored the Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat, to intervene. However, the Egyptian government had no intention of getting involved. The West German government initiated a plan to free the hostages. The television coverage of the German snipers who were moving in their position inside the Olympic village was seen by the terrorists who demanded the end of the operation. Another rescue plan was devised. The terrorists and hostages were allowed to leave the Olympic village and go to the Fū'rstenfeldbruck airfield, where they tried to arrest the terrorists. The Palestinians, realizing they had been ambushed, detonated hand grenades in the helicopters that held the hostages. All the Israelis died. In total, 17 people died as a result of the Munich attack (Groussard, 1975).

The national teams of Egypt, Israel, Algeria and the Philippines withdrew from the Games, as did some athletes from the delegations of the United States, the Netherlands and Norway. The Israeli government requested the cancellation of the Games, however, the IOC decided not to do so, arguing that the Games would be more susceptible to new attacks.⁴⁶ Instead, he canceled all events on September 7 and held a service in memory of the dead and official athletes. In his ovation speech at the funeral held the next day in a fully packed Olympic stadium, he pronounced the well-known "The Games must go on", without a doubt his most famous words, defined by the historian Allen Guttman as "the creed of his life" (Guttman, 1979, p.253), and pronounced on the day that saved the Olympism according to the words of his successor, Lord Killanin (Senn, 1999, pp.152-153)¹.

Despite the ambush of the airport, the terrorists had obtained publicity that went beyond anything they could have imagined. Faud al-Shameli, one of the planners of the Munich terrorist attack, provided the reason why the Israeli Olympic athletes were

¹ "Every civilized person reacts with horror to the barbarous criminal intrusion of the terrorists in the Olympic precincts. We mourn our Israeli friends, victims of this brutal assault. The Olympic flag and flags from around the world are flying at half-mast. The Games of the 20th Olympiad have been subject to two savage attacks. I am sure that public will agree that we can not allow a handful of terrorists to destroy this core of international cooperation and goodwill that we have in the Olympic movement. The Games must continue and we must continue our efforts to keep them clean, pure and honest, trying to extend sportsmanship to other areas. We declare today, day of mourning, and we will continue with the contest of all the events tomorrow" (Reeve, 2000, p.138).

selected for the attack². An Olympiad awakens the interest and attention of many people. The choice of the Olympic Games as a target for a terrorist attack, from the purely propagandistic point of view, was 100 percent successful.

Despite the increase in security measures, terrorist attacks at the Olympic Games happened again. After South Korea was selected as the venue for the 1988 Olympic Games, North Korea demanded to co-host the event. When their requests were rejected, two attacks occurred, and were directly linked to North Korea's attempt to interrupt the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988.

On November 29, 1987, the Korean Air flight 858 that flew from Baghdad to Seoul, exploded in the air after the detonation of a bomb placed by two North Korean citizens who then swallowed cyanide capsules, although only one died in reality (Sylas, 2007, pp. 166-168). The attack killed the 115 people who were traveling aboard the plane. It seems that North Korea had wanted to destabilize the government of South Korea, interrupt its upcoming parliamentary elections and scare international teams to attend the 1988 Seoul Olympics (Radchenko, 2011).

Faced with this situation, both Japan and the United States provided direct security assistance to Korea to guarantee the security of the Games. The Japanese government monitored thousands of flights and controlled all visitors passing through Tokyo and other Japanese cities on the way to South Korea; while the US deployed air and naval units in and around South Korea, before and during the Games (Pound, 1994).

In 1992, two Spanish terrorist groups tried to interrupt the Opening Ceremony of the Barcelona Games. The Basque separatist group Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) bombed high-voltage towers to disrupt power supply; while another group with a Marxist tendency, the Antifascist Resistance Group First of October (GRAPO), exploded three bombs in a pipeline on the outskirts of Barcelona. Both attacks caused some inconvenience to the organizers of the '92 Barcelona Games, but they failed to attract the attention of the world media (Alcoba, 2001, pp.154-155).

At the 1996 Atlanta Games, a bomb in Centennial Park detonated by a lone American anti-abortion extremist, Eric Rudolph, killed

² "The bombings in the offices of El Al do not serve our cause... We have to kill its most important and famous characters. Since we can not get close to their statesmen, we have to kill artists and athletes". (Deshowitz, 2002, p.41).

a spectator, and indirectly killed a Turkish camera operator who was covering the event after suffering a heart attack, besides wounding 111 people. Atlanta Centennial Park was a recreation area created especially for the Games, where athletes and the public could meet, enjoy and consume products of the Olympic sponsors. The bomb was hidden in a backpack, and exploded on the morning of Saturday, July 27. After the attack, a telephone meeting was held between the Organizing Committee of the '96 Games of Atlanta, the White House and officials of the State of Georgia (Toohey & Veal, 2007, pp.109-110).

As in 1972, the authorities decided that canceling the Games would amount to a victory for terrorism. The president of the United States, Bill Clinton, declared: "We can not allow terrorism to win" (Cushman, 1996). As a sign of respect for the dead or wounded in the explosion, all the Olympic flags waved at half mast, and a minute of silence was observed in all the Olympic facilities. The competitions continued, however, Centennial Park was closed for three days and when it reopened, on July 30, the security measures to enter the venue were much stricter.

In the face of these attacks, precautions were taken at the Sydney 2000 Games. As a result, two alleged attempts at terrorist attacks were disrupted in their planning stages. Some months before the Games, the New Zealand police thwarted a plot, which aimed to carry out an attack on the Lucas Heights Nuclear Reactor during the Sydney Olympics (Ackerman & Halverson, 2016, pp.134-135). In addition, during the investigation, the Auckland police found evidence that Osama bin Laden was behind the plot after the arrest of two Afghan citizens (Fussey, et al., 2011, p.52). Two months later, in May 2000, a man was arrested near the Olympic Village, having discovered his house was full of explosives ready to perpetrate an attack.

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States, concerns about a terrorist attack directed towards the Olympic Games have been greater than before, even though there was no specific sports connection with September 11. After September 11, numerous sporting events were canceled or postponed. Some athletes and national teams withdrew from international competitions. These initial effects have now dissipated, however, Olympic security measures, and costs have skyrocketed. The perception of the risk of a terrorist attack was also adduced as a reason to justify the low attendance of spectators at the Athens Games 2004 (Toohey & Veal, 2008, p. 111).

Sport as a hostage of terrorism

Since September 11, 2001, the fear of a terrorist attack whose goal was a macro-sporting event, became an obsession. South Korea and Japan, organizers of the 2002 World Cup, implemented unprecedented anti-terrorist measures: fighter planes patrolled no-fly zones around stadiums and placed surface-to-air missiles to shoot down any suspicious aircraft; snipers were placed everywhere and, in addition to the normal security personnel, undercover agents (some trained by the Mossad and assisted by specialists of the Israeli army) were attentive to the suicide attackers (Toohey, Taylor & Lee, 2003, p.176). No major terrorist incidents were reported in 2002, neither during the Olympic Games nor the World Cup.

As is being observed, terrorists have targeted professional athletes, the organization of macro-events in itself, and the spectators. On May 1, 2002, Basque separatists from the ETA terrorist group made an attempt with a car bomb that exploded outside the Santiago Bernabéu football stadium in Madrid, hours before Real Madrid played against Barcelona. The shrapnel wounded several spectators who were in the zone for the semifinal of the Champion League of Soccer (Tarlow, 2017, pp.117-118).

This was not the first time a separatist group attacked on the eve of a top-flight football competition. On June 15, 1996, the terrorist group Northern Ireland (IRA) detonated a bomb housed in a truck, consisting of about 1500 kilos of homemade explosives. This attack was the largest detonated bomb in Britain since the Second World War. More than 200 people were injured, including some 500 meters away, when hit by crystals. Although no one had to regret any deaths, the damages were valued at more than 700 million pounds. In those moments, England was the seat of the European Championship (Currie, 2002, p.54).

In early 2004, during a visit by IOC President Jacques Rogge to Athens, two Greek government vehicles were attacked in Athens. A few months later, 100 days before the Opening Ceremony of the 2004 Athens Olympics, three more bombs exploded in the city. Although no one was injured in these attacks, it became clear again that a terrorist attack was a clear possibility during the Games.

On May 8, 2004, New Zealand canceled the tour of its cricket team throughout Pakistan, after a bomb explosion in the hotel where they were staying. It killed 11 people and wounded 18 others. The bomb exploded shortly before the New Zealand team climbed onto their bus to travel to the National Stadium to play a match (Khan & Khan, 2013, p.24).

Three days later, on May 11, 2004, there was another terrorist incident not related to sport: the detonation of several bombs on several commuter trains in Madrid, which killed more than 200 people. Although the Spanish authorities initially blamed the attack on the Basque separatist group, ETA, it was discovered that it was the work of a terrorist group linked to Al Qaeda and related to Spain's participation in the invasion of Iraq. This incident made it clear that athletes from countries with troops in Iraq could be targeted during the Olympic Games in Athens. The possibility was also raised that the United States Olympic team would withdraw if the threat became too high. In this regard, the IOC acknowledged that the bombings raised safety concerns, but said that it had complete confidence in Olympic security planning.

Despite these assurances, the Australian government (which had troops in Iraq) angered Greek Olympic officials by issuing warnings about the trip to Greece. The Australian Olympic Committee itself (AOC), with the cooperation of the Australian government, implemented protective measures to ensure its team and Olympic officials, in addition to assigning Australian police to escort athletes between the Olympic Village and the competition venues.

Sport became a key target for terrorist groups operating in the Middle East. Sport became a risky activity for those who practiced it on a pseudo-professional level. In May 2006, a terrorist group killed 13 members of an Iraqi taekwondo team while traveling to Jordan. In May of that same year, the national tennis coach of Iraq was murdered along with two members of the Davis Cup team. In July, an armed group abducted 30 members of the Iranian Olympic Committee, including its president, Ahmed al Samarrai, whose whereabouts are still unknown (Dorsey, 2013, pp.156-167). In 2008, as a result of continued Islamic threats, the Paris-Dakar Rally was suspended, and the organization decided to hold it in South America (Hassan & O'Kane, 2011, p.276).

Linked to Islamic terrorism, many areas of the planet become

vulnerable, due to deficiencies in their security systems. In these areas, a sporting event becomes a prime target for terrorists. On April 6, 2008, fourteen people died, including the Minister of Sri Lanka, Jeyaraj Fernandopulle, and more than 100 were injured, by a Tamil guerrilla bomb in Gampaha. The minister was there, to signal the start of the traditional New Year marathon (Hassan, 2012, p.266).

On March 3, 2009, a terrorist group attacked the bus of the Sri Lankan national cricket team. Seven people died.

On January 1, 2010, ninety people died during a volleyball game at Lakki Marwat in Pakistan. A suicide bomber detonated a device he was carrying in his vehicle, right in the middle of the field and with the match underway (Mickolus, 2014, p.148).

On January 8, 2010, a rebel group from the Angolan enclave of Cabinda, armed with machine guns, attacked the bus of the national team of Togo, as they prepared to participate in the African Cup of Nations. An assistant coach and Togo's press officer were murdered (Nixon, 2016, pp.301-302).

In May 2010, Reuters reported that Iraqi security personnel had arrested a Saudi al-Qaeda operative who they said was under the coordination of Ayman al-Zawahiri and planning to attack the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa (Mohammed, 2010).

Islamic terrorism against sporting goals in the West

On April 15, 2013, the Boston Marathon ended abruptly and terrifyingly when two bombs exploded near the finish line. Three people died and 264 were injured by the detonated explosives, which had been packed in pressure cookers, and hidden in black backpacks. A few days later, what followed was unprecedented in the United States: the complete closure of the city of Boston (Sylvester, 2013, pp.11-23)³.

On April 18, the FBI posted surveillance images of the alleged perpetrators, who were identified later on the same day as the Chechen brothers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev. This identification triggered a series of dramatic and violent events. The suspects killed a police officer, stole a car and clashed with

³ Political commentator Chemi Salev, who wrote in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, one day after the Boston attacks: "This was the great victory of terrorism, its spectacular triumph and its gloriously abhorrent day in the sun. Never, in the history of violence directed at innocent civilians, have the lives of so many people been so disturbed by the relative lack of affection of so few" (Salev, 2013).

the police. In the escape, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, already wounded by shots, died after his younger brother ran over him with the car. On April 19, there was a large-scale persecution to capture Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who was later found wounded and arrested (Galily, et al., 2016, pp.1057-1067).

The attack on the Boston Marathon was a major success for terrorism for two reasons. First, the city of Boston became a major crime scene, and the sense of danger fiercely re-emerged. As we have seen, sporting events have attracted attacks on previous occasions since the combined presence of the media and a large number of people adapts to the general objective of terrorism, that is, seeking maximum attention by spreading maximum fear and damage. Second, the news of the terrorist attack initially spread quickly on Twitter and Facebook. Just over an hour and a half after the attack, Twitter included more than 700,000 mentions of the "Boston Marathon," including photographs of both the perpetrated attack and the damage caused, publicity for terrorists, never seen before (Haddow & Haddow, 2014, p.155).

On November 13, 2015, terrorists with French and Belgian nationality launched a series of attacks that killed 130 people in and around Paris. The terrorists comprised three coordinated teams that simultaneously attacked the Bataclan concert hall, the Stade de France and restaurant terraces at four different locations in the 10th and 11th districts of Paris. Seven of the attackers died in clashes with the police or detonated suicide vests during the attacks (United States, Department of State, 2015).

Three other suicide bombers tried to attack the Stade de France with explosive vests during a friendly match between the national football teams of France and Germany, where more than 80,000 spectators gathered. One detonated outside the Gate D of the stadium after he was prevented from entering, another detonated outside Gate H and later, the third explosion occurred in the vicinity of a restaurant near the stadium (Alderman, 2015).

Undoubtedly, to make an attempt on a stadium full of people, during a match broadcast at prime time, was a powerful end to the bloodbath. The terrorist attack sought, in addition to causing the greatest possible damage, a great impact on the media, which would feed the culture of fear once again. The terrorist attack saw the media as the best possible tool to spread terror. The attacks in Paris highlighted the relationship between terrorism and the media.

Conclusions

In general, a culture of fear has been created within society. Terror has been feeding on it. Terrorists see sporting events, athletes or spectators as possible targets, specially in major sporting events, as they attract international audiences.

This study has examined the intersections between terrorism and sporting events. The empirical data presented in this document underscores the importance of terrorism in this context, emphasizing that the deadliest terrorist attack in the history of international sport was sponsored by a state, North Korea, during the preparations for the '88 Seoul Olympic Games.

Sport as a terrorist objective is not a new phenomenon and nor is limited to a particular ideology, like radical Islamism. Since September 11, the threat of an attack on a macro-sporting event has resulted in greater governmental cooperation and multinational networks. Safety operations at sporting events have evolved from a relatively unobtrusive approach towards an expansive safety regime in which protection against terrorism is a key concern for local organizing committees. This security regime, which generally developed since the Munich Olympics in 1972, and accelerated after 9/11, has become increasingly standardized and globalized.

Incidents such as the hostage-taking and murder of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Games are engraved on public memory. However, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as well as the subsequent political-military maneuvers around the world have substantially increased the need to create anti-terrorist security protocols at major sporting events. In fact, the first major international sporting event held after September 11, the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City, boosted safety measures to unprecedented levels.

Terrorists who act alone or in small groups are those who seem to choose sporting events as the targets of their actions. While such attacks or plots are relatively rare and infrequent, their detailed analysis allows a better understanding of the nature of the threat. To this end, the most significant attacks, whose objective was a sporting event, have been exposed.

This brings us to two important conclusions. First, the reasons given for attacks on sporting events are often similar, even if the ideological motive behind the attack. Second, terrorists target sporting events, not because they have a particular attachment

to sport, but rather because they want to target a government or community involved or associated with the event. Often the host government is the real and main target of the attack.

The cases examined in this study show the similarity by which sporting events were constituted as an objective, although from radically different ideological points of view. For anti-abortion activist Eric Rudolph, the explosion of Centennial Park in Atlanta, was intended to “confuse, anger and embarrass” an evil government, in an attempt to “*drag this monstrosity of a government to dust where it belongs*” (Balleck, 2018, p.312). For the Tsarnaev brothers, the explosions of the Boston Marathon were carried out, in response to the US military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. With this, we can appreciate how the choice of a sporting event as an objective should be understood in relation to the grievances and desires of revenge of the terrorists. In their minds, sporting events symbolize, at an abstract level, the justification of their cause, reducing innocent civilians to mere collateral damage. The symbolism of sporting events has been used with the aim of intimidating and instilling fear in the broader target audience.

The attacks examined here also allow us to appreciate where these attacks fit within the panorama of terrorists acting alone or in small groups, the most repeated pattern in attacks with sporting objectives. The exposed attacks reflect a broad pattern with respect to the ideological motivations that drive the terrorism of a lone wolf (or small groups) is not restricted to any particular ideology. While their ideological motivations differ considerably, attacks on these targets are, in general, notably more lethal when compared to the average lethality of lone wolf terror attacks. From 1940 to 2013, lone wolf terrorists have committed a total of 216 attacks, with a total of 143 dead and 431 wounded. The average number of “victims” was 2.66 per attack (Spaaij & Hamm, 2015, pp. 1022-1037).

On the contrary, the attack prior to the Seoul Games in 1988 claimed the lives of 115 people; that of the Olympic Games of Atlanta in 1996 took two lives and produced 110 wounded; The Boston Marathon bombings resulted in three deaths and more than 260 injuries. In all cases, the terrorists took advantage of the fact that the events, gathered a large number of people, which increases their chances of inflicting maximum damage. These sports macro-events were relatively accessible for the perpetrators, due to the unexpectedness of the attacks, which allowed them to place their bombs on the sites without being stopped or recorded

by the police or security. The increase in security measures has moved these attacks to regions and countries with less developed security systems. Despite this, the threat can be considered global.

It is important to note how, from the incidents of September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on sporting targets have multiplied, which leads to think of the existence of a pattern of imitation and inspiration effect. The media coverage of these events provides the opportunity to enjoy their moment of fame. By turning political causes into violent actions, terrorists can become models for other supporters of those causes. Internet and social networks have also a strong influence on this phenomenon. This development can have a greater impact on the interaction between sport and terrorism by encouraging like-minded people to attack densely populated spaces, such as sports stadiums.

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