# MASTER'S THESIS

Course code: SO330S

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## Escaping Attribution:

## Terrorist Groups' Claiming Behaviours in Eastern Europe and Western Europe

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# Summary

Numerous of terror attacks involve no suspected perpetrators, and these anonymous attacks contradict the assumption that terror groups may publicise their violence by claiming responsibility for attacks. Claiming behaviour in terrorism is shaped by multiple contextual factors, and this research aimed to promote a better understanding of this phenomenon by investigating patterns in claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe between two time periods: 1998-2008 and 2009-2019. While existing research largely has treated claiming behaviour as a dichotomous variable (claimed or unclaimed), this research also included attributed attacks, which refers to attacks with suspected perpetrators but no claim of responsibility. This project used secondary quantitative data from the Global Terrorism Database, and variables included to test variations in claiming behaviour were numbers of victims killed or wounded, suicide attacks, target groups, and weapon types. The results confirmed that most attacks in both Eastern Europe and Western Europe were unclaimed. Findings indicated that claimed attacks were more common in Western Europe, and unclaimed attacks and attributed attacks were more frequent in Eastern Europe. The period of time had less impact on claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe, but in Western Europe, unclaimed attacks had increased, and attributed attacks had decreased between time periods. Differences in claimed attacks may indicate that countries in Eastern Europe have a more constrained media, which prevent media outlets from publishing terrorism stories that may signal that a government is vulnerable. While it was established that time period had less impact on claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe, in certain years there were sharp shifts between unclaimed and attributed attacks. This demonstrated that claiming behaviour is dynamic and emerging patterns occur. Analyses of attack characteristics demonstrated that suicide attacks and high numbers of victims killed or wounded increased claims of responsibility. This can indicate that terror groups claim responsibility for attacks that demonstrate a group's strength (Min, 2013; Wright, 2011). Attacks on private citizens and property were less likely to be claimed by terror groups, which confirm previous research (Abrahms and Conrad, 2017; Carter and Ahmed, 2020). Contrary to expectation, attribution decreased when the target was private citizens or property. However, it may be that the media is less likely to cover attacks on property, and if most attacks involve attacks on property, then attribution may be reduced for this target group. Thus, these results provide a unique insight into patterns in claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe in two time periods.

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# List of Abbreviations

9/11 – September 11, 2001

AD – Action Directe

CBR - Chemical, biological, or radiological weapons

ELF – Earth Liberation Front

ETA – Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (the Basque separatist movement; Basque Homeland and Liberty; Basque Country and Freedom, Basque Fatherland and Freedom)

GTD – Global Terrorism Database

IEP – Institute for Economics & Peace

ISIS, IS, ISIL – Daesh, the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

RAF – Red Army Faction (Baader-Meinhof Group)

RPG – rocket-propelled grenade

RSF – Reporters Without Borders

START - National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism

Te-Sat - Terrorism Situation and Trend Report

TWEED – Terrorism in Western Europe

# Chapter 1      Introduction

On 17 July 2014, a Malaysia Airlines flight travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was shot down with a missile. 298 people were killed in this terrorist attack. Shortly after the flight went missing in the Ukraine, the terror group Donetsk People's Republic claimed responsibility for attacking a military plane. Soon after publishing the claim on the social media platform Vkontakte, the claim was removed (Bright, 2014). Shortly after, the Donetsk People's Republic denied any involvement in the attack on the passenger flight. This example highlights that a terror group may present contradictory statements related to a terror attack, and this involve multiple challenges when trying to understand claiming behaviour in terrorism. Why did the terror group claim responsibility for an attack, and then delete the claim from social media? And why did the terror group proceed to deny any involvement in the attack? Claiming behaviour in terrorism has generally been overlooked in terrorism research (Kearns et al., 2014), and there is lack of research on claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe. Thus, this research aims to identify trends in claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe in two time periods: 1998-2008 and 2009-2019. This chapter will provide an introduction to the study by first exploring the phenomenon of claiming behaviour. This will be followed by introducing the research problem, the research aims and objectives, and the research question.

## 1.1      Theme and Research Question

The theme in this master's thesis is claiming behaviour in terrorism. Claiming behaviour will be explored from three aspects: claiming responsibility for an attack, not claiming responsibility, and unclaimed but attributed attacks. A claim of responsibility is when a terror group officially states that an attack was perpetrated by them. The statement is understood as a claim of responsibility (on behalf of a terror group) if the claim is issued by official representatives of a terror organisation, such as the leadership, the group's official media outlet, or a suspected member. There are multiple ways for a terror group to claim responsibility, for example, it can be done by sending a letter to a media outlet or publishing a video on a social media account. Social media can be described as 'any internet platform that allows communication through images, videos, or messages' (Wu, 2015: 286). Not claiming responsibility refers to when a terror group is silent about its involvement in an attack. It is

not uncommon for terror groups to remain anonymous after terror attacks, in fact, unattributed terror attacks are frequent (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017; Min, 2013). Attribution refers to when an attack is unclaimed, but responsibility is assigned to a perpetrator group through media sources.

Terrorism literature describes that terror groups want maximum publicity for their violence (Hoffman, 2017). It can therefore be suggested that terror groups claim responsibility for lethal attacks that result in large media attention. Because deadly attacks frequently gain widespread media coverage (LaFree et al., 2015; Kearns et al., 2019; Mitnik et al., 2020), it might be assumed that terror groups want to be recognised as the perpetrators, hence, a claim of responsibility might be expected. However, terror groups do not always claim responsibility for attacks that are given extensive media coverage. It is even reported that patterns in claiming behaviour are changing, and compared to the 1970s, claimed attacks are decreasing in contemporary times (Hoffman, 1997; Rorie, 2008). Additionally, unattributed terror attacks (attacks where there are no suspected perpetrators), have decreased in the time period 1970-2015 (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017: 137-8). While existing literature may address why terror groups claim responsibility for attacks, there is a lack of knowledge about why so many attacks are unclaimed (Kearns et al., 2014: 422). From a counterterrorism perspective, it is necessary to know who perpetrated a terror attack in order to respond properly. Additionally, if authorities and the media are unable to assign responsibility after a terror attack, the public may experience increased fear and uncertainty. Thus, it is necessary to evaluate claiming behaviour in terrorism.

Given the lack of research on the phenomenon of claiming behaviour in terrorism, this study will contribute to a broader understanding of patterns in unclaimed, claimed, and attributed attacks. This study will aim to identify and explore patterns in claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe in two time periods. A research objective will be to identify patterns in unclaimed, claimed, and attributed terror attacks in the two regions. Furthermore, an objective will be to identify patterns in unclaimed, claimed, and attributed attacks between two time periods, 1998-2008, and 2009-2019. Another research objective will be to explore the relationship between claiming behaviour and numbers of victims killed or wounded, suicide attacks, target groups, and weapon types. Additionally, a research objective will be to compare and contrast these trends in claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe. Thus, this master's thesis seeks to explore the following research question:

*Have the patterns in terrorist groups' claiming behaviours in Eastern Europe and Western Europe changed between 1998-2008 and 2009-2019?*

## 1.2    Why We Should Study Claiming Behaviour in Terrorism

A central focus after a terrorist attack has been executed, is the question of *who did it?* This is an important question for the media, the public, as well as the state. When a terror group comes forward and claims responsibility, the question of *who did it?* may be answered. However, while uncertainty may be reduced, uncertainty is not eliminated. This is because terror groups might lie, and therefore claims of responsibility should be treated with caution (Kearns et al., 2014). Nonetheless, no claim of responsibility is common in terrorism, and it is also necessary to understand how terror attack can be attributed to perpetrators when there are no claims of responsibility. By identifying trends in claiming behaviour, this study will help address the current shortage of research in this area.

## 1.3    A Short Outline for This Thesis

In Chapter one, the context of the study has been introduced. The aim of the research, research objectives, as well as the research question have been identified. Moreover, the value of this research on claiming behaviour has been explored.

In Chapter two, the terrorism concept will be explored, and the regions Eastern Europe and Western Europe will be introduced. A large part of the literature review will focus on claimed, unclaimed, and attributed attacks in order to identify potential patterns in claiming behaviour. Moreover, the challenges in attribution will be reviewed. This chapter will also consider reasons for terror groups to lie about their involvement in attacks, and the importance of media freedom will also be included.

In Chapter three, the methodology used to conduct the study will be presented. The adaption of a quantitative approach will be justified, and the use of Global Terrorism Database will be discussed, including information about the data. In addition, limitations of the study will be presented.

In Chapter four, the results and discussion related to the research question will be discussed. Patterns in unclaimed, claimed, and attributed terror attacks will be identified and interpreted.

In Chapter five, a conclusion will be provided. A summary of the key findings relating to the research aim and the research question will be presented. Implications and future research recommendations will also be included.

# Chapter 2        Literature Review

This study seeks to explore the following research question:

*Have the patterns in terrorist groups' claiming behaviours in Eastern Europe and*

*Western Europe changed between 1998-2008 and 2009-2019?*

In this literature review, the definition of terrorism used in this research will be discussed. Further, this chapter will present some key information about Eastern Europe and Western Europe to provide a better understanding of terrorism in these regions. Claiming behaviour in terrorism will be addressed with a focus on claimed attacks, unclaimed attacks, and unclaimed but attributed attacks. Challenges in attributing responsibility will be explored, with a focus on press freedom and terror groups lying about their involvement in terror attacks.

## 2.1        Terrorism

The word *terror* describes 'an individual psychological state of mind'. *Terror* derives from the Latin verb *terrere,* and it means to 'bring someone to tremble through fear' (Schmid, 2011a: 41). Terrorism, however, has proven to be far more difficult to define. It is filled with secrecy and unpredictability which complicates studies on this subject. The lack of a universally accepted definition of terrorism further obscures studies on this phenomenon. There are many different interpretations of terrorism, and it has proven to be impossible to have one agreed universal definition of the term. Since this study includes incidents from the GTD, it is their definition of a terrorist attack that is used within this research. The GTD defines a terrorist attack as:

> 'the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.'
> (START, 2021: 11)

Therefore, these three elements need to be present in order to be included in the database:

- The incident must be intentional.
- The incident must entail some level of violence or immediate threat of violence.
- The perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors.

(START, 2021: 12)

Moreover, two out of three of the following criteria must also be present:

- The act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal.
- There must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims.
- The actions must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities.

<div align="right">(START, 2021: 12)</div>

It is necessary to acknowledge that this definition includes some terrorist attacks but also excludes other types of violence. Like any other database, the inclusion/exclusion criteria have an impact on what events are counted (Mitnik et al., 2020: 179). It is important to note that the definition used by the GTD includes only sub-national actors. Schmid (2011a: 68) explains that terrorism committed by governments is neglected with such a definition. Additionally, this definition does not cover genocide (LaFree, 2011: 412). Consequently, the use of force by police or military may be less questioned as terrorism. This is because there is less room to question whether official forces wearing uniforms are committing terrorism (Jaggar, 2005: 204). Importantly, the GTD also codes a 'threatened use' of violence as a terror attack. While this definition is inclusive, it is also challenging because a terror group that threatens a future terrorist attack, may also be lying and the group might not have any intention to carry out this attack (Tishler, 2016: 3). Nonetheless, these threats 'influences public behaviour and forces the authorities to increase threat levels', and even empty threats may be costly in a society (Schmid, 2011a: 80). Moreover, Hoffman (2017: 33) argues that 'Terrorism is as much about the threat of violence as the violent act itself'.

The following question is necessary to keep in mind when it comes to defining terms: 'Who is defining the term and where does s/he come from?' (Weinberg et al., 2004: 783). Since both social and political contexts shape the understanding of the term, a successful definition of terrorism is challenging (White, 2015: 22). Moreover, terrorism has various meanings in different time periods. As Schmid (2011b: 2) notes, 'Terrorism changes as the instruments of violence and communication change and as contexts evolve'. For example, the September 11, 2001 attacks can be used to exemplify that the meaning of terrorism is continuously shifting. The impact 9/11 had on people all over the world were massive, and these events have impacted immigration, law enforcement and border security (LaFree et al., 2015: 1). It can therefore be argued that terrorism is considered differently in different contexts (Rothenberger, 2015: 481). Nonetheless, it does not mean that we should not try to define terrorism. This is because a definition can determine policy and it has consequences in

the criminal justice system. Thus, defining terrorism can be the difference between life and death (White, 2015: 3).

## 2.2 Eastern Europe and Western Europe

The countries constituting Eastern Europe and Western Europe in this study are based on GTD classifications, and the table below displays the countries in these two regions.

*Table 1*
Countries constituting Eastern Europe and Western Europe (1998-2019)

| Eastern Europe | Western Europe |
|---|---|
| Albania | Andorra |
| Belarus | Austria |
| Bosnia-Herzegovina | Belgium |
| Bulgaria | Cyprus |
| Croatia | Denmark |
| Czech Republic | Finland |
| Estonia | France |
| Hungary | Germany |
| Kosovo | Gibraltar |
| Latvia | Greece |
| Lithuania | Iceland |
| Macedonia | Ireland |
| Moldova | Italy |
| Montenegro | Luxembourg |
| Poland | Malta |
| Romania | Netherlands |
| Russia | Norway |
| Serbia | Portugal |
| Serbia-Montenegro | Spain |
| Slovak Republic | Sweden |
| Slovenia | Switzerland |
| Ukraine | United Kingdom |
| Yugoslavia | Vatican City |

*Table 1* presented above shows that both regions include 23 countries. When commenting on Eastern Europe, it is important to note that some countries no longer exist. Yugoslavia was divided into several independent countries in the beginning of the 1990s, and in 2003 Yugoslavia became Serbia-Montenegro. In 2006, Serbia-Montenegro was divided into two

independent countries: Montenegro and Serbia. Thus, when comparing terrorism in different time periods, it is necessary to keep in mind these changes. No or few terror attacks reported in a time period may be because the country did not exist in that period of time, or it experienced a disintegration during the time period. When looking at Western Europe, it is necessary to point out that England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are combined, and these countries constitute United Kingdom. Since this study investigates claiming behaviour in terrorism, it is also of great importance to look at the number of terror attacks in Eastern Europe and Western Europe. The figure below displays the number of terror attacks that have been reported in Eastern Europe and Western Europe in the years 1998-2019.

*Figure 1*
Terror attacks in Eastern Europe and Western Europe (1998-2019)
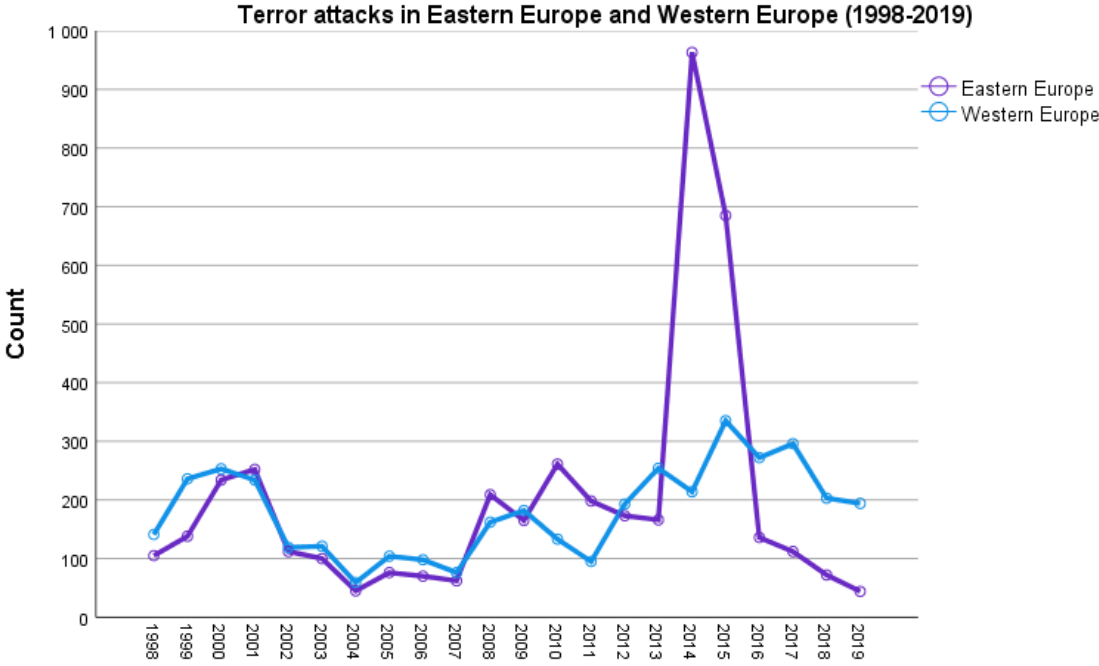
First, when comparing the results between both regions, the figure illustrates that there were quite similar patterns from 1998 to 2009. After 2009, there have been some larger variations in the patterns. When looking at Eastern Europe, the figure shows that most years less than 300 attacks were registered. In 2014 there was a sharp increase in terror attacks, when approximately 950 attacks were reported. 2015 was also a year with numerous of reported attacks with around 700 attacks. Importantly, 2019 was the year with the least reported attacks in Eastern Europe, when 44 attacks were registered. Looking at the results for Western

Europe, the figure demonstrates that there were not more than 350 terror attacks in Western Europe any year from 1998-2019. 2015 was the year with most terror attacks when more than 300 attacks were registered. 2004 was the year with the least registered attacks.

## 2.3 Claiming Responsibility

Claiming responsibility for a terrorist attack can also be referred to as credit taking, credit claiming, claiming ownership, taking responsibility, and claim-making. Claiming responsibility for a terror attack is not a new phenomenon in terrorism. It is proposed that rebels in the 1800s would claim responsibility for terror attacks as a way to differentiate themselves from criminals (Rapoport, 1997: 11). Claims of responsibility may be short or lengthy, and they can be written statements or spoken statements collected by the media. For example, a claim of responsibility may also be linked to 'public demands for a redress of grievances, release of prisoners, political concessions, ransom monies, publication of a manifesto' (Schmid, 2011a: 83). It is therefore suggested that the difference between a criminal and a terrorist is that terrorists 'want to enhance their symbolic communication and "explain" the act, while criminals want to remain anonymous because they are mostly interested in material values' (Rothenberger, 2015: 489-490). If a terror group wants to claim responsibility, it can be relatively cheap and easy to do so. Claiming responsibility can, for example, be done by sending a letter, making a phone call, or publishing a tweet (Kearns, 2020: 82). There are also instances where terror groups have dropped notes in trash cans that journalists have located (Pluchinsky, 1997: 7). In the 1970s and 1980s, the Red Army Faction (RAF), also known as the Baader-Meinhof Group, which was active in Germany, claimed responsibility for attacks by sending statements to TV channels or news agencies (Rothenberger, 2015: 490). The Earth Liberation Front (ELF), which was established in England, frequently claimed responsibility for terror attacks in the late 1990s and early 2000s by leaving notes (Kearns, 2019: 166).

However, there may be changing trends in the practises of claiming methods. A global information and communication environment is characteristic in modern times (Nacos, 2016: 65), which may have impacted the use of claiming methods. There have been major innovations within communications technology, and the internet and the World Wide Web have revolutionised communications (Hoffman, 2017: 209). Communications technology refers to 'the availability of means of communication, such as newspapers, radio, television, or the Internet, that enable the exchange of information and enhance the speed of that exchange' (Mahmood and Jetter, 2020: 128). Rapid and inexpensive exchange of information

across the globe are central aspects of these technological innovations. New information and communications technologies have been important for terror groups, and organisations have been quick to use these new technological advances (Nacos, 2007: 113). Thus, the internet has been a major feature in terrorism since the 1990s (Weimann, 2015: Chapter 1). Because of the developments in communications technology, contemporary terror groups might be operating in a different environment than earlier terror groups. Already in 2001, it was stated that almost all terror groups had created their own websites (Zanini and Edwards, 2001: 43).

While a fax or a phone call were claiming methods used before the internet, the internet has expanded the opportunities for publishing claims of responsibility (Zanini and Edwards, 2001: 42). Thus, technological innovations within communications technology have created far more opportunities for terror groups to claim responsibility for attacks. Weimann (2010: 46) writes that most terror groups are using online platforms such as 'e-mail, chatrooms, e-groups, forums, virtual message boards, and resources like You-Tube, Facebook, Twitter, and Google Earth'. Because of terror groups' presence on these online platforms, it might be expected that claims of responsibility will frequently be published on these sites. Thus, there may be changing trends in the usage of claiming methods. Since 1998, the GTD has systematically reported on terror groups' use of claim mode when they claim responsibility for attacks, which can be used to track trends in claiming behaviour (START, 2021: 47). These changing patterns are illustrated in the table below.

*Table 2*
Distribution of mode for claims of responsibility by year, all over the world
(1998-2019)

| | Letter | | Phone call | | Email | | Note left at scene | | Video | | Website, blog, social media | | Personal claim | | Other | | Unknown | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Row % | N | Row % | N | Row % | N | Row % | N | Row % | N | Row % | N | Row % | N | Row % | N | Row % | Total N |
| **1998** | 19 | 17% | 32 | 29% | 1 | 1% | 2 | 2% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% | 18 | 16% | 8 | 7% | 31 | 28% | 112 |
| **1999** | 20 | 11% | 37 | 20% | 0 | 0% | 13 | 7% | 0 | 0% | 17 | 9% | 20 | 11% | 17 | 9% | 60 | 33% | 184 |
| **2000** | 28 | 12% | 62 | 26% | 0 | 0% | 9 | 4% | 3 | 1% | 6 | 3% | 27 | 11% | 37 | 16% | 64 | 27% | 236 |
| **2001** | 36 | 12% | 57 | 20% | 5 | 2% | 9 | 3% | 10 | 3% | 8 | 3% | 42 | 14% | 35 | 12% | 89 | 31% | 291 |
| **2002** | 17 | 8% | 50 | 23% | 5 | 2% | 2 | 1% | 2 | 1% | 14 | 6% | 28 | 13% | 23 | 11% | 78 | 36% | 219 |
| **2003** | 21 | 9% | 50 | 21% | 8 | 3% | 22 | 9% | 5 | 2% | 20 | 8% | 27 | 11% | 21 | 9% | 68 | 28% | 242 |
| **2004** | 5 | 2% | 43 | 20% | 10 | 5% | 8 | 4% | 24 | 11% | 41 | 19% | 28 | 13% | 7 | 3% | 50 | 23% | 216 |
| **2005** | 17 | 5% | 68 | 19% | 3 | 1% | 15 | 4% | 13 | 4% | 78 | 22% | 26 | 7% | 15 | 4% | 117 | 33% | 352 |
| **2006** | 9 | 3% | 70 | 24% | 6 | 2% | 16 | 5% | 17 | 6% | 22 | 7% | 26 | 9% | 22 | 7% | 108 | 36% | 296 |
| **2007** | 20 | 5% | 59 | 16% | 2 | 1% | 7 | 2% | 4 | 1% | 69 | 18% | 49 | 13% | 31 | 8% | 139 | 37% | 380 |
| **2008** | 11 | 2% | 93 | 14% | 25 | 4% | 27 | 4% | 1 | 0% | 45 | 7% | 61 | 9% | 22 | 3% | 361 | 56% | 646 |
| **2009** | 2 | 0% | 30 | 6% | 0 | 0% | 26 | 5% | 3 | 1% | 14 | 3% | 47 | 9% | 12 | 2% | 396 | 75% | 530 |
| **2010** | 1 | 0% | 34 | 6% | 7 | 1% | 92 | 17% | 6 | 1% | 43 | 8% | 53 | 10% | 29 | 5% | 289 | 52% | 554 |
| **2011** | 8 | 2% | 62 | 12% | 7 | 1% | 79 | 15% | 2 | 0% | 19 | 4% | 70 | 14% | 62 | 12% | 201 | 39% | 510 |
| **2012** | 8 | 1% | 193 | 12% | 67 | 4% | 133 | 8% | 11 | 1% | 331 | 21% | 330 | 21% | 22 | 1% | 476 | 30% | 1571 |
| **2013** | 11 | 1% | 208 | 14% | 65 | 4% | 67 | 5% | 56 | 4% | 334 | 23% | 410 | 28% | 16 | 1% | 307 | 21% | 1474 |
| **2014** | 16 | 1% | 288 | 11% | 97 | 4% | 117 | 5% | 40 | 2% | 945 | 38% | 705 | 28% | 13 | 1% | 292 | 12% | 2513 |
| **2015** | 8 | 0% | 232 | 8% | 203 | 7% | 131 | 4% | 50 | 2% | 916 | 31% | 1143 | 39% | 15 | 1% | 269 | 9% | 2967 |
| **2016** | 1 | 0% | 132 | 5% | 289 | 10% | 201 | 7% | 75 | 3% | 812 | 28% | 1101 | 38% | 4 | 0% | 281 | 10% | 2896 |
| **2017** | 3 | 0% | 64 | 2% | 277 | 10% | 152 | 6% | 44 | 2% | 812 | 30% | 1041 | 39% | 8 | 0% | 296 | 11% | 2697 |
| **2018** | 7 | 0% | 25 | 1% | 216 | 9% | 144 | 6% | 57 | 2% | 744 | 31% | 901 | 37% | 0 | 0% | 334 | 14% | 2428 |
| **2019** | 3 | 0% | 40 | 2% | 170 | 10% | 131 | 8% | 43 | 2% | 486 | 28% | 620 | 36% | 1 | 0% | 250 | 14% | 1744 |
| **Total** | 271 | 1% | 1929 | 8% | 1463 | 6% | 1403 | 6% | 466 | 2% | 5777 | 25% | 6773 | 29% | 420 | 2% | 4556 | 20% | 23058 |

Source: Global Terrorism Database

In 1998-2019, a total of 23058 attacks were claimed worldwide. *Table 2* reveals that the use of a letter to claim responsibility was less common in recent years. In 1998, 17% of claimed attacks were claimed by letter, but in the years 2008-2019, the use of letter to claim responsibility were 2% or less every year. The use of a phone call to claim responsibility was quite common during the years 1998-2006. In 1998, 29% of attacks were claimed by phone calls, and claims of responsibility via phone calls were never less than 19% any year in 1998-2006. In recent years, claiming responsibility for attacks by phone were less common, and since 2015, 8% or less attacks were claimed by phone each year. Using email as a claim mode was less frequent, and from 1998-2014, the use of email as a claim mode was never larger than 5%. However, since 2016, 9-10% of attacks have been claimed by this method. This may

suggest an increased trend in contemporary times, although it is early to state. When looking at the category note left at scene, this claim mode was used 5% or less during most years. However, in 2010, 17% of claimed attacks involved a note left at scene, and in 2011, 15% involved a note left at scene. Since 2012, claimed attacks containing note left at scene were less common, and each year between 4% and 8% of attacks included this claim mode. The use of a video to claim responsibility was infrequent every year, and most years 2% or less claimed attacks included the use of video. 2004 was an exception in terms of a higher percentage rate in the use of video (11%).

The table shows that claiming responsibility for attacks on a website, blog or social media is common in recent times. Social media platforms include, for example, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram, and Instagram. A significant feature of social media platforms is that they are growing quickly (White, 2015: 80). In 2004, 2005 and 2007 claims of responsibility via a website, blog or social media were also quite common. During these years around 20% of attacks were claimed via this claim mode. Importantly, every year since 2012, between 21% and 38% of attacks were claimed via a website, blog or social media, and when examining the frequency counts in the years 2012-2019, between 311 and 945 attacks were claimed via this claim mode each year. Thus, the data suggest that the use of a website, blog, or social media to claim responsibility has become common in recent years. Personal claim as a claim mode has also increased, and since 2012 the use of this method has been between 21% and 39%. The table shows that the use of claim mode 'other' was less frequent in recent years, and since 2012 0% or 1% of claims of responsibility involved other claiming methods. There seems to be a decrease in the use of unknown claiming methods, and since 2014, 12% or less claims of responsibility were issued via unknown claiming methods. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between mode for claims of responsibility and year. There was a significant difference between these variables: $x^2$ = 8962,752, p = ,000 (Appendix 1).

### 2.3.1 Claims of Responsibility on the Internet and Social Media

As explored, the internet has expanded the opportunities for claiming methods. Now, terror groups can publish claims of responsibility via their own web sites and social media accounts should they wish to do so. Moreover, terror organisations can provide the media and the public with information about terror attacks by sharing content via their own channels and accounts on various internet platforms. It is suggested that there are three major reasons for terror groups to use social media platforms: they are popular, user-friendly, and free, and there

is a greater opportunity for terror groups to reach their target audiences (Weimann, 2014: 3).

YouTube is a social media platform regularly used by terror groups (Weimann, 2014). On this platform, terror groups can post videos where they explain their motives for an attack. In April 2010, the terror group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan created a YouTube profile, and the first video they posted was a claim of responsibility for an attempted bombing attack in Times Square, New York City in 2008 (Weimann, 2014: 12). This example also demonstrates that terror groups also claim responsibility for attacks years after the incident occurred. Thus, a claim of responsibility does not necessarily appear immediately after a terror attack. However, it is suggested that a claim of responsibility loses its credibility if it is issued more than 24 hours after an attack (Cengiz et al., 2022).

Twitter has been presented as terrorists' favourite platform (Weimann, 2014: 8). On this social media platform, terror groups have repeatedly posted violent content and propaganda. The first time a terror group used Twitter to claim responsibility for a terror attack was in September 2013. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility by continuously posting updates on the attack that took place in Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, where 67 people were killed and 175 were wounded. This was the first time a terror group posted 'live tweets' during an attack (Weimann, 2014: 8). Al-Shabaab tweeted reasons for the attack, and they also provided operational details in these tweets. The mainstream media then used these tweets to report about the terror attack (Fassrainer, 2020: 86).

Pantucci and Ong (2021: 122) report that both Facebook and Twitter in recent years have banned more terrorism materials on their platforms. However, the restrictions on these platforms have led to an increasing use of the social media platform TikTok, especially among extreme right groups (Pantucci and Ong, 2021: 123). In 2019, the most used social media app by ISIS was Telegram, and Europol, in partnership with Telegram, removed 43,000 channels and accounts that were related to ISIS (Yong and Noor, 2020: 2). Even if there has been a decrease in social media propaganda because of these counterterrorism measures, terror groups' online activities have 'dispersed across multiple, often smaller online platforms' (Europol, 2021: 57). A consequence of this, is that ISIS are now active on various platforms, and it is now more difficult to locate and follow their online activities (ibid.). Moreover, in order to avoid takedowns, ISIS have been seeking to post terror content on platforms not linked to social media and messenger applications (ibid.). Thus, it might be that even if there are counterterrorism efforts in place to prevent terror groups from using social media sites, terror groups do not hesitate to adapt to changing situations.

## 2.4 Why Terror Groups Claim Responsibility for Attacks

A main reason for a terror group to claim responsibility may be to achieve increased publicity (Wright, 2011). For some terror groups, publicity may be the most important goal to achieve (Crenshaw, 1981: 386). It is also suggested that terror groups make calculated decisions, and they evaluate whether an attack will receive media attention or not (Nacos, 2007: 15). There is an assumption that the mass media generally has an excessive coverage of terrorism, compared to other news events, and it is argued that these news portrayals influence public perceptions of threat (Schmid, 2011a: 80). Moreover, media publicity can result in fear and panic among the public (Weimann, 2008: 383). Terror groups might rely on the media to report about terror attacks, and it is even suggested that 'without the media's coverage, the act's impact is arguably wasted' (Hoffman, 2017: 183). Therefore, it might be expected that terror groups need to communicate their actions and threats in a dramatic and fast way in order for terrorism to be effective (Combs, 2013: 173). Increased media coverage can perhaps be maximised by claiming responsibility for an attack. Hence, a claim of responsibility may be understood as a way for terror groups to enhance fear and send a clear message. Weimann and Kaplan (2011: 75) describe a claim of responsibility in the following manner:

> 'The claim serves to enhance the image of the terrorist's effectiveness; it also makes the terrorist group more terrifying. No cowardice or cruelty in action is perceived by the terrorists as shameful; on the contrary, it is something to be proud of just because it is terrifying.'

Thus, increased media attention may be a key factor for terror groups to claim responsibility for attacks. While a terror attack itself may cause large media publicity, an even greater publicity may be gained by claiming responsibility for an attack. The willingness to claim responsibility for an attack might also involve a commitment to cause a public outrage (Weimann and Kaplan, 2011: 106). In addition, an increased media focus on a terror group's claim of responsibility gives a terror group an opportunity to let others know who they are and what they do. If the terror group only states a claim of responsibility without any other explanations, the group might rely on the media to report fully about the terror group's motives. A *propaganda aspect* might also be present, in which a terror group communicates their motives for an attack to attract supporters (Cordes, 2001: 151). By contacting the media, the group has an opportunity to explain and justify the violence themselves. By legitimising the violence via public platforms, the group may reach a broader audience, and from this perspective, claiming responsibility can function as a way for the organisations to gain broader support (Hoffman, 2010: 616). In addition, by claiming responsibility for attacks, a

terror group can achieve the 'oxygen of publicity' (Hoffman, 1997: 2). This implies that terror groups rely on publicity to survive. A different approach to claim-making is that claiming responsibility enables communication between different terror cells (Brown, 2020). It is suggested that claims of responsibility are important 'to build community, encourage growth, set agendas, and set standards' (Brown, 2020: 252). It is also proposed that a claim of responsibility is issued because the terror group wants to praise and glorify its members (Cordes, 2001: 154).

In a competitive context where there are several terror groups operating, claiming responsibility for attacks may be used to distinguish themselves from other active groups (Hansen, 2022; Hoffman, 2010). Additionally, by claiming responsibility for attacks, a terror group can prevent other groups from taking credit for their acts. Thus, issuing a public claim can make a terror group stand out from the crowd, and they may receive recognition for their actions. However, Wright (2011) does not find support for the argument that a competitive context increases claims of responsibility, instead the results suggest a negative relationship in claims of responsibility.

Additionally, increased publicity may be necessary to achieve a political goal. No matter how long or short a claim of responsibility may be, it is suggested that a claim of responsibility 'sends a political message to the targeted audience about its motives and identities' (Soliev and Siyech, 2016: 19). Incorporated in such a viewpoint is the idea that leaders of terror groups will claim responsibility for attacks when they expect a positive political reaction (Abrahms and Conrad, 2017: 281). A claim of responsibility may occur when there are less political risks involved. This theory is supported by Carter and Ahmed (2020) who find that environmental terror groups, that commonly committed low-fatality attacks and rarely attacked civilians, more frequently claimed responsibility for attacks. Thus, attacks involving no civilian targets, and also attacks involving no victims killed or wounded might indicate less political risks (Carter and Ahmed, 2020: 33). Nonetheless, terror attack involving numerous of civilian casualties have been claimed. However, it is argued that lower-ranked members of a terror group may want to claim responsibility for lethal attacks on civilians to gain status within a terror group, while the leadership might resist claiming these attacks because they fear retaliation (Abrahms and Conrad, 2017).

### 2.4.1 Terror Attacks that Signal High Levels of Strength

It is suggested that terror groups claim responsibility for attacks that signal the largest level of strength (Wright, 2011: 5). Attacks that demonstrate a group's strength is usually possible to

measure after a terror attack has occurred, when information about numbers of fatalities are published, and information about the targets are official. Attacks that involve high levels of strength may be suicide attacks, attacks on armed targets, and attacks with a high number of fatalities. In his study on ISIS' claiming behaviour, Brown (2021) finds support that lethal attacks increase the probability of responsibility claims. Terror attacks generally involve few numbers of dead and wounded, and lethal attacks are quite uncommon. The majority of terrorist attacks since 1970 involved no fatalities (LaFree, 2011: 425). Mass fatality attacks that involve more than 25 deaths are rare. In terms of media coverage, attacks involving injuries and deaths receive more media attention (LaFree et al., 2015; Mitnik et al., 2020) and this increased publicity may also be a reason for terror groups to claim responsibility. However, in contemporary times, several deadly terror attacks have been unclaimed (Hoffman, 1997; IEP, 2022). An opposing theory is that attacks with no or few victims, are more likely to be claimed, because there might be less political sanctions against the group (Carter and Ahmed, 2020: 33).

Previous research find that claims of responsibility are more frequent when there is suicide terrorism (Brown, 2021; Carter and Ahmed, 2020; Hoffman, 2010; Kearns, 2019; Min; 2013). While some argue that suicide attacks are a weapon of the weak (Pape, 2003: 349), others argue that these attacks symbolise a terror group's strength (Wright, 2011: 7). Suicide attacks may represent a terror group's 'ability to recruit individuals willing to die for their cause' (Min, 2013: 10). Suicide attacks are frequently associated with high violence and brutality, and it is therefore suggested that these attacks cannot be ignored by the public and the media (Hoffman, 2017; Hoffman and McCormick, 2004; Weimann, 2008). Although suicide terrorism is not a new phenomenon, it has received a lot of attention in contemporary times. What is argued to be distinctive about suicide attacks are that they are inexpensive, effective in terms of destruction and causing death, and they have a larger possibility of success compared to other methods in terrorism (Hoffman, 2017: 140). Suicide attacks seem well planned and coordinated, and targets seem to have been chosen specifically. Moreover, it is argued to be 'the most aggressive form of terrorism, pursuing coercion even at the expense of losing support among the terrorist's own community' (Pape, 2003: 345). It is therefore suggested that a suicide attack contains a large amount of violence that cannot be overlooked (Hoffman and McCormick, 2004: 249). Weimann (2008: 384) argues that terror groups have the media in mind when suicide attacks are planned. He explains: 'The events are not only dramatic, very photogenic, and emotionally powerful, they also satisfy the requirements of the Theater of Terror.' (ibid.). Thus, it might be expected that terror groups claim responsibility

for suicide attacks because they demonstrate a group's strength.

Attacks on the police, the military, and the government may also be regarded as signalling high levels of strength. Police and military targets can be viewed as hard targets because they may be armed and engaging in combat (Kearns, 2019: 169). Moreover, attacking hard targets may also be associated with a reduced chance of escape (Berman and Laitin, 2005). Thus, attacks on these target groups may signal more strength because it takes more skill to attack these targets (Kearns, 2020: 82). When a terror group targets the government, these attacks may also signal that not even the government can protect itself from terrorism. It can also be suggested that 'a direct attack on the regime aims at the insecurity and demoralization of government officials' (Crenshaw, 1981: 387). Findings also show that attacks on governments receive more media coverage (Kearns et al., 2019). Thus, attacks on hard targets may increase claims of responsibility because they demonstrate strength, and in addition they might receive more media coverage. While it is suggested that terror groups sometimes refrain from attacking hard targets because of consequences, Crenshaw (1981: 387) suggest that terrorism also involves a provocative aspect'

> 'Terrorism may also be intended to provoke a counterreaction from the government, to increase publicity for the terrorists' cause and to demonstrate to the people that their charges against the regime are well founded. The terrorists mean to force the state to show its true repressive face, thereby driving the people into the arms of the challengers'

As explored, there is a widespread belief that claiming responsibility for terror attacks is strategic communication, in which terror groups claim responsibility for attacks to achieve their goals (Nacos, 2007). This interpretation is developed from the perspective that terrorism is a communication strategy. Within such a framework, a terror organisation is considered a unit with shared collective values. Terrorism scholars generally emphasise that terror attacks are costly signals (Kydd and Walter, 2006). Furthermore, terrorist violence is used to signal strength (Kydd and Walter, 2006: 79). This can also be understood as a 'signalling game' (Hoffman and McCormick, 2004: 244). This implies that dramatic attacks are executed because terror groups want to signal that they are capable of using violence to reach their political goals. From this viewpoint it is also suggested that terror groups want to claim responsibility for attacks they have committed. While terror groups issue claims of responsibility from time to time, empirical research on claimed and unclaimed attacks find that unclaimed attacks are more common (LaFree et al., 2015; Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017). Thus, attacks with no claim of responsibility ultimately challenges this rationale.

**2.5     Why Terror Groups Do Not Claim Responsibility for Terror Attacks**

Most terror attacks do not involve a claim of responsibility, and it is not unusual that perpetrators remain anonymous. When no terror group states any involvement in a terror attack, the attack is unclaimed. Importantly, there is a possibility that some claims of responsibility are lost in chaotic war zones (Spangler and White, 2020: 2). While it might be expected that terror groups claim responsibility for dramatic actions where numerous people have been killed, it is not unusual that lethal attacks are unclaimed. For example, the second worst attack in 2021 was in Yagha, Burkina Faso (IEP, 2022: 10). At least 160 people were killed and 40 were injured by gunmen. No group has claimed responsibility for this attack (ibid.). There are even cases where terror groups publicly deny any involvement in a terror attack. In 2021, the terror group Taliban publicly denied responsibility for an attack in Kandahar province, Afghanistan (IEP, 2022: 17). The attack killed at least 100 civilians, and another 200 people are unaccounted for. The media announced that the Taliban were the suspected perpetrators, but the terror group denied any involvement (ibid.).

There may be numerous reasons for terror groups not to claim responsibility for attacks. Rapoport (1997: 13) writes that 'the wonder is *not* that responsibility is concealed but rather that so many claims are still made'. It is proposed that terror groups may not issue public claims of responsibility because they expect the media to still report about the attack. Attacks where no claim of responsibility is issued, and there are doubts about the perpetrator, might still be given enormous international media coverage (Wilkinson, 1997: 53). It is also suggested that terror groups know that they will be recognised as the attackers, and therefore the media will provide details about the attack (Nacos, 2016: 43). Thus, terror groups will still receive publicity for an attack without claiming responsibility (Hansen, 2021; Hoffman, 1997; Nacos, 2007; Nacos, 2016; Pluchinsky, 1997). Terror groups might also rely on the media to report about their motives for the attack despite no claim of responsibility. For example, it may be that the date of an attack contains a significant message that the terror group expects the media to report about (Nacos, 2007: 21). Similarly, issuing a claim of responsibility may be less likely because the intended audience might have an idea who the perpetrator is, and a 'message' to this audience has therefore been delivered (Pluchinsky, 1997: 8, Kearns et al., 2014: 434). Furthermore, if there is only one terror group operating in an area, then a claim of responsibility may not be necessary (Hansen, 2022: 5). When there is one dominant group, the terror group might expect the target audience to know who perpetrated the attack, and a claim of responsibility may be concealed. A terror group that is perceived as 'stronger' than

other groups in an area, might also consider a claim of responsibility unnecessary (Rapoport, 1997: 13). While most attacks are unclaimed, in many cases assigning responsibility to a terror group is still possible. In other words, 'an unclaimed attack can serve the same communicative function of a verbal and public claim of responsibility, despite no verbal or public claim being made' (Hansen, 2021: 1372). For example, the type of weapon used in a terrorist attack can point to a terror group (method signature), and the specific target may indicate a particular group's involvement (target signature) (Hansen, 2021: 1384). RAF frequently targeted politicians by kidnapping them, and incidents with these characteristics were usually attributed to the terror group (ibid.). In Italy, the Red Brigades, a Marxist-Leninist terror group, oftentimes used kneecapping as a tactic in terrorism, and this group caused fear and intimidation throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Matusitz, 2014: 48). Thus, when a terror group uses a target or method signature, the attribution that may follow can be understood as a non-verbal claim of responsibility (Hansen, 2022: 3). Additionally, the weapon type used in an attack can provide information that can be used to assign responsibility. Matusitz (2014: 208) writes that:

> 'Weapons can arouse profound sentiments by suggesting a terrorist group's participation in, or support of, a radical movement. Whether the weapon is weak or strong matters little; the essence of their use is to destroy the enemy'

The two most prominent weapons used in terrorism are explosives and firearms (Jackson and Frelinger, 2008; Koehler-Derrick and Milton, 2019). For example, the AK-47 (also known as the Kalashnikov or Kalash) is one of the most common weapons in terrorism, and it has also become a symbolic weapon (Matusitz, 2014: 210). The use of a firearm as a weapon may be considered a riskier weapon in terms of remaining anonymous. This is because the use of a firearm will require the attacker to be in proximity of the target (Koehler-Derrick and Milton, 2019: 914). On the other hand, the use of this weapon is considered more precise (ibid.). The use of an explosive as a weapon might involve less risk of being caught because a bomb can be detonated without the perpetrator being present at the scene, thus, it is a weapon that may provide anonymity and escape (Bonomo et al., 2007: 69). It is also suggested that contemporary bombs can be more easily concealed (Hoffman, 2014: 66). While the use of a bomb as a weapon is oftentimes argued to be more clandestine than other weapon types, it is pointed out that claims of responsibility often have occurred after a bombing (LaFree and Dugan, 2007: 203). Moreover, suicide terrorism usually involves an explosive device, and suicide terrorism is also associated with increased claims of responsibility (Hoffman, 2010).

  While some researchers argue that a claim of responsibility might enhance fear

(Weimann and Kaplan, 2011), it is also suggested that no claim of responsibility can be associated with increased fear (Hoffman, 1997; Kearns et al., 2014; Min, 2013; Nacos, 2000; Rorie, 2008). As Min (2013: 9-10) explains 'fear is enhanced by the presence of the unknown'. Hence, terrorist attacks where no one claims responsibility may be considered more threatening than attacks where there is a suspected perpetrator. In the majority of attacks worldwide, no perpetrator can be identified, but it is still proposed that an unclaimed attack 'adds to the surprise effect and uncertainty that the attackers aim to achieve' (Duyvesteyn, 2004: 449). Anonymity may therefore be essential for terror groups to spread fear. For example, attacks involving chemical, biological, or radiological weapons (CBR) are frequently unattributed (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017: 141-2), and the fact that unknown terror groups have access to CBR weapons might also contribute to an enlarged fear and uncertainty. Importantly, however, these weapon types have proven to be inefficient in terms of causing deaths (Hoffman, 2014). However, the fear that terror groups can strike whenever and wherever might be amplified if the perpetrator remains unknown (Hoffman, 1997: 5). Terrorism may cause extreme fear or terror in a population, and this psychological effect might be a reason for terror groups to remain silent after an attack. Nacos (2007: 17) suggests that even if there is no claim of responsibility, a message is still sent to the public: 'even the most powerful governments cannot protect them from this sort of violence'. Thus, by remaining anonymous, terror groups may also appear stronger in the public's eye. Extensive media coverage of terror attacks where a claim of responsibility is absent can therefore spread this fear even more. Because the media and politicians tend to sensationalise terrorism, it can result in a society that is filled with hysteria and panic (Sageman, 2017: 373). This can create panic and insecurity in society as the public may view the government 'as weak and powerless, looking incompetent or impotent in the face of the terrorist threat' (Hoffman, 1997: 5). Moreover, if a government is incapable of identifying the perpetrators, the citizens may lose their trust in the government and there might be a belief that the government is not capable of protecting its citizens from future terror attacks. Thus, the direct effects caused by terrorism may generally be limited, but the fear and overreaction to terror attacks are much costlier (Mueller, 2005: 487). Thus, by not claiming responsibility for an attack, intimidation and fear may be enhanced.

A different perspective is that terror groups are dependent on anonymity to exist (Weimann, 2015: Chapter 1). It is emphasised that by claiming responsibility, a terror group is taking great risks. It is likely that there are terror groups operating which the media does not yet know about. By remaining anonymous, the group may operate more freely, without their

activities being scrutinised (Hoffman, 1997). Public and governmental scrutiny after a responsibility claim can be destructive for a terror group. For example, a terror group may risk increased counterterrorism efforts (Hoffman, 1997; Rorie, 2008). Thus, a claim of responsibility can provide governments with information that can identify members in a terror group, and terrorists might risk being arrested (Hoffman, 1997: 4). While the internet and social media has created endless opportunities for terror groups to claim responsibility, a terror group might risk increased monitoring by counterterrorism state agencies by publishing claims online. As Rapoport (1997: 14) writes, 'Publicity is a drug which can cure or kill'. Because of this, a terror group may refrain from claiming responsibility for an attack.

Another explanation for terror groups' reluctancy to claim responsibility can be that on certain occasions, a terror group might not want to be associated with a terrorist attack. For example, if a terror attack has not gone as planned, the group might not wish to claim responsibility for the attack (Pluchinsky, 1997: 7). Moreover, it is suggested that if an attack killed more people than intended, the group may not issue a claim of responsibility (ibid). Attacks on civilians may also be a reason not to take credit for an attack. If civilians were killed in an attack, the terror group may fear negative consequences if they claim responsibility (Kearns et al., 2014: 428). The leadership might expect a negative reaction when civilians are attacked, and this may also be a reason for the leadership to deny any involvement (Abrahms and Conrad, 2017: 301). For example, governments may sanction responsible terror groups for killing civilians. But if the terror groups remain anonymous, they might avoid military retaliations and economic sanctions (Hoffman, 1997: 5). Findings suggest that attacks on civilians result in less responsibility claims (Abrahms and Conrad, 2017; Carter and Ahmed, 2020; Min, 2013). Leaders in the terror organisation Al Qaida have publicly apologised when attacks have caused civilian deaths (Reuters, 2014).

It is also suggested that religious groups are less motivated than other ideological group types to claim responsibility for attacks because the intended audience is a holy doctrine, and thus, claiming responsibility may not be needed (Nacos, 2007: 18, Rapoport, 1984: 660). Some researchers find empirical support for this claim (Carter and Ahmed, 2020), while this explanation lack support in other studies. Hoffman (2010), for example, finds that Islamist groups in Israel frequently claim responsibility for attacks. On a more local level, it might be that the perpetrator was planning on claiming responsibility for an attack after the attack, but the perpetrator might not have had the chance to do so because of an arrest (Nacos, 2000: 173).

## 2.6 The Importance of Time

It is important to recognise the complexity in claiming behaviour, and how patterns emerge over time. It may be beneficial for a terror group to claim responsibility for an attack in a certain context, but this can change over time. For instance, terror attacks resulting in large numbers of fatalities were generally claimed during the 1960s and 1970s (Hoffman, 1997: 2). During these years, terror groups would also give lengthy explanations to journalists stating why they had carried out attacks, and terror groups frequently used television to tell their stories (White, 2015: 79). However, journalists began to realise that they were being manipulated, since terror groups were able to control much of the content. As a result, terrorists were given fewer opportunities to use television as a platform to explain their motives (ibid.). Therefore, it has been proposed that a new terrorism is emerging, in which more lethal attacks have to be perpetrated in order to receive media attention (Hoffman, 1988: 1). Nevertheless, there were instances after these years when leaders of terror groups were given the opportunity to provide lengthy explanations and justifications of their actions. In 2005, an interview with Shamil Basayev, a former alleged leader of the terror group Chechen Rebels, was broadcasted on ABC News. Chechen Rebels had claimed responsibility for one of the most lethal attacks in Russia, which was the attack on Beslan School in 2004. The attack on Beslan school is one of the worst terror incidents in the world in the last 20 years. 1200 people were taken hostage, in which 344 people were killed, many of them children, and 727 people were wounded (IEP, 2012: 20). This attack is also classified as the deadliest suicide attack in the world involving at least one female attacker (IEP, 2019: 66). The perpetrators, Chechen Rebels, are fighting for Chechnya's independence from Russia. On the television interview, the former leader justified and legitimised this attack and stated that similar attacks would take place in the future (Myers, 2005).

Notably, in the 1960s and 1970s some terror groups made secret deals with governments (Hoffman, 1997: 3). In some cases, governments would make deals with terrorists who agreed not to strike within certain territories. In return, these terrorists would not be prosecuted, and there were instances where terrorists who had been captured were able to 'escape' (ibid.). However, many governments would later regret making these secret deals with terrorists since they repeatedly did not follow agreements. Consequently, such deals have become less common in contemporary times (ibid.). Arciszewski et al. (2009) point out that emerging new forms of terrorism may be subject to more claims of responsibility than others. For example, claims of responsibility and media attention seemed to be important for jihadist

terror groups emerging in the 1990s (Arciszewski et al., 2009: 7). Because of the fluidity and unpredictability in terrorism, it is necessary to study claiming behaviour over time. Perhaps counterterrorism efforts and more liberal states impact claiming behaviour. Rorie (2008) finds great variations in claimed and unclaimed attacks over time in the United States and suggest that counterterrorism measures may have decreased claimed attacks. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge that terror groups

> '…evolve and transform in response to internal and external pressures. Like any social organization, they adapt to their changing environment in a variety of ways, often splintering into different entities or merging with other groups. Members move in and out, from clandestine to overt activity and back, sometimes engaging in a mix of legal and illegal action' (Crelinsten, 2001: 61).

## 2.7    Attribution Challenges

While most attacks are not publicly claimed by a terror organisation, the media might collect information about the attack which makes it possible to assign responsibility. An attributed attack may refer to both claimed and unclaimed attacks where a perpetrator has been assigned responsibility by the media, a government, or the public. For the purposes of this research, however, attribution refers to an unclaimed terror attack where media sources obtain information about the attack which makes it possible for the GTD research team to assign responsibility to a perpetrator. Even if there is no official statement by a terror group claiming responsibility for an attack, there are sometimes contextual indicators which make it possible to suspect a perpetrator. Since 1968, around 40% of terror attacks in the world have been attributed to a perpetrator (Stohl, 2012: 40).

After a terror attack, a government, the media, or the public may have ideas about who was responsible for an attack, even if no terror group has come forward to claim responsibility. Because terrorism is secretive, and perpetrators may remain anonymous, information about the violence can be confusing and contradictory. In some instances, there may be no available information. Thus, it is important to recognise that there are great challenges when attribution for a terror attack is assigned to a terror group. For the government, the consequences of a wrongful attribution may be devastating. On the other hand, identifying the perpetrators is necessary for punishments, and the public may expect the government to provide information which can help to identify perpetrators. It is also possible that a government itself has been involved in terrorism. If this information is revealed, then there is a possibility that an attribution will lead to political issues (Crenshaw and LaFree,

2017: 132). In states where there are extensive media controls, this information about a state's involvement may never become public.

Problems of attribution may also arise when trying to distinguish whether an individual is affiliated with a terror group. If it appears that the perpetrator has a membership with a terror group, then there are additional challenges in identifying whether the attack was perpetrated on behalf of that group or if it was an unaffiliated attack. Crenshaw and LaFree (2017: 135) also point out that cases can be even more complex if several perpetrators were involved in a terror attack, and only one of them can be linked to a terror organisation. It may be easier to identify perpetrators in regions where few terrorist organisations are active. On the other hand, both the media and policy makers may be 'more likely to assume that unclaimed attacks are in reality the work of the dominant group – whether or not this can be demonstrated to be true' (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017: 139). When assigning responsibility to a group, there is a possibility for wrongful attribution. This occurred after the Madrid train bombing in 2004. 192 people were killed and approximately were 1800 injured (IEP, 2012: 15). Because there had been only one active terror group in Spain, ETA (the Basque separatist movement), it was assumed that ETA had carried out the attack (Rose et al., 2007). Major media sources and political actors immediately framed ETA as responsible for the attack. In a press conference on the day of the attack, Spain's Ministry of the Interior confirmed that ETA had executed the terror attack by stating "beyond any shadow of a doubt, the responsibility for this massacre lies with ETA" (Canel, 2012: 218). While the media started to question ETA's involvement the next day because of leaks from the security forces, the government persisted that ETA was responsible (Canel and Sanders, 2010: 455). Importantly, ETA also denied any involvement in the terror attack, but the government continued to frame ETA as the perpetrators (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017: 154). It was later revealed that the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades with links to Al Qaida were named as the perpetrators after a spokesman for Al Qaida claimed credit for the terror bombings. However, to this day, it is still contested whether the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades were responsible for the bombings. Except for communiqués sent to the press, there is no confirmation that this group actually exists (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017: 112). There is a possibility that the attackers sympathised with Al Qaida, but no clear linkage to Al Qaida, or the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades, or any other affiliated Al Qaida organisations has been established (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017: 154-5). Nonetheless, after it was identified that ETA was not involved in the attack, the wrongful attribution by the Spanish government seemingly had an impact on the upcoming election. Voters expressed feelings of being manipulated by the government into thinking that the

perpetrators were the ETA (ibid.). In this case it might be that the wrongful attribution by the authorities was consequential in terms of voters' trust in the government. This example illustrates that wrongful attributions can have large political consequences. Thus, it is important to recognise that a wrong attribution can be consequential and therefore it should be treated with caution. While it is important from a counterterrorism perspective to know who the attacker is, 'There are real risks to getting out front with the media and the public with a possibly wrong attribution when the situation is still fluid' (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017: 151).

## 2.8     Freedom of the Press in Eastern Europe and Western Europe

An important perspective to consider when exploring claiming behaviour in terrorism, is the direct impact press freedom has on media reporting. For example, since 1970, only one terror attack has been reported in North Korea, and this attack occurred in 1994 (Dugan et al., 2012: 479). However, it is unlikely that only one terror attack has taken place in the country in the last 50 years, and instead it might be a strict media control that prohibits journalists from accessing and publishing information. Thus, access to information about terror attacks may be limited in more closed societies (O'Kane, 2013: 6). On the other hand, in places where there is more media freedom, terrorism news might spread more rapidly (Asal et al., 2009: 265). Moreover, publicity for terror attacks may be amplified when there is more media freedom (O'Kane, 2013: 6), and terror groups exploit this media freedom and rely on the mass media to report about terror attacks in order to gain publicity (Schmid, 2011a: 82). It is therefore suggested that 'Free media and unconstrained political expression may also fuel credit-taking behavior because terrorists have greater access to publicity' (Wright, 2011: 10).

Since claiming behaviour may be impacted by freedom of the press, it is of interest to explore the situation in Eastern Europe and Western Europe in both contemporary times and former times. Because many Eastern European countries were part of the former Soviet Union, it may be that media traditions have also been transferred to the new independent countries. In 1991, the Soviet Union was disintegrated, and several Eastern European countries emerged, including Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, and Russia. These countries' traditions in media practice in the former Soviet Union may also have affected media freedom in contemporary times. In the Soviet Union, the media was controlled by the communist party, and also other countries in Eastern Europe have historically had strong media control (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015: 15). For example, communist dictators in Bulgaria and Romania executed strict media controls in the mid and late 1900s. Poland and Hungary have also been affected by media controls, but there seems to have been

oppositional media present throughout the years (ibid.). What has been characteristic for mass media in Eastern Europe is high levels of control by the state, and the use of mass media in propaganda (Zhuang, 2021: 3). Nonetheless, there are great variations between countries and their media reform phases (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015). Thus, Pluchinsky's (1997: 10) comment is quite fitting in this context: 'The Soviet Union is gone. However, the mysteries continue'.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) provides information about the press freedom situation worldwide. The organisation analyses the degree in which journalists and media outlets in countries all over the world can operate freely. Multiple countries in Western Europe have high scores of press freedom. In 2021, Norway was the country ranked with the highest level of press freedom, and Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Portugal, and Switzerland were in the top ten (RSF, n.d.-a). However, not all Western European countries contain high levels of media freedom. One example is Northern Cyprus (in contrast to the GTD, Cyprus and Northern Cyprus are separated in RSF). Cyprus is ranked as 26 and Northern Cyprus is ranked as 76 out of 180 countries (ibid.). Northern Cyprus is an area where two communities share a conflicted history: the Turks, which is the ethnic minority, and the Greeks which is the dominant majority (Dunér, 1999: 486). In 1983, Turkish Cypriots declared the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) as an independent state (ibid.). Thus, reporting about Turkey and its policies towards Cyprus is an especially problematic aspect in this area (RSF, n.d.-b).

Freedom of the press is threatened in several countries in Eastern Europe, and this has become evident in recent years (Zhuang, 2021: 1). In Eastern Europe, Estonia is ranked as number 15 in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index, and it is the Eastern European country with the highest level of media freedom (RSF, n.d.-c). RSF describes that 2020 was a tough year for journalists in Estonia because members of the government have been threatening journalists verbally and they have also refused to provide the media with information (ibid.). Belarus is the country with the lowest score out of the Eastern European countries, and it is ranked as number 158 out of 180 countries (RSF, n.d.-d). RFS refers to Belarus as the most dangerous European country for media personnel (ibid.). This is because threats and violence are frequently aimed at journalists, and numerous news websites and print media are censored. Overall, access to information is restricted in Belarus. Importantly, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are ranked in the top 30 (RFS, n.d.-a), which shows that there are also great differences between Eastern European countries. Nonetheless, this demonstrates that there are great differences in media freedom between Eastern and Western Europe in contemporary

times. Moreover, these disparities in media freedom between regions make it important to differentiate between Eastern Europe and Western Europe in this thesis.

## 2.9    Terror Groups Lying About Involvement

It is suggested that it is difficult to credibly claim responsibility for an attack perpetrated by another group (Hoffman, 2010: 616). This is because a terror group that claims responsibility for an attack that was executed by them, will most likely be able to present correct information about the execution and details of the attack. Thus, when a terrorist group claims responsibility for an attack, we assume that the group was the perpetrator. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that a terror group might not be telling the truth when claiming responsibility, and it is also necessary to evaluate whether a group may falsely claim responsibility for an attack. As Kearns (2020: 83) notes, it is important to 'consider the situational and attack-level factors that might make it appealing for a group to falsely claim credit for violence'. Kearns (2020: 84) presents the following questions to be asked in relation to claims of responsibility: 'Does the claim make sense, and is it in line with the group's goals? If not, does the group have something to gain by falsely suggesting that it's responsible and garnering media attention from the claim? There are several ways a terror group may lie about their involvement in attacks. Kearns et al. (2014: 429-430) identify four lies terror groups may be using:

1) A group may claim responsibility for an attack that they did not perpetrate.
2) A group may commit *false flag terrorism* by carrying out an attack and then blaming it on a rival organisation.
3) A group may lie by blaming an attack that it did not commit on a rival group (*hot-potato problem*).
4) A group may engage in a lie of omission where they perpetrate an attack but neither claim responsibility for it nor blame another group.

Terror groups lying about their involvement in terror attacks is complex, and these lies can both be direct and indirect. A direct lie can be when the leadership knowingly claims responsibility for attacks not caused by their organisation. This can also be referred to as a *hoax* claim of responsibility (Tishler, 2016: 3). An indirect false claim of responsibility could be if a member of a terror organisation gives the leadership false information about a terror attack by stating that a terror attack was perpetrated by them, when it was in fact perpetrated by another group. Based on the wrongful information, the leadership may claim responsibility for an attack that was not perpetrated by them (Kearns et al., 2014: 429). Thus, it is necessary to acknowledge that there may be different interests within an organisation.

Kearns (2019: 166) notes that between 1998 and 2016, 16 percent of claimed attacks were claimed falsely. Of course, it is not possible to know the correct number of times terror groups have lied about their involvement. Additionally, details about terror events may not become public until years later, and it is also possible that lies might never be discovered (Kearns et al., 2014: 424). Nonetheless, these numbers do tell us that this occurs from time to time. Moreover, these claims 'are often taken seriously by the media, the public and even governments' (Kearns, 2019: 166). This also illustrates that attributing responsibility is challenging. For example, the worst attack in Iraq in 2021 resulted in 35 civilians killed and more than 60 wounded (IEP, 2022: 21). ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, and the group stated that it was a suicide bomber. However, security forces have contradicted ISIS' responsibility claim by stating that it was a static explosive that was used in the attack. This may suggest that ISIS was taking responsibility for an attack they did not commit. It is also necessary to recognise the role of the security forces, and whether they would have any reason to lie about the weapon used in the attack. Nonetheless, this is an example that demonstrates the difficulties in assigning responsibility for an attack when a claim of responsibility has been issued.

In the years 2014 - 2016, ISIS and individuals inspired by ISIS claimed responsibility for 143 attacks in 29 countries (Lister et al., 2018), and in recent years, false claims of responsibility issued by ISIS have been studied (Whiteside, 2020; Wood, 2017). It is suggested that by claiming responsibility for attacks they did not commit, the terror group will risk losing its credibility (Wood, 2017). Thus, ISIS wants their claims of responsibility to be credible, and false claims of responsibility will be issued rarely and carefully (Whiteside, 2020: 131). One way to obscure lies might be to issue claims of responsibility for attacks perpetrated by individuals who might have been inspired by ISIS. It may be difficult to both prove and dismiss allegations of membership if no clear linkage between the individual and the terror organisation can be established.

It might be expected that a terror group achieves increased publicity for a hoax claim of responsibility, and therefore some terror groups might lie about their involvement. For example, Al Qaida-linked group called Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades has claimed responsibility for terror attacks carried out by others, as well as non-terrorist incidents (Soriano, 2012: 270). In 2005 they falsely claimed responsibility for the 7 July bomb attacks in London. Additionally, the group claimed responsibility for power blackouts in the north-eastern areas of the United States in 2003. It was discovered that the blackout was caused by technical problems, and it was not terrorism related. Soriano (2012: 270) writes that the

group's false claims of responsibility resulted in a vast media coverage, and sometimes the effect of false claims has even had a greater impact than the actual terror attacks and other incidents.

There are also instances where claims of responsibility have been withdrawn. It is suggested that in cases where terror groups claim responsibility for attacks that have unintended consequences, terror groups might withdraw their claims of responsibility (Cordes, 2001: 161). For example, in Paris 1981, the terror group Action Directe (AD), claimed responsibility for placing a bomb beneath a car that belonged to an American diplomatic councillor (ibid.). However, the claim was issued before the bomb exploded, and a bomb squad tried to safely remove the bomb. Unfortunately, the bomb went off and two members of the bomb squad were killed. After the bomb exploded, the AD called authorities to deny any involvement in the incident (ibid.). It might be expected that the group feared a negative reaction from the public, and therefore the terror group denied responsibility (Cordes, 2001: 162).

From time to time, there may be multiple claims of responsibility, which implies that at least one terror group is lying. While it may be possible that two terror organisations did cooperate with each other, it is not common. For example, in the London bombings in April, 1999, four right-wing extremist groups separately claimed responsibility for the attack. It was later discovered that the individual who perpetrated the attacks acted alone, and was not affiliated with any group (START, n.d.-a). It is suggested that claims of responsibility are more likely in competitive contexts where multiple organisations are competing for support, and false claims may also be more likely in these environments (Kearns et al., 2014: 431).

## 2.10 Summary

This literature review explored the GTD's broad definition of terrorism, and also provided some key information about terrorism in Easter Europe and Western Europe. Claims of responsibility in terrorism was also explored, and there was an emphasis on how developments in communications technology have impacted terror groups' usage of the internet and social media to claim responsibility. The literature review also explored unclaimed attacks in terrorism, and how previous studies explain the lack of claimed attacks in terrorism. Moreover, challenges in assigning responsibility for terror attacks was presented, and it was explored how levels of press freedom, and terrorist groups lying about involvement complicates studies on claiming behaviour in terrorism.

# Chapter 3        Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore patterns in claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe in different time periods. There is a gap in the literature on what impacts claiming behaviour, and while previous literature generally explores why terror groups claim responsibility for terror attacks, there is little knowledge about what prevent groups from claiming responsibility. Thus, a lack of prior literature on claiming behaviour in terrorism presents a problem for counterterrorism measures. In this chapter, the research design used to answer the research question will be presented. Data from the Global Terrorism Database was used to conduct this study, and advantages and limitations of using this dataset will also be discussed. Justifications for choosing the time periods 1998-2008 and 2009-2019 will be included. Moreover, the selection of Eastern Europe and Western Europe as regions to study will be explained. Because claiming behaviour is an important aspect of this research, it is necessary to provide a description of what constitutes a claim of responsibility versus no claim of responsibility. Characteristics of independent variables will also be presented, and lastly, methodological limitations will be explored.

## 3.1    Research Design

To answer the overarching research question on claiming behaviour trends in Eastern Europe and Western Europe, the research method used is a quantitative approach. This study will use secondary quantitative data from the Global Terrorism Database. An inductive logic will be used to explore the patterns in claiming behaviour. This logic of inquiry is useful when identifying patterns of association (Blaikie and Priest, 2019: 92). Thus, a quantitative approach is beneficial because it can be used to observe trends over time. In this research it was of interest to compare two time periods: 1998-2008 and 2009-2019. Because terrorism is a contested concept, it is important to acknowledge that there are problematic aspects related to researching this subject. Quantitative terrorism methods may be challenging because there is no clear distinction between civil wars and terrorism (Lia, 2005: 11). As explored, there are many definitions of terrorism, and the GTD has incorporated a broad definition for inclusiveness. The GTD is managed by the University of Maryland's National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). All the data in the GTD is from unclassified sources. The latest update of the GTD includes over 200,000 coded terrorist attacks from 1970 to 2019 (START, 2021: 3). This publicly available dataset is regarded as the most comprehensive (Betus et al., 2021: 1135; Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017: 27), and the

database includes over 120 variables and around 75 of these variables can be used for quantitative and statistical methods (Bowie and Schmid, 2011: 297). For example, the database includes information about the date of the attack as well as the location. In addition, information about the weapons used in the attack, and information about the target group can be found.

Details from terror attacks are generally taken from media sources, which are systematically recorded in the dataset (LaFree and Dugan, 2007: 27). All news sources the GTD team gathers information from are available online (LaFree et al., 2015: 31). A great advantage of using unclassified media sources is that the media can get information about terror attacks that a state may want to keep a secret. Even if journalists may face repercussions within a government-controlled media apparatus, media outlets outside these territories may still be able to access and publish information. Thus, it is a great advantage that the media may still be able to collect information about incidents that official sources may not intend to publicise. Compared to other publicly available datasets, the GTD was also the most appropriate for this study. For example, the database Terrorism in Western Europe: Event Data (TWEED) includes internal terrorism incidents from Western European countries in the time period 1950-2004 (Engene, 2007: 109), and the use of this dataset would not be sufficient when exploring the research question in this study. The Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (Te-Sat) by Europol provides data from European Union countries, and because several Eastern European countries are not part of the EU, this data would be inadequate. Moreover, different EU members states have different definitions of terrorism, which affect the Europol database (Bowie and Schmid, 2011: 326). Hence, for the purposes of this study, the GTD was best equipped to answer the research question.

The data analysed in this study were accessed from the GTD on 14 September 2021, and IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27 was used to conduct all statistical analyses. Crosstabulations and non-parametric tests of significance (Pearson's chi-square), with a predetermined confidence probability level of ,05 were used to determine whether there were significant differences between variables. Because these categorial variables were not normally distributed, crosstabulations were useful in this study when looking at relationships between claiming behaviour and the variables victims killed or wounded, suicide attacks, target group and weapon type. I argue that the use of crosstabulation also provide a useful insight into claiming behaviour, especially in terms of comparing two time periods. Because contingency tables with many cells become difficult to

analyse, multivariate analyses were separated in terms of region and time period, which was done by using 'Custom Tables' in SPSS.

### 3.1.1 *Time Periods 1998-2008 and 2009-2019*

The research included incidents from 1998 to 2019. The reason why this study included these years, was because the GTD has only systematically included the claim of responsibility variable after 1997, and at the time of the analysis, incidents after 2019 had not yet been added to the database. The variable 'Year' was treated as a categorical and a continuous variable to examine the impact time has on claiming behaviour. Operationalising time into two categorical variables would make it possible to explore changes over time. Because the years 1998-2019 contained a total of 22 years, a useful operationalisation would be to separate these years into two categories, each covering eleven years: 1998-2008 and 2009-2019. As explored, the internet has expanded the opportunities for claiming responsibility for attacks (see *Table 2),* and it was also predicted that there would be differences in the use of claiming methods between the two time periods. The use of internet-based claiming methods such as website, blog, social media, video and email was expected to be more common in the second time period. Claiming responsibility via letter, phone call or note left at scene were also expected to be more frequent in the first time period, 1998-2008. The *Tables 3 and 4* below confirmed that the usage of claiming methods have changed between time periods in both regions.

*Table 3*
Mode for claim of responsibility in Eastern Europe by time period

| Eastern Europe | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1998-2008** | | | **2009-2019** | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Letter, phone call, note left at scene | 19 | 51% | 20% | 18 | 49% | 8% |
| Website, blog, social media, video, email | 28 | 26% | 29% | 79 | 74% | 36% |
| Personal claim | 13 | 12% | 14% | 93 | 88% | 42% |
| Unknown | 36 | 54% | 38% | 31 | 46% | 14% |
| Total | 96 | 30% | 100% | 221 | 70% | 100% |

***Table 4***
Mode for claim of responsibility in Western Europe by time period

| Western Europe | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1998-2008** | | | **2009-2019** | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Letter, phone call, note left at scene | 302 | 76% | 68% | 97 | 24% | 15% |
| Website, blog, social media, video, email | 33 | 13% | 7% | 229 | 87% | 36% |
| Personal claim | 26 | 18% | 6% | 120 | 82% | 19% |
| Unknown | 81 | 30% | 18% | 189 | 70% | 30% |
| Total | 442 | 41% | 100% | 635 | 59% | 100% |

*Table 3* demonstrates that in Eastern Europe the use of website, blog, social media, video, email to claim responsibility is more frequent in 2009-2019. The Row % shows that 26% of attacks involving these claim modes were in the time period 1998-2008, and 74% were in the time period 2009-2019. Looking at the Column % in 1998-2008 reveals that 29% of attacks involved the use of website, blog, social media, video, or email to claim responsibility. The Column % for 2009-2019 shows that 36% of attacks involved the use of these claiming methods. The chi-square test of independence (Appendix 2) confirmed that there were differences between claiming methods and time period in Eastern Europe: $x^2 = 42,386$, p = ,000.

Table 4 displays that the claiming methods website, blog, social media, video, email were more common in the second time period in Western Europe. Looking at the Row %, the use of these claiming methods has a proportion of 13% in 1998-2008, and in 2009-2019, this proportion is 87%. The Column % show that in 1998-2008, attacks involving these claiming methods were 7%, and in 2009-2019, 36% of claimed attacks involved these claiming methods. The chi-square test of independence (Appendix 2) showed that there were differences between claiming methods and time period in Western Europe: $x^2 = 331,740$, p = ,00. Since there were differences in claiming methods between time periods, it was also expected that there would be differences in unclaimed, claimed, and attributed attacks in 1998-2008 and 2009-2019, which would provide useful insight into claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe.

### 3.1.2    Region Selection

The research was interested in claiming behaviour in Western Europe and Eastern Europe. However, as *Figure 2* below demonstrates, these two regions have small numbers of terrorism compared to other regions.

<div align="center">

*Figure 2*

Terror attacks by region, percentages (1998-2019)
</div>
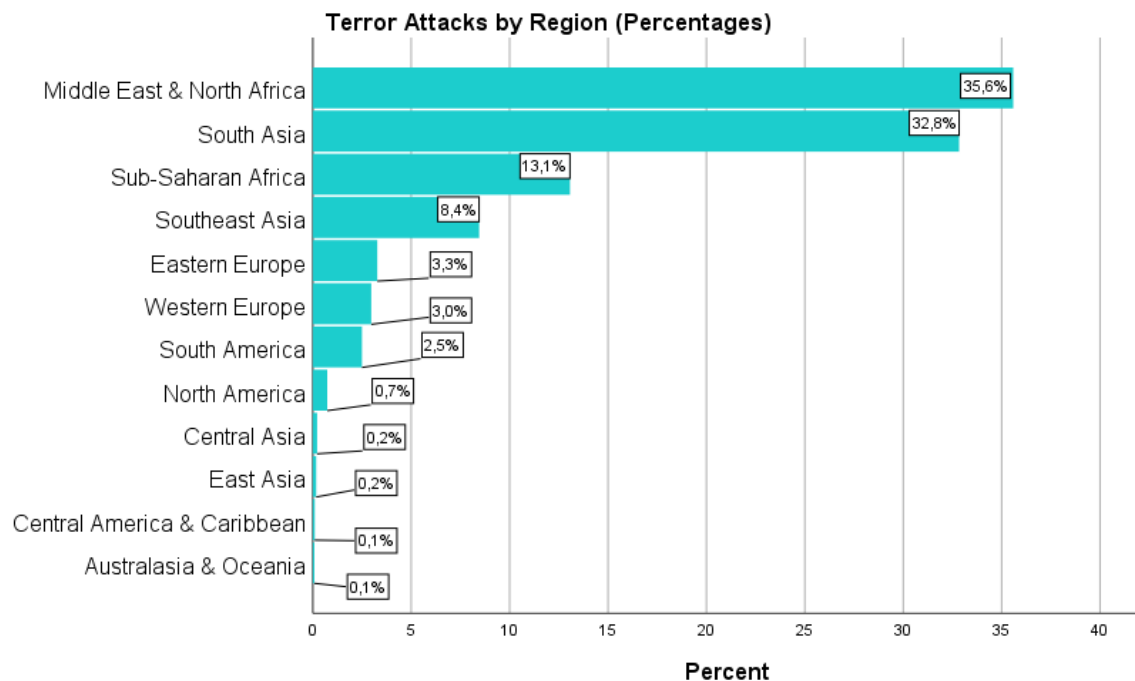
*Figure 2* demonstrates that in 1998-2019, the regions most affected by terrorism were the Middle East and North Africa (36%) and South Asia (33%). The regions with the smallest percentage of total terror attacks were Australia and Oceania (0,1%), Central America and Caribbean (0,1%), East Asia (0,2%) and Central Asia (0,2%). Approximately 3,3% of terror attacks were reported in Eastern Europe, and 3% were registered in Western Europe. This shows that Eastern Europe and Western Europe were not the regions most affected by terrorism. A main reason, then, for choosing these two regions in this study is because these regions are in the same continent but their traditions in terms of media freedom are quite different. Hence, these regions can provide a unique insight into the patterns in claiming behaviour. As explored, several countries in Western Europe are oftentimes associated with high levels of media freedom and freedom of expression, while Eastern European countries

traditionally have been associated with media control. Thus, it might be expected that there will be differences in claiming behaviour when comparing these two regions. The sample size for Eastern Europe is $N = 4378$, and the sample size for Western Europe is $N = 3974$. This makes the total sample size $N = 8353$. *Tables 5 and 6* below show the distribution of terror attacks in Eastern Europe and Western Europe by country and time period.

*Table 5*
Distribution of attacks in Eastern Europe, by country and time period

| | Eastern Europe | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **1998-2008** | **2009-2019** | **Total** |
| Russia | 902 | 1080 | 1982 |
| Ukraine | 13 | 1747 | 1760 |
| Kosovo | 161 | 37 | 198 |
| Macedonia | 104 | 10 | 114 |
| Yugoslavia | 106 | ÷ | 106 |
| Bosnia-Herzegovina | 34 | 15 | 49 |
| Albania | 14 | 12 | 26 |
| Bulgaria | 9 | 12 | 21 |
| Czech Republic | 4 | 17 | 21 |
| Serbia | 4 | 10 | 14 |
| Croatia | 8 | 3 | 11 |
| Serbia-Montenegro | 11 | ÷ | 11 |
| Belarus | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| Hungary | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| Latvia | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| Montenegro | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| Poland | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| Slovak Republic | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Moldova | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Estonia | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Lithuania | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Romania | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Slovenia | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| **Total** | **1403** | **2975** | **4378** |

1403 attacks were registered in 1998-2008 in Eastern Europe. During these years, Russia was the country most impacted by terrorism (902 attacks). The second country most impacted by terrorism in this time period was Kosovo (161 attacks). No terror attacks occurred in Lithuania in this time period. In 2009-2019, Ukraine was the country most affected by terrorism (1747 attacks). Notably, only 13 terror attacks were reported in the Ukraine in the previous time period 1998-2008. The second country most affected by terrorism in 2009-2019 was Russia (1080 attacks), and the third country most impacted was Kosovo (37 attacks). No terror attacks were reported in Romania and Slovenia in 2009-2019. Yugoslavia and Serbia-Montenegro were excluded from this time period because these countries did not exist in

2009-2019.

A total of 4378 terror attacks were registered in 1998-2019 in Eastern Europe. The country most impacted by terrorism during these years was Russia, with a total of 1982 attacks. The second country most affected by terrorism was Ukraine with a total of 1760 attacks, with almost all attacks taking place in the second time period. The countries least impacted by terrorism were Romania and Slovenia, with a total of one registered terror attack. Between 1998-2008 and 2009-2019, there was a great increase in number of terror attacks. There were over 1500 more attacks registered in 2009-2019.

*Table 6*
Distribution of attacks in Western Europe, by country and time period

| | Western Europe | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **1998-2008** | **2009-2019** | **Total** |
| United Kingdom | 441 | 949 | 1390 |
| Greece | 228 | 442 | 670 |
| France | 280 | 256 | 536 |
| Spain | 443 | 48 | 491 |
| Germany | 56 | 207 | 263 |
| Ireland | 16 | 174 | 190 |
| Italy | 68 | 92 | 160 |
| Sweden | 8 | 89 | 97 |
| Netherlands | 10 | 25 | 35 |
| Belgium | 17 | 17 | 34 |
| Switzerland | 12 | 9 | 21 |
| Austria | 10 | 10 | 20 |
| Finland | 2 | 18 | 20 |
| Cyprus | 7 | 7 | 14 |
| Denmark | 2 | 11 | 13 |
| Norway | 3 | 8 | 11 |
| Malta | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| Iceland | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Portugal | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Vatican City | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Gibraltar | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Luxembourg | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Andorra | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **1603** | **2371** | **3974** |

In Western Europe, in 1998-2008, 1603 terror attacks were registered. During the years 1998-2008, Spain was the country where most terror attacks were registered (443 attacks), and this was closely followed by United Kingdom (441 attacks). The third country most affected by terrorism in this period was France (280 attacks). No terror attacks were registered in the following seven countries: Malta, Iceland, Portugal, Vatican City, Gibraltar, Luxembourg, and Andorra. Between 1998-2008 and 2009-2019, there was an increase in

registered terror attacks in the region. 2371 terror attacks were registered in the second time period, which is around 700 more terror attacks compared to the previous time period. In 2009-2019, the country most impacted by terrorism in Western Europe was United Kingdom with 949 terror attacks. The second country most affected by terrorism was Greece (442 attacks), and France (256) was the third country most impacted by terrorism. No terror attacks were reported in Vatican City, Gibraltar, Luxembourg, and Andorra. A total of 3974 terror attacks were reported in Western Europe between 1998 and 2019. There are three countries where more than 500 terror attacks were registered: United Kingdom (1390 attacks), Greece (670 attacks) and France (531 attacks)

### 3.1.3   Dependent Variable

The main dependent variable of interest is 'Claiming Behaviour' which has been developed by using the variables 'Claims of Responsibility' (*claimed*), and 'Perpetrator Group Name' (*gname*) in the GTD dataset. In the GTD, the variable 'Claim of Responsibility?' consist of two measures: unclaimed attacks (0) and claimed attacks (1). Most literature focuses on claiming behaviour as a binary category, in which a terror attack is either claimed or unclaimed, however, by treating claiming behaviour as dichotomous, our understanding of the phenomenon will be limited (Kearns, 2019: 164-5). This is because numerous of attacks are attributed to a terror organisation even if there is no public claim of responsibility. Thus, in this research, the variable 'Claiming Behaviour' consists of the following mutually exclusive categories: Unclaimed (coded 0), Claimed (coded 1), and Attributed (coded 2).

The value 'Attributed' was developed by using the variable 'Perpetrator Group Name' in the original GTD dataset. This variable includes both generic and specific information about the perpetrator group name. The GTD relies on information from the print and electronic media to develop a standardised list that includes terrorist group names (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017: 133). Thus, by using information from this variable it is possible to know whether an attack was attributed even if there was no public claim of responsibility. I also chose to include generic information in the value 'Attributed' because this information is useful in terms of understanding whether the media have been able to identify some generic indicators about the alleged perpetrators. While there has been extensive research on identifying a group as the perpetrator in the GTD, there are numerous of attributions that are ambiguous (LaFree et al., 2015: 77). This is because a terror organisation may be associated with multiple names, and name speeling can differ from an area to another. This is referred to as an 'organisational linking problems' (LaFree et al., 2015: 72). Moreover, it is not always

clear whether these names or spellings are aliases for known terrorist groups, or if they are in fact completely different entities (LaFree et al., 2015: 73). When these challenges occur, it is not always possible to attribute an attack to a specific group. One solution is therefore to only include basic information about the terror group to create some context. LaFree et al. (2015: 80) find that approximately 18% of attacks between 1970 and 2012 in the GTD include generic perpetrator information. It can be argued that by including generic information, there is an acknowledgement that terror groups are constantly changing and evolving. Moreover, 'change is constant and stability rare' (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017: 101).

The value 'Unclaimed' was created by selecting only the incidents that were labelled 'Unknown' in the 'Perpetrator Group Name' variable. When an attack is coded 'Unknown', the attack cannot be associated with a specific or generic group. There is also a possibility that an individual has been attributed responsibility, and this individual cannot be linked to any group. The value 'Claimed' was created by selecting only the claimed attacks in the original 'Claim of Responsibility' variable. In the original dataset, 58 attacks were coded as claimed while also being coded as perpetrated by an unknown terror group. When looking at the motive descriptions in the GTD dataset, many of these incidents involved personal claims by unaffiliated individuals, thus, these individuals have not been linked to any terror organisation. Several of these claims were also by unknown groups, and the GTD has listed these as unknown in the 'Perpetrator Group Name' variable. I chose to include these 58 cases as 'Claimed' even if the perpetrator is regarded as unknown. As mentioned, terrorism is filled with secrecy and lack of information. It is therefore possible that credible information about possible perpetrator groups may be discovered in the future, and since this research is interested in claiming behaviour, I have chosen to include these in the sample. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that claimed terrorist attacks do not always result in a clear attribution.

*Table 7*
Characteristics of claiming behaviour variable

| Variable: Claiming Behaviour | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Code | Claiming behaviour category | Eastern Europe (count) | Eastern Europe (percentage) | Western Europe (count) | Western Europe (percentage) | Total count | Percentage of all attacks |
| 0 | Unclaimed | 2747 | 62,7% | 1997 | 50,3% | 4744 | 56,8% |
| 1 | Claimed | 321 | 7,3% | 1115 | 28,1% | 1436 | 17,2% |
| 2 | Attributed | 1310 | 29,9% | 862 | 21,7% | 2172 | 26% |

Even if this research is interested in claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe, it is of interest to explore claiming behaviour in other regions in the world. Claiming behaviour in other regions are displayed in the figure below.

*Figure 3*
Patterns in claiming behaviour by region, percentages (1998-2019)
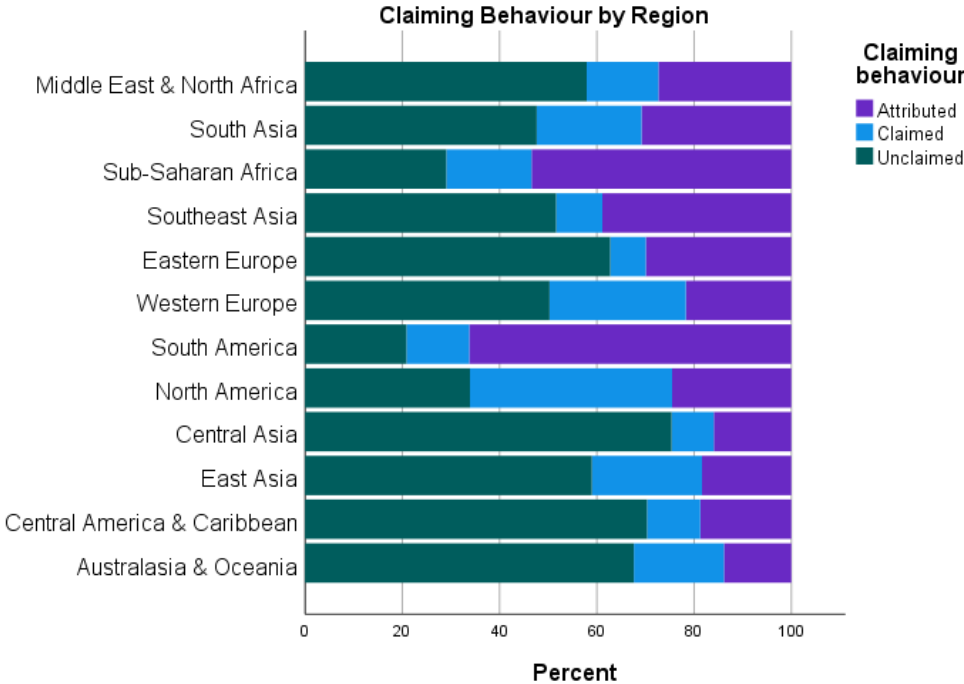


*Figure 3* demonstrates that unclaimed attacks were common in most regions. Central Asia was the region with most unclaimed attacks (75%), followed by Central America and the Caribbean (70%), Australasia and Oceania (68%) and Eastern Europe (63%). The region where unclaimed attacks were less frequent was South America (21%). Claimed attacks were less frequent across regions, however, the region that stood out with the highest percentage of claimed attacks was North America (42%). Western Europe had the second highest proportion of claimed attacks (28%). The smallest proportion of claimed attacks can be found in Eastern Europe (7%). When looking at attributed attacks, South America was the region that stands out (66%). The region with the second largest proportion of attributed attacks was Sub-Saharan Africa (53%). Australasia and Oceania was the region with the smallest percentage of attributed attacks (14%).

*Claims of Responsibility vs. No Claim of Responsibility*

Since this research is dependent on GTD's inclusion of claims of responsibility, it is necessary to comment on their classifications on claimed and unclaimed attacks. According to

the GTD, only claims that involve *credibility* are included as a claimed attack. Even if a credible media source report that a group claims responsibility for an attack, this may not be correct, and data collection need to be thorough. Claims of responsibility that are not considered credible will usually be labelled as unclaimed in the dataset. For example, the Bastille truck attack in Nice, France in 2016, that killed 86 people and injured 433, was claimed by ISIS (START, n.d.-b). However, there is no evidence that can support the claim by ISIS, and no linkage between the perpetrator and the group has been confirmed. Thus, the claim is considered invalid. Therefore, the GTD has recorded the attack as unclaimed, and 'Jihadi-inspired extremists' has been assigned responsibility (ibid.). While no linkage has been established between the perpetrator and ISIS, there is a possibility that the attacker was connected to another jihadist group, but a specific group name has not been found. Because the attacker was killed in the incident, investigating the attacker's connections to other terror groups may have been even more complicated. There are multiple challenges when attempting to only include claims of responsibility that are credible. A challenge might be that a terror group only publishes a short statement claiming their involvement, and at the same time the group might try to conceal other types of information than can be useful when investigating a perpetrator's connection to a terror group. While the GTD strives to only include credible claims of responsibility, approximately 6% of claimed terror attacks in Eastern and Western Europe involve unconfirmed perpetrator groups (Appendix 3). Thus, when studying claiming behaviour in terror attacks, there is no certainty that the group that has claimed responsibility is the group that committed the attack (Kearns, 2019: 182).

### 3.1.4 Independent Variables

*Victims Killed or Wounded*

I was interested in how claiming behaviour is affected by the number of killed or injured in an attack. The original dataset does not include a variable containing numbers of both killed or wounded. By using information from the variables 'Total Number of Fatalities' (*nkill*) and 'Total Number of Injured' (*nwound*) in the original dataset, I first created two new numeric variables 'Numbers of Victims Killed' and 'Number of Victims Wounded'. Importantly, in the GTD the numeric variables 'Total Number of Fatalities' and 'Total Number of Injured' include information about both victims and attackers killed or wounded in a terror attack. However, this research was only interested in the number of victims killed or injured, so perpetrator fatalities and wounded perpetrators were excluded from the new variables.

Because the original dataset had two numeric variables labelled 'Number of Perpetrator Fatalities' (*nkillter*) and 'Number of Perpetrators Injured' (*nwoundte*) that included information about perpetrators killed or wounded, it was possible to create new variables that only include victim information, and not perpetrator information. When the two variables 'Number of Victims Killed' and 'Number of Victims Wounded' were created, I was able to use the compute variable function to create a new variable which included both number of victims killed, and number of victims injured. Importantly, the SUM function was used when creating this variable, and this was because of inclusiveness. By using this function, events that did not have information about victims killed, but had information about victims wounded (or opposite information) were included in this study. Thus, the SUM function secured that these incidents would be counted in the new variable, instead of being considered as system missing. This new numeric variable was named 'Number of Victims Killed or Wounded'. A frequency table revealed that 64% of terror attacks involved no people killed or wounded, and 14% of terror attacks involve one victim killed or wounded. Thus, based on this information I created categories that separated these two values, in addition to two other values. This variable was labelled 'Victims Killed or Wounded' and it contains four categories to assess the impact number of victims killed or wounded affect claiming behaviour in different time periods.

*Table 8*
Characteristics of victims killed or wounded variable

| Variable: Victims Killed or Wounded | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Code | Category | Eastern Europe (count) | Eastern Europe (percentage) | Western Europe (count) | Western Europe (percentage) | Total Count | Percentage of all attacks |
| 0 | 0 killed or wounded | 2135 | 48,8% | 3173 | 79,8% | 5308 | 63,6% |
| 1 | 1 killed or wounded | 760 | 17,4% | 422 | 10,6% | 1182 | 14,2% |
| 2 | 2-9 killed or wounded | 1047 | 23,9% | 271 | 6,8% | 1318 | 15,8% |
| 3 | 10+ killed or wounded | 229 | 5,2% | 78 | 2% | 307 | 3,7% |
| System missing | | 207 | 4,7% | 30 | 0,8% | 237 | 2,8% |

Interestingly, one case was registered as -8, meaning that there were more perpetrators killed in the terror attack than victims. This was later registered as system missing. In total, then, 237 cases (3%) were registered as system missing in this sample. This number is not

surprising since the data is based on media reports, and the sources may not have details on the numbers of people killed or injured.

*Suicide Attack*

I was also interested in the impact suicide attacks had on claiming behaviour in different time periods. In the GTD, 'Suicide Attack' is a binary variable where the category suicide attack is coded 1, and non-suicide attack is coded 0. An attack is coded as a suicide attack 'if it is clear from the media reports that the perpetrator did not intend to escape from the attack alive' (LaFree et al., 2015: 192). The table below shows characteristics of this variable.

*Table 9*
Characteristics of suicide variable

| Variable: Suicide | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Code | Category | Eastern Europe (count) | Eastern Europe (percentage) | Western Europe (count) | Western Europe (percentage) | Total count | Percentage of all attacks |
| 0 | Non-suicide attack | 4282 | 97,8% | 3946 | 99,3% | 8228 | 98,5% |
| 1 | Suicide attack | 96 | 2,2% | 28 | 0,7% | 124 | 1,5% |

*Target Group*

In this study I examined the relationship between the target group and claiming behaviour. For each incident the GTD can record up to three target groups. However, for the purposes of this research I chose to include one target group for each incident, and this variable was labelled *targtype1;targtype1_txt* in the original dataset. Originally, this variable contained 22 categories, but since many of these categories included few units, the variable was reduced to the following four categories: private citizens and property, police, military, and government. In the original dataset, a government target was coded either as general government or diplomatic government. For the purposes of this research, these two were combined. Below are characteristics of the 'Target group' variable as well as descriptions of categories that were included in the analysis.

*Table 10*

*Table 10*
Characteristics of target group variable

| | | Variable: Target Group | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Code | Target group category | Eastern Europe (count) | Eastern Europe (percentage) | Western Europe (count) | Western Europe (percentage) | Total Count (N) | Percentage of all attacks |
| 1 | Private citizens and property | 769 | 17,6% | 1298 | 32,7% | 2067 | 24,7% |
| 2 | Government (general and diplomatic) | 626 | 14,3% | 679 | 17,1% | 1305 | 15,6% |
| 3 | Military | 1094 | 25% | 76 | 1,9% | 1170 | 14% |
| 4 | Police | 773 | 17,7% | 431 | 10,8% | 1204 | 14,4% |
| Total | | 3262 | 74,5% | 2484 | 62,5% | 5746 | 68,8% |
| System missing | All other categories have been coded as 'system missing' | 1116 | 25,5% | 1490 | 37,5% | 2606 | 31,2% |

**DESCRIPTION OF CATEGORIES**
**Private citizens and property:** This value includes attacks on individuals, the public in general or attacks in public areas including markets, commercial streets, busy intersections and pedestrian malls.
**Government (general):** Any attack on a government building; government member, former members, including members of political parties in official capacities, their convoys, or events sponsored by political parties; political movements; or a government sponsored institution where the attack is expressly carried out to harm the government. This value includes attacks on judges, public attorneys (e.g., prosecutors), courts and court systems, politicians, royalty, head of state, government employees (unless police or military), election-related attacks, or intelligence agencies and spies. This value does not include attacks on political candidates for office or members of political parties that do not hold an elected office (these attacks are captured in "Private Citizens and Property"). **Government (diplomatic):** Attacks carried out against foreign missions, including embassies, consulates, etc. This value includes cultural centers that have diplomatic functions, and attacks against diplomatic staff and their families (when the relationship is relevant to the motive of the attack) and property. The United Nations is a diplomatic target.
**Military:** Includes attacks against military units, patrols, barracks, convoys, jeeps, and aircraft. Also includes attacks on recruiting sites, and soldiers engaged in internal policing functions such as at checkpoints and in anti-narcotics activities. This category also includes peacekeeping units that conduct military operations (e.g., AMISOM).
**Police:** Attacks on members of the police force or police installations; this includes police boxes, patrols headquarters, academics, cars, checkpoints, etc. Also includes attacks against jails or prison facilities, or jail or prison staff or guards.

(START, 2021: 32-7)

*Weapon Type*

Weapon type is another independent variable used in this research. The GTD provides information about both general types of weapons used in an incident, but also more specific information about the weapon type can be provided if the information is available. In this

study I am interested in the specific type of weapon used. Up to four weapon types can be recorded in a terror attack, for the purposes of this research, one weapon type per incident is included. This variable is labelled 'Weapon Sub-type' (*weapsubtype1; weapsubtype1_txt*), and a frequency table (Appendix 4) revealed that the following categories were the most frequent categories when excluding categories such as 'other' and 'unknown': automatic or semi-automatic rifle, projectile, vehicle (explosive), arson/fire, and molotov cocktail/petrol bomb. These five weapon types were used in 34,4% of terror attacks in Eastern and Western Europe, and the total sample size when using this variable was N = 2855.

*Table 11*
Characteristics of weapon type variable

| Variable: Weapon Type |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Code | Weapon type category (general weapon type in parentheses) | Eastern Europe (count) | Eastern Europe (percentage) | Western Europe (count) | Western Europe (percentage) | Total count | Percentage of all attacks |
| 1 | Automatic or semi-automatic rifle (firearms) | 274 | 6,3% | 48 | 1,2% | 322 | 3,9% |
| 2 | Projectile (an explosive weapon) | 954 | 21,8% | 43 | 1,1% | 997 | 11,9% |
| 3 | Vehicle (an explosive weapon) | 173 | 4% | 175 | 4,4% | 348 | 4,2% |
| 4 | Arson/fire (an incendiary weapon) | 113 | 2,6% | 618 | 15,6% | 731 | 8,8% |
| 5 | Molotov cocktail/ petrol bomb (an incendiary weapon) | 46 | 1,1% | 411 | 10,3% | 457 | 5,5% |
| Total | | 1560 | 35,6% | 1295 | 32,6% | 2855 | 34,4% |
| Missing system | All other categories have been coded as 'system missing' | 2818 | 64,4% | 2679 | 67,4% | 5497 | 65,8% |

**Descriptions of general weapon categories:**
- An explosive weapon: A weapon composed of energetically unstable material undergoing rapid decomposition and releasing a pressure wave that causes physical damage to the surrounding environment.
- Firearms: A weapon which is capable of firing a projectile using an explosive charge as a propellant.
- An incendiary weapon: A weapon that is capable of catching fire, causing fire, or burning readily and produces intensely hot fire when exploded

**Specific information for the projectile weapon:** This category includes e.g., rockets, mortars, RPGs, missiles.

(START, 2021: 28-9)

## 3.2    Methodological Limitations

Because this research used secondary sources, the researchers collecting these data might have had a different purpose in their data collection, than the subsequent user (Blaikie and Priest, 2019: 157). This was evident when creating the 'Claiming behaviour variable', but nonetheless, the dataset included information which made it possible to create three mutually exclusive categories. A fundamental limitation in studying terrorism 'is that we study clandestine actors and thus most of our data are filtered through secondary sources, like the media' (Young, 2019: 335). Also disinformation from governments and censorship might affect the data collection (LaFree, 2010: 24). Another weakness is that the media in some instances is incapable of reporting about the perpetrators in a terror attack. As LaFree and Dugan (2007: 188) explain, information about perpetrators is essential when classifying an incident as terrorism. If this information is missing, then an incident may not be included in the dataset.

When using this dataset in analyses it is necessary to point out that a reporting bias may be present in the collection of data. It might be expected that the media will report about terror attacks, but this is not always the case. The media does not cover all terror attacks, and it may seem that the media favours some types of attacks over others (Archetti, 2013: 99; Hoffman et al., 2013, 898; Kearns, 2020: 82). Moreover, a reporting bias may be present when considering factors such as numbers of killed, the target, and perpetrator characteristics (Mitnik et al., 2020). Thus, there may be a lack of information about certain types of attacks, which can cause inconsistencies in the dataset. Because this research is interested in two different regions, there is a possibility that one region contains less media reports than the other. It is worth mentioning that differing levels of press freedom may have impacted the data collection in the GTD. Because several countries in Eastern Europe are associated with lower levels of press freedom compared to countries in Western Europe, a reporting bias may be present when comparing these two regions. Therefore, there is a possibility that fewer cases related to terrorism were reported in Eastern Europe. Moreover, it is argued that attacks involving fatalities are more likely to be reported by the media, as it is more difficult for the authorities to hide these attacks (Young and Dugan, 2011: 24). However, if a domestic media outlet is unable to report about a lethal attack, then there is still a possibility that foreign media will report about the attack (ibid.). However, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has been a significant increase in terrorism reports in the former Soviet states (Dugan et al., 2012: 479). There is a possibility that this reflects emerging terrorism patterns in these

new states, but it is argued that it is more likely that these increased numbers are in some ways associated with less media control (ibid.). Thus, under-reporting of terror attacks may not be a serious issue in Eastern Europe in contemporary times. Moreover, media outlets outside state borders might have been to collect information that government-controlled media cannot publicise.

The validity of this study is largely dependent on the GTD's collection of data. As explored, there may be various challenges in data collection. In some instances, it can be problematic to rely on media information, because media reports might report information that is inaccurate, false, or conflicting (LaFree, 2010). Nonetheless, a great advantage in using the GTD is that the data collection and coding is done by an independent research team, and no funding body or specific interests or perspectives should be represented (Betus et al., 2021: 1135). Since the data have been collected by private actors, the probability that political influences have affected the data collection is reduced, and the dataset might include incidents that are politically sensitive (LaFree and Dugan, 2007: 187). Moreover, it is a great advantage that the media may be able to collect information that the official sources do not intend to publicise.

## 3.3    Summary

In this chapter the advantages and limitations of using data from the GTD has been discussed. Reasons for separating the time periods 1998-2008 and 2009-2019 were provided, and the division between Eastern Europe and Western Europe was justified. This chapter also included an explanation of the claims of responsibility variable, and the credibility of these claims. The creation of the variable 'Claiming Behaviour' was explained, and descriptions of the independent variables *victims killed or wounded, suicide attack, target group, and weapon type* were provided. Methodological limitations as well as validity and reliability were also presented.

# Chapter 4        Results and Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore and identify patterns in claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe in the two time periods 1998-2008 and 2009-2010. The following research question will be answered:

*Have the patterns in terrorist groups' claiming behaviours in Eastern Europe and Western Europe changed between 1998-2008 and 2009-2019?*

Crosstabulations will be presented to explore patterns in unclaimed, claimed, and attributed terror attacks between two time periods. Key findings and interpretations will be discussed in this chapter. First, patterns in claiming behaviour all over the world will be presented to create some context. Next, trends in claiming behaviour over time in Eastern Europe and Western Europe will be described. Furthermore, the relationship between claiming behaviour and the variables numbers of killed or wounded, suicide attack, target group, and weapon type will be assessed and interpreted.

## 4.1    Patterns in Claiming Behaviour by Year

This research was mainly interested in identifying patterns in claiming behaviour in two different time periods. Nonetheless, it was also of interest to explore trends in claiming behaviour over time. By examining claiming behaviour by year, possible outliers may be discovered, which can provide useful information when interpreting the analyses.

Figure 4

*Figure 4*
Claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe, percentages (1998-2019)
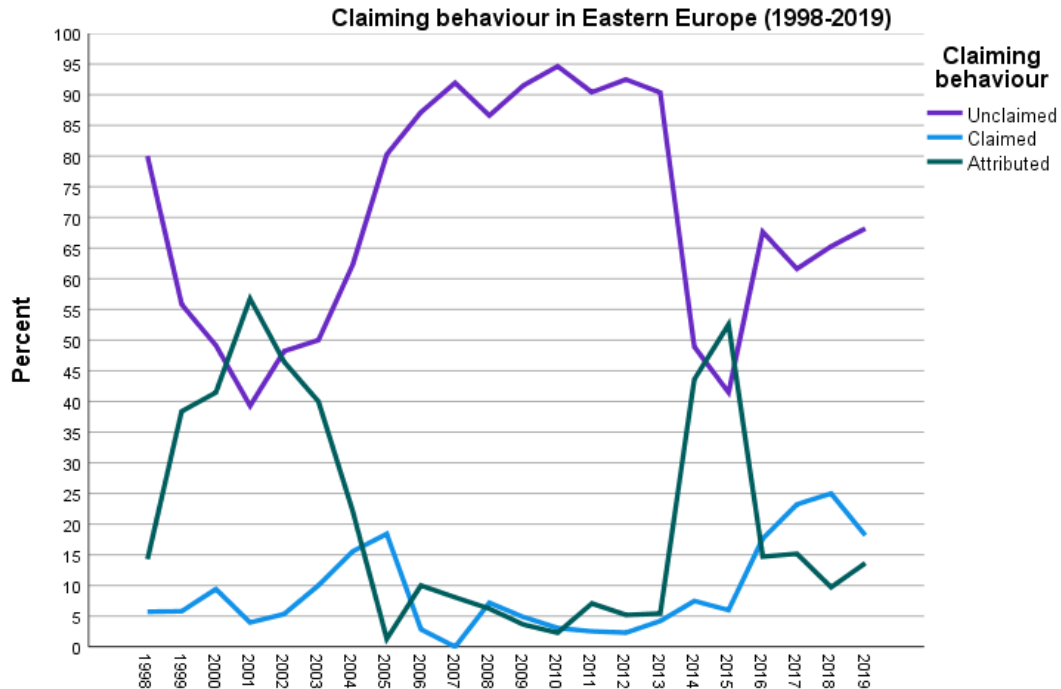


*Figure 4* shows that unclaimed attacks were common during most years in Eastern Europe in 1998-2019. The exceptions were in 2001 and 2014, when attributed attacks were more frequent. From 1998 to 2001 there was a large decrease in unclaimed attacks, from approximately 80% to under 40%. In the years 2005-2013, unclaimed attacks were between 80% and 95%. And the highest proportion of unclaimed attacks was in 2010 when 95% of attacks were unclaimed. There was a significant shift in unclaimed attacks from 2013 (approximately 90%) to 2014 (less than 50%). When looking at claimed attacks, the figure illustrates that claimed attacks were generally uncommon, and it was not larger than 30% any year. The smallest proportion of claimed attacks was in 2007 when no attacks were claimed, and the highest proportion was in 2018 when 25% of attacks were claimed. The figure shows that attribution had variations between years. In 2001 there was a sharp increase in attributed attacks, when over 55% of attacks were attributed. By, 2005, attributed attacks had dropped to 1%, which is the smallest percentage registered in this figure. In the years 2005-2013 attribution was less common, and it was 10% or less each year. Another sharp increase in attributed attacks occurred in 2014 when almost 40% of attacks were attributed, and in 2015 the percentage was over 50%. However, in 2016, attribution had a sharp decrease, and

attributed attacks were approximately 15%. These differences in claiming behaviour were significant: $x^2 = 1036{,}941$, p = ,000 (Appendix 5).

*Figure 5*
Claiming behaviour in Western Europe, percentages (1998-2019)
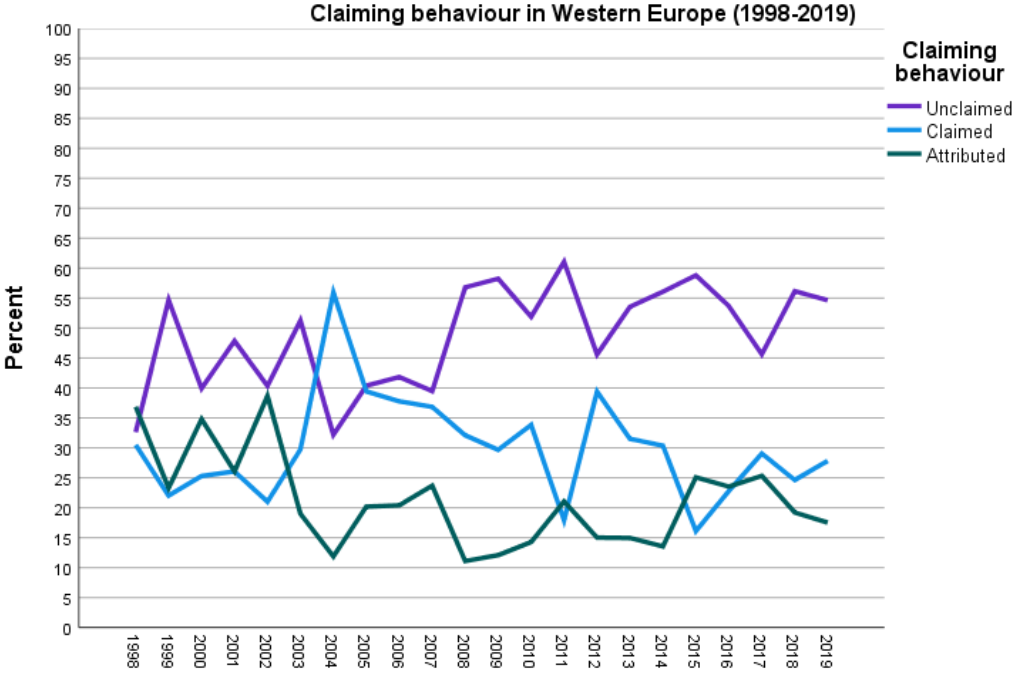


*Figure 5* displays claiming behaviour over time in Western Europe, from 1998 to 2019. Unclaimed attacks were common in Western Europe, but there were variations between years and over time there seems to have been an increase in unclaimed attacks. The figure shows that unclaimed attacks were never less than 30% any year, and the highest proportion of unclaimed attacks was in 2011 when over 60% of terror attacks were unclaimed. Looking at claimed attacks, the figure shows different levels of claimed attacks between years. In 2004, over 55% of attacks were claimed, and this was the largest proportion compared to other years. 2015 was the year with the smallest proportion of claimed attacks (16%). The figure demonstrates that there were also disparities in attributed attacks over time. 2002 had the greatest level of attributed attacks, when almost 40% of attacks were attributed. The smallest percentage in attribution was in 2008, when approximately 10% of attacks were attributed. These differences in claiming behaviour were significant: $x^2 = 212{,}453$, p = ,000 (Appendix 5).

## Table 12
*Claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe (1998-2019)*

|  | Eastern Europe | | | Western Europe | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 2747 | 58% | 63% | 1997 | 42% | 50% |
| Claimed | 321 | 22% | 7% | 1115 | 78% | 28% |
| Attributed | 1310 | 60% | 30% | 862 | 40% | 22% |
| Total | 4378 | 52% | 100% | 3974 | 48% | 100% |

*Table 12* displays claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe in the years 1998-2019. First, when looking at Eastern Europe, the Column % shows that 63% of terror attacks were unclaimed, 7% were claimed, and 30% were attributed. In Western Europe, the Column% shows that 50% of attacks were unclaimed, 28% were claimed, and 22% were attributed. When examining unclaimed attacks in Row %, most of these attacks were situated in Eastern Europe (58%). Thus, when comparing Eastern and Western Europe, the results confirm that claimed attacks were less frequent in both regions, but claimed attacks were more frequent in Western Europe. The chi-square test of independence (Appendix 6) confirmed a significant difference between region and claiming behaviour: $x^2 = 631,935$, p = ,000.

## Table 13
Claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe by time period

| Eastern Europe | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1998-2008 | | | 2009-2019 | | |
|  | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 867 | 32% | 62% | 1880 | 68% | 63% |
| Claimed | 100 | 31% | 7% | 221 | 69% | 7% |
| Attributed | 436 | 33% | 31% | 874 | 67% | 29% |
| Total | 1403 | 32% | 100% | 2975 | 68% | 100% |

*Table 14*
Claiming behaviour in Western Europe by time period

| | 1998-2008 | | | 2009-2019 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western Europe | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 722 | 36% | 45% | 1275 | 64% | 54% |
| Claimed | 472 | 42% | 29% | 643 | 58% | 27% |
| Attributed | 409 | 47% | 26% | 453 | 53% | 19% |
| Total | 1603 | 40% | 100% | 2371 | 60% | 100% |

*Tables 13 and 14* demonstrate the relationship between claiming behaviour and time period in the two regions. First, when examining the Column % in Eastern Europe, there were not any differences between time periods, and this suggest that time has less impact claiming behaviour in this region. When looking at the Row % in Eastern Europe, around 70% of claimed, unclaimed, and attributed attacks were in the time period 2009-2019. The chi-square test of independence (Appendix 7) confirmed that there was no significant difference between region and claiming behaviour when controlling for time period in Eastern Europe: $x^2 = 1,333$, p = ,513.

When looking at Western Europe the Column % shows that unclaimed attacks were common in both time periods, and there was an increase from 45% in 1998-2008 to 54% in 2009-2019. Claimed attacks were similar in both time periods: 29% and 27%. There was a decrease in attributed attacks: from 26% to 19%. When examining the distribution of claiming behaviour across time periods (Row %), most attacks were in 2009-2019. 64% of unclaimed attacks were in the second time period. The results suggest that time period had an impact on unclaimed and attributed attacks in Western Europe. The chi-square test of independence (Appendix 7) confirmed a significant difference between region and claiming behaviour when controlling for time period in Western Europe: $x^2 = 34,472$, p = ,000.

### 4.1.1 *Sudden Shifts between Attributed and Unclaimed Attacks*

*Figures 4 and 5* demonstrated that unclaimed attacks were common in both regions most years, and this confirms previous research on claiming behaviour which demonstrate an increased trend in unclaimed attacks over time (Rorie, 2008). Although there were some variations between years, *Figure 5* showed an increased trend in unclaimed attacks in Western

Europe after 2007, and *Table 12* confirmed this shift in unclaimed attacks between 1998-2008 and 2009-2019. Large proportions of unclaimed attacks imply that even if claiming responsibility of an attack may be beneficial in terms of gaining support, the fear of negative reactions and potential prosecutions may cause a terror group to remain anonymous (Min, 2013: 2). Moreover, *Table 12* demonstrated a significant difference in attributed attacks between time periods. *Table 11* demonstrated that time period has less impact on claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe, and there were quite similar results for unclaimed, claimed, and attributed terror attacks in both time periods. In Eastern Europe, *Figure 4* showed that during several years, unclaimed attacks were over 80%. Moreover, the figure demonstrated some sudden shifts in claiming behaviour by year, and the years 2001 and 2014 stood out when looking at unclaimed and attributed attacks in this region. 2001 was the year when least unclaimed attacks were reported. Perhaps the 9/11 attacks in 2001 impacted claiming behaviour that year, as well as the years before and after. The 9/11 attacks were a rare event that led unusual responses in terms of massive counterterrorism reactions (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017; Mueller and Stewart, 2016). There is a possibility that attacks that occurred in Eastern Europe before 2001 were subject to more media scrutiny after the 9/11 attacks. Consequentially, assigned attribution may have followed. In this case it would be useful if the GTD offered information about the date of an alleged attribution to examine whether an attributed attack in for example 1999, was attributed shortly after an attack, or if a perpetrator was assigned responsibility years later. In the years following 9/11, terrorism news was intensified. Thus, there is a possibility that terror attacks that occurred after the 9/11 events, were given a lot of attention in Eastern Europe, and because of enlarged media attention, attributed attacks increased, and unclaimed attacks decreased.

Eastern Europe experienced another sudden shift between unclaimed attacks and attributed attacks in the years 2013-2015. Since the distribution of terror attacks in Eastern Europe in 2009-2019 were concentrated in Russia and Ukraine (*Table 5*), and there was a large increase in terror attacks in 2014 (*Figure 1*), the data implies that the conflict in the Ukraine had an impact on claiming behaviour in 2014. In 2014, the regional conflict between the Ukraine and Russia escalated, and numerous of terror attacks took place in the Ukraine that year (IEP, 2016: 20). Eastern Ukraine is pro-Russian and controlled by separatists, and the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic represent two states between Ukraine and Russia that declared independence in 2014. These two regions also represent terror groups (ibid.). Information in conflict zones tend to be ambiguous and contradictive. Therefore, the sharp rise in attributed attacks from 2013 to 2014 is interesting

because it contradicts the assumption that attribution is difficult in areas of ongoing war and conflict (Crenshaw and LaFree, 2017: 137). One explanation might be that attribution occurred some time after the conflict, when the conflict had reduced, and the media were able to investigate the terror attacks in more detail. Another explanation may be that the conflict resulted in amplified media attention outside state borders, which in turn may have led to increased attributions of terror attacks. Thus, amplified international media attention following this conflict might explain increased attribution in 2014 and 2015 in Eastern Europe. However, media attention varies, and it does not have to be long-lasting. While an amplified focus might occur after significant events, media focus might shift quickly (Mitnik et al., 2020: 172). Because of variations in media attention, attributed attacks may decline after the media shifts focus, and this might explain a sharp decline in attribution from 2015 to 2016.

### 4.1.2 *Claimed Attacks and Differences Between Regions*

When comparing claiming behaviour between Eastern Europe and Western Europe, it is evident that claims of responsibility were more common in Western Europe. This might indicate that levels of media freedom impact claimed attacks. In places where there is more media freedom, it may be easier for a terror group to claim responsibility for an attack (Kearns, 2019; O'Kane, 2013; Wright, 2011). Unrestricted access to communications technology, including the internet and social media, make it easier for terror groups to use platforms where claims of responsibility can be published. On the other hand, restricted media may decrease claims of responsibility because lack of access to online platforms make it more difficult to claim responsibility. There is also a possibility that terror groups contact the media to claim responsibility for an attack, but if the authorities have a large media constrain, then these claims of responsibility may not be reported (Tishler, 2016: 18). Even if the media collects information about a claim of responsibility, perhaps journalists and media personnel face repercussions if this information is published without the government's consent. Russia is particularly known for its restrictions on media freedom (Freedom House, 2022). Another matter that further complicates research on claims of responsibility is that only claims of responsibility collected in media sources can be studied, and there is a possibility that *private* claims a terror group has communicated to state officials may be excluded. This is because some state authorities may want to hide private claims from the media and the public (Hansen, 2021: 1386). It might be expected that terror groups are in control of their claims, and the media is simply the tool to deliver their statements. However, the credibility of claims

must be treated with some caution since a state's involvement in claims of responsibility may be concealed. Therefore, it is no guarantee that claims of responsibility have not been modified by government authorities and that these claims have not been altered in terms of timing and content (Hoffman, 2010: 616). Thus, it is not an easy task to determine whether the content in a claim of responsibility is issued directly from the perpetrator group or whether a claim of responsibility is provided by a state authority. If media freedom affects claiming behaviour, it might be expected that there should also be differences between attributed attacks. Because access to information about terror attacks may be limited in places where there is a constrained media (O'Kane, 2013: 6), there is a possibility that attribution is less frequent. Moreover, in areas where there is a free media and opportunities for political expression, the media may have a greater opportunity to report about terror attacks. Thus, the media might provide information about alleged perpetrators, which can increase attributed attacks. For example, media freedom may lead to more investigations of terror attacks, and attribution of terror attacks may be more common in these areas (Kearns, 2019: 173). On the contrary, these findings implied that attributed attacks were more frequent in Eastern Europe, compared to Western Europe. In fact, most attributed attacks were distributed in Eastern Europe (see Row % in *Table 12*). While Crenshaw and LaFree (2017: 139) find that only 4% of attacks in Eastern Europe from 1970-2017 could be attributed to a perpetrator, the results from *Figure 4* and *Tables 12 and 13* were quite different. Importantly, however, in this research, generic information about perpetrators was included, which might explain why these analyses produced quite different results than Crenshaw and LaFree (2017). In their research, only specific perpetrator group information was included in their statistics. As explored previously, the GTD also includes information about the perpetrators' generic identity in the perpetrator group variable if a specific group name cannot be established. In Eastern Europe, general information such as 'Gunmen' and 'Ukrainian nationalists' were reported in the 'Perpetrator Group Name' variable (Appendix 8). In Western Europe, 'Anarchists' and 'Neo-Nazi extremists' are included (Appendix 8). In these cases, it has not been possible to link a specific terror group to an attack. It might be that a group exists, but media sources have not been able to confirm a specific group name (LaFree et al., 2015: 80). Thus, there is a possibility that media reports on terror attacks in Eastern Europe include more generic information about perpetrators, while media reports in Western Europe include more specific perpetrator information.

## 4.2    Number of victims

It is assumed that the number of victims in terror attacks have an impact on claiming behaviour in terrorism. The literature explains that terror groups may be willing to claim responsibility for attacks involving multiple casualties because these attacks signal strength. Thus, it was of interest to explore how the numbers of victims killed or wounded impacted claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe, and whether there were any differences between time periods.

*Table 15*

Claiming behaviour by victims killed or wounded in Eastern Europe (1998-2008)

| Eastern Europe (1998-2008) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Victims killed or wounded | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 0 | | | 1 | | | 2-9 | | | 10+ | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 384 | 46% | 69% | 153 | 18% | 66% | 250 | 30% | 60% | 41 | 5% | 36% |
| Claimed | 21 | 26% | 4% | 8 | 10% | 3% | 27 | 34% | 7% | 24 | 30% | 21% |
| Attributed | 148 | 36% | 27% | 70 | 17% | 30% | 138 | 34% | 33% | 50 | 12% | 43% |
| Total | 553 | 42% | 100% | 231 | 18% | 100% | 415 | 32% | 100% | 115 | 9% | 100% |

*Table 16*

Claiming behaviour by victims killed or wounded in Eastern Europe (2009-2019)

| Eastern Europe (2009-2019) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Victims killed or wounded | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 0 | | | 1 | | | 2-9 | | | 10+ | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 1007 | 55% | 64% | 390 | 21% | 74% | 416 | 23% | 66% | 33 | 2% | 29% |
| Claimed | 87 | 43% | 5% | 39 | 19% | 7% | 42 | 21% | 7% | 36 | 18% | 32% |
| Attributed | 488 | 60% | 31% | 100 | 12% | 19% | 174 | 22% | 28% | 45 | 6% | 39% |
| Total | 1582 | 55% | 100% | 529 | 19% | 100% | 632 | 22% | 100% | 114 | 4% | 100% |

First, when examining attacks with no victims killed or wounded in *Tables 15 and 16*, the Column % show similar results between time periods in Eastern Europe. The total Row % reveal that attacks with no victims were more common in 2009-2019 (55%), compared to the previous time period (42%). When looking at the category with one victim killed or wounded,

the Column % show differences in unclaimed and attributed attacks between time periods. In 1998-2008, 66% were unclaimed, and 30% were attributed, and in 2009-2019, 74% were unclaimed, and 19% were attributed. The total Row % in the category 2-9 victims killed or wounded, show that these attacks were more common in 1998-2008. While 32% of attacks involved 2-9 victims killed or wounded in 1998-2008, 22% of attacks in 2009-2019 involved between 2-9 victims. Looking at the results for 10+ victims killed or wounded, the Column % display differences in claiming behaviour between time periods. In 1998-2008, 36% of attacks involving more than ten people killed or wounded were unclaimed, 21% were claimed, and 43% were attributed. In 2009-2019, 29% of these attacks were unclaimed, 32% were claimed, and 39% were attributed. There was a significant difference between claiming behaviour and time period when controlling for victims killed or wounded (Appendix 9). The results for 1998-2008 in Eastern Europe were: $x^2 = 76,789$, p = ,000, and the results for 2009-2019 were $x^2 = 153,446$, p = ,000.

*Table 17*
Claiming behaviour in Western Europe by victims killed or wounded (1998-2008)

| | Western Europe (1998-2008) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Victims killed or wounded | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | **0** | | | **1** | | | **2-9** | | | **10+** | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 599 | 84% | 49% | 62 | 9% | 32% | 47 | 7% | 35% | 6 | 1% | 15% |
| Claimed | 358 | 76% | 29% | 56 | 12% | 29% | 32 | 7% | 24% | 23 | 5% | 57% |
| Attributed | 271 | 66% | 22% | 73 | 18% | 38% | 54 | 13% | 41% | 11 | 3% | 28% |
| Total | 1228 | 77% | 100% | 191 | 12% | 100% | 133 | 8% | 100% | 40 | 3% | 100% |

*Table 18*
Claiming behaviour in Western Europe by victims killed or wounded (2009-2019)

| | Western Europe (2009-2019) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Victims killed or wounded | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | **0** | | | **1** | | | **2-9** | | | **10+** | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 1124 | 89% | 58% | 81 | 6% | 35% | 50 | 4% | 36% | 6 | 0% | 16% |
| Claimed | 476 | 75% | 24% | 82 | 13% | 35% | 52 | 8% | 38% | 28 | 4% | 74% |
| Attributed | 345 | 76% | 18% | 68 | 15% | 29% | 36 | 8% | 26% | 4 | 1% | 11% |
| Total | 1945 | 83% | 100% | 231 | 10% | 100% | 138 | 6% | 100% | 38 | 2% | 100% |

When looking at the category with no victims killed or wounded, the total Row % demonstrate that these attacks were most frequent in both time periods. In 1998-2008, 77% attacks involved no victims, and in 2009-2019, 83% attacks involved no victims. The Column % show differences in unclaimed attacks: in 1998-2008, 49% of attacks involving no victims were unclaimed, and in 2009-2019, 58% of attacks were unclaimed. Looking at the category with one victim killed or wounded, the Column % show differences in attributed attacks between time periods. In 1998-2008, 38% of terror attacks involving one victim were attributed, and in 2009-2019, 29% were attributed. The Column % in the category 2-9 victims killed or wounded show differences in claimed and attributed attacks. In 1998-2008, 24% of these attacks were claimed, and 41% were attributed, and in 2009-2019, 38% were claimed and 26% were attributed. Examining the results for attacks with ten or more victims killed or wounded, the total count show that these attacks were not common. In 1998-2008, 40 attacks involved ten or more victims, and in 2009-2019, the total count was 38. The Column % demonstrate differences in claimed and attributed attacks between time periods. In 1998-2008, 57% of attacks involving ten or more victims were claimed, and 28% were attributed. In 2009-2019, 74% of attacks involving ten or more victims were claimed, and 11% were attributed. There was a significant difference between time period and claiming behaviour in Western Europe (Appendix 9). The results for 1998-2008 were $x^2 = 63,992$, p = ,000, and the results for 2009-2019 were $x^2 = 110,115$, p = ,000.

### 4.2.1   More Victims, More Claimed Attacks

The results for both Eastern Europe and Western Europe show that claimed attacks increased when there were ten or more victims killed or wounded. When looking at unclaimed attacks, the findings showed that in Eastern Europe in 1998-2008, unclaimed attacks increased when there were no victims killed or wounded, and in 2009-2019 unclaimed attacks increased when there was one victim. Unclaimed attacks in Western Europe increased when there were no victims killed or wounded in both time periods. The data support the theory that small numbers of victims killed or wounded are more likely to be unclaimed because they do not signal as much strength as more lethal attacks Thus, the results indicate that groups claim responsibility for terror attacks with high numbers of killed or wounded because they signal a group's strength (Min, 2013). It is also a possibility that there is less media attention on attacks with no or few victims, and therefore unclaimed attacks will be more frequent. In addition, claimed attacks involving ten or more victims had increased between time periods in both regions. These results may also support the theory that terror groups claim responsibility

for attacks that signal most strength. Attacks involving ten or more victims also increased the likelihood of attribution in Eastern Europe, but there was a small decline between time periods. Because terror attacks with large numbers of killed or wounded are infrequent in terrorism (LaFree, 2011), these attacks gain massive media coverage, and assigned responsibility may be a consequence of this media coverage. However, in Western Europe, there was a large decline in attributed attacks between time periods for attacks with ten or more victims. Because the majority of attacks involving ten or more victims were claimed in this time period, less frequent attributed attacks in this time period are not surprising.

## 4.3 Suicide Terrorism

This study tested the relationship between suicide attacks and claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe in the two time periods 1998-2008 and 2009-2019.

*Table 19*
Claiming behaviour by time period in Eastern Europe (suicide attacks only)

| | Eastern Europe | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1998-2008 | | | 2009-2019 | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 8 | 22% | 21% | 28 | 78% | 48% |
| Claimed | 20 | 53% | 53% | 18 | 47% | 31% |
| Attributed | 10 | 45% | 26% | 12 | 55% | 21% |
| Total | 38 | 40% | 100% | 58 | 60% | 100% |

*Table 20*
Claiming behaviour by time period in Western Europe (suicide attacks only)

| | Western Europe | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1998-2008 | | | 2009-2019 | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 0 | 0% | 0% | 2 | 100% | 10% |
| Claimed | 5 | 26% | 63% | 14 | 74% | 70% |
| Attributed | 3 | 43% | 38% | 4 | 57% | 20% |
| Total | 8 | 29% | 100% | 20 | 71% | 100% |

First, when looking at claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe in *Table 19*, the Column % show differences between time periods. In 1998-2008, 21% of suicide attacks were unclaimed, 53% were claimed, and 26% were attributed. In 2009-2019, 48% of suicide attacks were unclaimed, 31% were claimed, and 21% were attributed. Thus, when comparing the two time periods, there was an increase in unclaimed suicide attacks, and a decrease in claimed and attributed attacks. The Row % show that most unclaimed suicide attacks were in 2009-2019 (78%), but the proportion of claimed and attributed attacks were similar in both time periods. There was a significant difference between claiming behaviour and time period in Eastern Europe: $x^2 = 7,560$, p = ,023 (Appendix 10).

When examining claiming behaviour in Western Europe in *Table 20*, the table shows that no suicide attacks (0%) were unclaimed in 1998-2008, and two attacks (10%) were unclaimed in 2009-2019. In 1998-2008, 63% of suicide attacks were claimed, and 38% were attributed. In 2009-2019, 70% of suicide attacks were claimed, and 20% were attributed. These differences between claiming behaviour and time period in Western Europe were not significant: $x^2 = 1,547$, p = ,461 (Appendix 10). Importantly, suicide terrorism was infrequent in Western Europe in both time periods (eight suicide attacks in 1998-2008, and 20 suicide attacks in 2009-2019), and assumptions for the chi-square test were violated because of insufficient numbers in cells.

### 4.3.1   *A Decline in Claimed Attacks Between Time Periods*

Suicide attacks were infrequent in Eastern Europe and Western Europe. The results for Eastern Europe indicate that suicide terrorism increased claims of responsibility, which reflects previous empirical findings (Carter and Ahmed, 2020; Min, 2013). This supports the theory that terror groups claim responsibility for suicide attacks because it is an unconventional method that signals a group's strength. Notably, attributed attacks decreased when there was a suicide attack. This is in line with Kearns' (2019: 180) findings on suicide terrorism and attribution, and it was suggested that high rates of suicide terrorism might explain why attributed attacks were not impacted. *Table 19* demonstrated that there was a significant decline in claimed attacks between 1998-2008 (53%) and 2009-2019 (31%) in Eastern Europe. Additionally, there was a decline in attributed attacks between time periods, so these results contradict the suggestion that attributed attacks decrease because of increased claims of responsibility. An explanation for these results may be that terror groups fear punishments. Usually, 'the target state almost always has the capacity to retaliate with far more extreme punishment' (Pape, 2003: 350). Thus, terror groups might not want to be

associated with a suicide attack because of state reactions, and both claimed and attributed attacks may therefore decrease between time periods.

## 4.4 The Targets

To explore and identify patterns in claiming behaviour it was of interest to examine the relation between target groups and unclaimed, claimed, and attributed attacks in Eastern Europe and Western Europe. It was also of relevance to compare the time periods 1998-2008 and 2009-2019 in each region.

*Table 21*
Claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe by target group (1998-2008)

| Eastern Europe (1998-2008) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Private citizens and property | | | Government | | | Military | | | Police | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 167 | 27% | 63% | 198 | 31% | 68% | 79 | 13% | 42% | 185 | 29% | 58% |
| Claimed | 5 | 6% | 2% | 23 | 29% | 8% | 28 | 35% | 15% | 24 | 30% | 8% |
| Attributed | 93 | 26% | 35% | 71 | 20% | 24% | 81 | 23% | 43% | 108 | 31% | 34% |
| Total | 265 | 25% | 100% | 292 | 27% | 100% | 188 | 18% | 100% | 317 | 30% | 100% |

*Table 22*
Claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe by target group (2009-2019)

| Eastern Europe (2009-2019) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Private citizens and property | | | Government | | | Military | | | Police | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 307 | 24% | 61% | 237 | 18% | 71% | 388 | 30% | 43% | 359 | 28% | 79% |
| Claimed | 27 | 16% | 5% | 37 | 23% | 11% | 55 | 34% | 6% | 45 | 27% | 10% |
| Attributed | 170 | 23% | 34% | 60 | 8% | 18% | 463 | 62% | 51% | 52 | 7% | 11% |
| Total | 504 | 23% | 100% | 334 | 15% | 100% | 906 | 41% | 100% | 456 | 21% | 100% |

*Tables 21 and 22* display the relationship between claiming behaviour and target type in Eastern Europe. First, when examining the target group private citizens and property, the Column % were similar in both time periods, and claimed attacks were less common. 2% of attacks involving private citizens and property were claimed in 1998-2008, and 5% were

claimed in 2009-2019. When looking at government, the Column % show a decrease in attributed attacks between time periods. 24% of these attacks were attributed in 1998-2008, and 18% were attributed in 2009-2019. The total Row % also reveal that attacks on government were more common in 1998-2008 (27%), compared to 2009-2019 (15%). When examining the results for military as target group, the Column % show differences in claimed and attributed attacks between time periods. In 1998-2008 15% were claimed, and 43% were attributed. In 2009-2019, 6% were claimed and 51% were attributed. The total Row % show that attacks on military had a larger proportion in the second time period. In 1998-2008, 18% of terror attacks involved the military, and in 2009-2019, 41% of terror attacks involved the military. When looking at police as target group, the Column % demonstrate large variances in unclaimed and attributed attacks between time periods. In 1998-2008, 58% were unclaimed, and 34% were attributed. In 2009-2019, 79% were unclaimed, and 11% were attributed.

When examining the Row % for unclaimed attacks, the largest proportion within unclaimed attacks in 1998-2008, involved attacks on the government (31%), and in 2009-2019, the largest proportion of unclaimed attacks involved attacks on the military (30%). The Row % for claimed attacks show that in both time periods, most attacks where a claim of responsibility had been issued involved a military target. The Row % for attributed attacks also reveal some differences between time periods. In 1998-2008, 31% of attributed attacks involved a police target, and in 2009-2019, 62% of attributed attacks involved a military target. The chi-square test of independence (Appendix 11) showed a significant difference between claiming behaviour and time period when controlling for target group. The results for the time period 1998-2008 were: $x^2 = 51,313$, p = ,000, and the results for 2009-2019 were: $x^2 = 266,182$, p = ,000.

*Table 23*

Claiming behaviour in Western Europe by target group (1998-2008)

| Western Europe (1998-2008) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Private citizens and property | | | Government | | | Military | | | Police | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 170 | 40% | 48% | 172 | 40% | 46% | 11 | 3% | 30% | 75 | 18% | 50% |
| Claimed | 89 | 36% | 25% | 117 | 47% | 31% | 10 | 4% | 27% | 32 | 13% | 21% |
| Attributed | 93 | 39% | 26% | 86 | 36% | 23% | 16 | 7% | 43% | 43 | 18% | 29% |
| Total | 352 | 39% | 100% | 375 | 41% | 100% | 37 | 4% | 100% | 150 | 16% | 100% |

*Table 24*

Claiming behaviour in Western Europe by target group (2009-2019)

| Western Europe (2009-2019) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Private citizens and property | | | Government | | | Military | | | Police | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % |
| Unclaimed | 600 | 70% | 63% | 141 | 16% | 46% | 6 | 1% | 15% | 108 | 13% | 38% |
| Claimed | 167 | 42% | 18% | 115 | 29% | 38% | 23 | 6% | 59% | 92 | 23% | 33% |
| Attributed | 179 | 56% | 19% | 48 | 15% | 16% | 10 | 3% | 26% | 81 | 25% | 29% |
| Total | 946 | 60% | 100% | 304 | 19% | 100% | 39 | 2% | 100% | 281 | 18% | 100% |

The tables above demonstrate that attacks on private citizens and property were common in both time periods in Western Europe. The total Row % show that 39% of terror attacks in 1998-2008 involved private citizens and property, and 60% of terror attacks in 2009-2019 involved private citizens and property. The Column % also show variations between time periods. In 1998-2008, 48% of attacks on private citizens and property were unclaimed, 25% were claimed, and 26% were attributed, and in 2009-2019, 63% were unclaimed, 18% were claimed, and 19% were attributed. When looking at government, the total Row % show a decrease between time periods. In 1998-2008 the total Row % was 41% and in 2009-2019, the total Row % was 19%. The Column % reveal similar results for unclaimed attacks in both time periods (46%). In 1998-2008, claimed attacks were 31%, and attributed attacks were 23%. In 2009-2019, claimed attacks were 38%, and attributed attacks were 16%. When examining the total Row % for military, the tables show that attacks on military were less common in both time periods: 4% in 1998-2008, and 2% in 2009-2019. There were also differences in claiming behaviour between time periods when looking at the Column %. In

1998-2008, 30% of attacks on military were unclaimed, 27% were claimed, and 43% were attributed. In 2009-2019, 15% were unclaimed, 59% were claimed, and 26% were attributed. Looking at the results for police as target group, the Column % show differences in unclaimed and claimed attacks between time periods. In 1998-2008, 50% were unclaimed, and 21% were claimed. In 2009-2019, 38% were unclaimed, and 33% were claimed. When examining the Row % for unclaimed attacks, there were some changes between time periods. In 1998-2008, the largest proportion within unclaimed attacks involved attacks on private citizens and property (40%) and the government (40%), and in 2009-2019, the majority of unclaimed attacks involved attacks on private citizens and property (70%). There was a significant difference between claiming behaviour and time period in Western Europe when controlling for target group (Appendix 11). For the time period 1998-2008 the results were $x^2 = 13,469$, p = ,036. For the time period 2009-2019, the results were $x^2 = 120,751$, p = ,000.

### 4.3.1 *Attacks on Private Citizens Decreased Claimed Attacks*

The results in *Tables 21 and 22* showed that claimed attacks were less frequent when the target group was private citizens and property in Eastern Europe. Similar patterns could be found in Western Europe, shown in *Tables 23 and 24*. The results confirm previous research which demonstrate that groups are less likely to claim responsibility for attacks on private citizens and property (Abrahms and Conrad, 2017; Carter and Ahmed, 2020; Min, 2013). It is argued that attacks on civilian targets is strategically ineffective (Abrahms, 2006), and therefore claims of responsibility may be less common. The results for Western Europe showed a significant increase in unclaimed attacks between 1998-2008 and 2009-2019. Perhaps targeting private citizens is associated with higher risks of counterterrorism measures and therefore terror groups refrained from claiming responsibility.

It might be expected that attribution will be more frequent when private citizens and property are targeted because of public pressure to assign responsibility. Contrary to this expectation, attacks on private citizens and property did not increase attribution in any of the regions. There was also a decrease in attribution between time periods in Western Europe. One explanation for this is that the target group category involves numerous of possible targets, such as a transportation vehicle or a civilian. Perhaps when perpetrators attack a student, it may be important for the media to cover the attack. In contrast, when a vehicle is targeted, it may be less media coverage, and thus, attribution may be reduced and claimed attacks may be less frequent.

### 4.3.2   Variations in Claiming Behaviour Between Hard Target Groups

A military target, a government target, and a police target can all be considered 'hard targets' because these targets may be armed. The results for Eastern Europe and Western Europe showed great variations in unclaimed attacks between hard target categories. Attacks on military targets were less frequently unclaimed in both regions. Moreover, attribution in Eastern Europe was more common in this target group, and there was also an increase between time periods. In Western Europe, *Tables 23 and 24* demonstrated that the percentage of unclaimed attacks also decreased between time periods. Additionally, attacks on military targets were more likely to be claimed in 2009-2019. These findings imply that terror groups claim responsibility for attacks that signal a group's strength. Higher levels of combat sophistication are required when attacking military targets (Abrahms, 2006: 77), and this might also signal a group's strength which might lead to increased claimed attacks. While attacks involving military and police targets decreased unclaimed attacks in both regions, it is evident that attacks on military were most frequently claimed and attributed in both time periods. This supports Wright's suggestion that 'attacks on military targets carry a higher profile and signal strength in a more resolute fashion than attacks on police targets' (Wright, 2011: 19).

Attacks on government targets in Eastern Europe increased unclaimed attacks, and the *Tables 21 and 22* also demonstrated that the percentage of attributed attacks decreased between time periods. Also in Western Europe, attributed government attacks decreased proportionality between time periods. This opposes the suggestion that terror groups attacking government targets receive more media attention, and motives for attacks on government may be clearer (Kearns et al., 2019: 1000). However, claimed attacks in Western Europe for government attacks were more common compared to government attacks in Eastern Europe. These opposing results between Eastern Europe and Western Europe might indicate differences in government information. The results support Tishler's (2016: 18) suggestion that governments hide information that may be considered vulnerable. Thus, it can be suggested that governments in Eastern Europe have received private claims of responsibility that they do not want to publicise to the media. It is argued that terror attacks on government is embarrassing for a state (Hoffman, 1997: 5), and it is therefore a possibility that a government does not want to provide information about the perpetrators. Nonetheless, it might be expected that terror groups who want their claims to be public, have extended opportunities to do so via, for example social media accounts. Thus, a different reason for

terror groups not to claim responsibility might be that they expect negative reactions from the authorities when targeting the government (Hoffman, 1997). In Eastern Europe, *Tables 21 and 22* demonstrated that the percentage of unclaimed attacks increased between time periods when the target was police. Moreover, attributed attacks decreased between time periods. This opposes the theory that terror groups claim responsibility for attacks involving police targets because they signal high levels of strength. Perhaps terror groups remained anonymous when attacking police targets because this target group does not signal as much strength compared to for example military targets (Wright, 2011). Another explanation might be that claiming responsibility for attacks on police target may be consequential in terms of counterterrorism efforts and sanctions. In Western Europe, however, *Tables 23 and 24* demonstrated an increase in claimed attacks between time periods for attacks involving police targets. There was also an increase in claimed attacks between time periods. These opposing findings illustrate the complexities in terrorism, and perhaps dynamics between time periods might explain these results. However, it is important to point out that many attacks involve multiple targets, and media reports may not be able to uncover who the intended target was. Moreover, there is a possibility that data collectors pay more attention to the target than the perpetrators themselves did when they committed an attack (LaFree et al., 2015: 116).

## 4.5    Weapon Types

This research objective in this study was to explore the relationship between the weapon type used in a terror attack and terrorist groups' claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe. The weapon types examined in this study were automatic or semi-automatic rifle, projectile, vehicle (explosive), arson/fire and molotov cocktail. Importantly, the category vehicle refers to car bombs or truck bombs. The weapon category 'projectile' includes, rockets, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), and missiles, and these are explosive weapons.

| Eastern Europe (1998-2008) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Automatic or semi-automatic rifle | | | Projectile | | | Vehicle (explosive) | | | Arson/fire | | | Molotov cocktail/ petrol bomb | | | |
| | N | Row % | Column n % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | Total N |
| Unclaimed | 91 | 50% | 61% | 22 | 12% | 39% | 39 | 22% | 51% | 25 | 14% | 76% | 4 | 2% | 100% | 181 |
| Claimed | 10 | 31% | 7% | 9 | 28% | 16% | 13 | 41% | 17% | 0 | 0% | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0% | 32 |
| Attributed | 48 | 46% | 32% | 25 | 24% | 45% | 24 | 23% | 32% | 8 | 8% | 24% | 0 | 0% | 0% | 105 |
| Total | 149 | 47% | 100% | 56 | 18% | 100% | 76 | 24% | 100% | 33 | 10% | 100% | 4 | 1% | 100% | 318 |

| Eastern Europe (2009-2019) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Automatic or semi-automatic rifle | | | Projectile | | | Vehicle (explosive) | | | Arson/fire | | | Molotov cocktail/ petrol bomb | | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | Total N |
| Unclaimed | 84 | 14% | 67% | 354 | 58% | 39% | 80 | 13% | 82% | 56 | 9% | 70% | 33 | 5% | 79% | 607 |
| Claimed | 16 | 19% | 13% | 49 | 58% | 5% | 6 | 7% | 6% | 11 | 13% | 14% | 3 | 4% | 7% | 85 |
| Attributed | 25 | 5% | 20% | 495 | 90% | 55% | 11 | 2% | 11% | 13 | 2% | 16% | 6 | 1% | 14% | 550 |
| Total | 125 | 10% | 100% | 898 | 72% | 100% | 97 | 8% | 100% | 80 | 6% | 100% | 42 | 3% | 100% | 1242 |

First, when examining the results for automatic or semiautomatic rifle in Eastern Europe, there was a great difference in attribution between time periods. The Column % show that 32% of attacks involving this weapon type were attributed in 1998-2008, and 20% were attributed in 2009-2019. Looking at the weapon type projectile, there has been a large increase in the use of this weapon. While the total Row % show that 18% of attacks in 1998-2008 involved the use of projectiles, 72% of attacks in 2009-2019 involved projectiles. In 1998-2008, 16% of these attacks were claimed, and 45% were attributed. In 2009-2019, 5% were claimed and 55% were attributed. Importantly, in 2009-2019, 90% of attributed attacks involved a projectile weapon, compared to 24% in 1998-2008. Compared to the other weapon types in this sample, the total Row % shows that the use of explosive vehicle was the second

most used weapon in 1998-2008 (24%). The Column % reveal differences between time periods: Unclaimed attacks involving weaponry that fall under the category 'explosive vehicles' increased proportionality from 51% in 1998-2008 to 82% in 2009-2019. 1998-2008, 17% were claimed, and 32% were attributed, and in 2009-2019, 6% were claimed, and 11% were attributed. The use of arson was not a common weapon in these time periods, and most of these attacks were unclaimed. The Column % show that 76% were unclaimed in 1998-2008 and 70% were unclaimed in 2009-2019. When examining the results for molotov cocktail in Eastern Europe, the count displays that molotov cocktail was an uncommon weapon type in both time periods. In 1998-2008, this weapon was used only four times, and all these attacks were unclaimed. In 2009-2019, the use of molotov cocktail was reported 42 times, and the Column % shows that 79% of these attacks were unclaimed in this time period.

The results of the chi-square test of independence (Appendix 12) showed a significant difference between claiming behaviour and time period when controlling for weapon type, and the results for Eastern Europe in 1998-2008 were $x^2 = 22,892$, p = ,004. However, chi-square assumptions were violated for Eastern Europe in this time period because of insufficient numbers in cells. This can be observed in the categories arson/fire and molotov cocktail, thus, these results may not be accurate. The results for the time period 2009-2019 showed a significant difference between variables: $x^2 = 163,921$, p = ,000.

*Table 27*
Claiming behaviour in Western Europe by weapon type (1998-2008)

| | Automatic or semi-automatic rifle | | | Projectile | | | Vehicle (explosive) | | | Arson/fire | | | Molotov cocktail/petrol bomb | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western Europe (1998-2008) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | Total N |
| Unclaimed | 6 | 3% | 46% | 7 | 4% | 27% | 19 | 10% | 16% | 118 | 61% | 63% | 45 | 23% | 76% | 195 |
| Claimed | 3 | 3% | 23% | 4 | 4% | 15% | 47 | 48% | 39% | 37 | 38% | 20% | 7 | 7% | 12% | 98 |
| Attributed | 4 | 4% | 31% | 15 | 13% | 58% | 56 | 49% | 46% | 32 | 28% | 17% | 7 | 6% | 12% | 114 |
| Total | 13 | 3% | 100% | 26 | 6% | 100% | 122 | 30% | 100% | 187 | 46% | 100% | 59 | 14% | 100% | 407 |

*Table 28*

*Table 28*

Claiming behaviour in Western Europe by weapon type (2009-2019)

| | Western Europe (2009-2019) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Automatic or semi-automatic rifle | | | Projectile | | | Vehicle (explosive) | | | Arson/fire | | | Molotov cocktail/petrol bomb | | | |
| | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | N | Row % | Column % | Total N |
| Unclaimed | 4 | 1% | 11% | 5 | 1% | 29% | 19 | 3% | 36% | 269 | 49% | 62% | 254 | 46% | 72% | 551 |
| Claimed | 27 | 15% | 77% | 4 | 2% | 24% | 21 | 12% | 40% | 87 | 48% | 20% | 42 | 23% | 12% | 181 |
| Attributed | 4 | 3% | 11% | 8 | 5% | 47% | 13 | 8% | 25% | 75 | 48% | 17% | 56 | 36% | 16% | 156 |
| Total | 35 | 4% | 100% | 17 | 2% | 100% | 53 | 6% | 100% | 431 | 49% | 100% | 352 | 40% | 100% | 888 |

First, when looking at the results for automatic or semi-automatic rifle in Western Europe the use of this weapon was infrequent in both time periods. The Column % reveal differences in claiming behaviour between time periods. In 1998-2008, 46% of these attacks were unclaimed, 23% were claimed, and 31% were attributed. In 2009-2019, 11% of attacks involving an automatic or semi-automatic rifle were unclaimed, 77% were claimed, and 11% were attributed. When looking at the category for projectile, the total counts show that this weapon has been infrequently reported in both time periods: 26 attacks in 1998-2008 and 17 attacks in 2009-2019. Most attacks involving this weapon type were attributed. When examining the results for vehicle as a weapon type, the Column % reveal variations between time periods. In 1998-2008, 16% of attacks involving weapon type were unclaimed, 39% were claimed, and 46% were attributed. In 2009-2019, 36% were unclaimed, 40% were claimed, and 25% were attributed. The use of arson/fire was frequently registered in both time periods, and the total Row % show that this weapon was the most used weapon compared to the other categories in this sample in both time periods. When looking at the results for molotov cocktail in Western Europe, the use of this weapon was more common in the second time period. While only a total of 59 attacks (14%) involved molotov cocktail in 1998-2019, 352 attacks (40%) were registered in 2009-2019. Nonetheless, the Column % were similar in both time periods, and most of these attacks were unclaimed: 76% in 1998-2008 and 72% in 2009-2019. The chi-square test (Appendix 12) showed a significant difference in claiming behaviour in Western Europe in 1998-2008 when including weapon type: $x^2 = 99,994$, p = ,000. The chi-square test for Western Europe in 2009-2019 also showed a significant difference: $x^2 = 117,600$, p = ,000.

### 4.5.1 Weapon Types and Risks

Automatic weapons are considered to be a widely available weapon type (LaFree, 2011: 427), but the use of this weapon was more common in Eastern Europe, compared to Western Europe. The AK-47 is an automatic rifle that was developed in the Soviet Union in the 1940s (Matusitz, 2014: 210), and it might be that this weapon is more prominent in Eastern Europe because of its traditional value. Nonetheless, attacks involving automatic or semi-automatic rifles in terror attacks were commonly unclaimed in Eastern Europe, and there was a small increase in unclaimed attacks between time periods. *Tables 27 and 28* demonstrated that the use of automatic or semi-automatic was infrequently registered in Western Europe, but there were large differences in claimed attacks between time periods. In 2009-2019, 77% of attacks involving this weapon type were claimed in Western Europe. The use of rifles is associated with increased precision compared to other weapon types because it requires the perpetrator to be in proximity to the target (Koehler-Derrick and Milton, 2019). Thus, increased claimed attacks between time periods might suggest that automatic or semi-automatic rifle attacks might have been involved in attacks that have demonstrated a group's strength.

The results showed that attacks involving projectile increased attribution in Eastern Europe and Western Europe. The results contradict the findings of Bonomo et al. (2007: 68) who found that between 1998-2005, over 60% of attacks involving the projectile weapon 'mortar' were unattributed, and they suggest that this is because the weapon offers anonymity since it can be fired from a distance. One explanation might be that attacks involving projectile weapons were easier to attribute because the weapons contained information which made assigning responsibility possible. For example, the projectiles might include features which offers more precision (e.g., GPS locators) (Bonomo et al., 2007: 7), at the same time the weapon might have special indicators that make it possible to track this weapon back to a potential perpetrator. While traditional mortar systems are cheap, these technological advancements have perhaps made this weaponry more expensive, thus, modern projectiles can signal a group's strength because not all terror organisations can access this weaponry. Therefore, terror organisations might want to be suspected as perpetrators when using weapons in this weapon category. While the results of this analysis cannot confirm whether old or new projectiles have been used, it is an interesting proposition that should be researched. On the other hand, another explanation as to why this weapon type increased attribution can be that terror groups have been using improvised projectiles, instead of commercially produced weapons (Bonomo et al., 2007: 70). By using improvised weapons,

the possibility of escape may have been reduced because of its inefficiency, and arrests and attributions may have followed.

In Eastern Europe, the results for explosive vehicles as a weapon showed large variations in claiming behaviour between time periods. Most attacks involving this weapon type were unclaimed, but there was a large increase in unclaimed attacks between time periods. Explosive vehicles are also considered to be an available weapon (LaFree, 2011: 427). The use of explosive devices does not require the perpetrator to be in proximity of the target, and it is therefore less risk of being caught when this weapon type is used (Koehler-Derrick and Milton, 2019). Because the use of this weaponry is associated with less risk, terror groups may resolve to the use of this weaponry to remain anonymous, and it indicates that these attacks will frequently be unclaimed. In Western Europe, there were variations between time periods when looking at unclaimed and attributed. Interestingly, the use of this weapon increased claimed attacks. Because this weapon type may provide anonymity, terror groups that want to be recognised as perpetrators must therefore claim responsibility to be assigned responsibility for an attack. It also argued that it may take more skill and precision to create this weapon (Brown, 2021: 10), and therefore claiming responsibility for explosive vehicle attacks may signal a group's strength.

In Eastern Europe and Western Europe attacks involving arson or fire were commonly unclaimed, they were infrequently claimed, and attributed attacks were uncommon. These results were also similar between time periods. When perpetrators cause a fire, they most likely will have time to escape. It is suggested that incendiary attacks usually aim for buildings and structures because people oftentimes can avoid the direct impact of incendiary weapons (Jackson and Frelinger, 2008: 591). Thus, claimed attacks may be less likely for arson attacks because they do not demonstrate a group's strength. The use of molotov cocktail as a weapon in terror attacks were infrequently reported in Eastern Europe. In Western Europe, this weapon was registered infrequently in 1998-2008, but in the second time period, this weapon was common. The use of molotov cocktail increased unclaimed attacks in both regions. Molotov cocktail is a simple weapon that does not require any specific skills to make, and in addition it is cheap. It is also a weapon that might not cause much damage, and perhaps molotov cocktail attacks involve few victims which may increase unclaimed attacks because these attacks do not demonstrate a group's strength. It can also be argued that the use of this weapon also offers anonymity that terror groups seek. These findings suggest that attributing responsibility for molotov cocktails attacks are uncommon. However, what complicates studies on terror groups' use of weaponry is that terror groups might combine weapons in

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terror attacks, but this information may not be provided in media reports (Jackson and Frelinger, 2008: 591). Thus, it is plausible that attacks where weapons have been combined are underreported in databases (ibid.).

## 4.6    Summary

The findings implied that unclaimed attacks were frequent in both regions in both time periods, but unclaimed attacks were more common in Eastern Europe. It was argued that constrains on media freedom decreased claimed attacks in Eastern Europe. The results from these analyses indicated that terror groups claim responsibility for less frequent attacks, such as suicide attacks and lethal attacks that can demonstrate a terror group's strength. In Eastern Europe claimed attacks increased when there was suicide terrorism, or ten or more victims killed or wounded. In both regions, attacks on private citizens and property were common, but these attacks decreased claimed attacks. It might be that claiming responsibility for attacks on this target group is associated with more counterterrorism measures. When looking at 'hard target' groups, the findings revealed great variations in claiming behaviour between time periods in both regions. The results for weapon types also revealed variations between regions, and the use of explosive vehicle increased unclaimed attacks in Eastern Europe in 2009-2019, but this weapon decreased unclaimed attacks in Western Europe.

# Chapter 5    Conclusion

This chapter will conclude the research project by summarising the key findings relating to the research aim and research question. Implications of the study and future research recommendations will also be provided. This research aimed to answer the following question:

*Have the patterns in terrorist groups' claiming behaviours in Eastern Europe and Western Europe changed between 1998-2008 and 2009-2019?*

A short answer to this research question would be to say that in Eastern Europe, the period of time had less impact on claiming behaviour. In Western Europe, unclaimed attacks increased between time periods, and attributed attacks decreased.

This study aimed to identify and explore patterns in unclaimed, claimed, and attributed attacks in Eastern Europe and Western Europe in two time periods. Based on quantitative

analyses of claiming behaviour in Eastern Europe and Western Europe between 1998-2008 and 2009-2019, the result indicated that unclaimed attacks were most frequent in both regions. In Eastern Europe more than half of terrorist attacks were unclaimed, and approximately one third of terror attacks were attributed in both time periods. Importantly, claimed attacks were infrequent, and only 7% of terror attacks in Eastern Europe were claimed in both time periods. Also in Western Europe, unclaimed attacks were common in both time periods, but there was an increase between 1998-2008 (45%) and 2009-2019 (54%). Claimed attacks were similar in both time periods, 29% of attacks were claimed in 1998-2008, and 27% in 2009-2019. Notably, there was a decrease in attributed attacks between time periods, from 26% in 1998-2008 to 19% in 2009-2019. The differences in unclaimed and claimed attacks between Eastern Europe and Western Europe might indicate that there are differences in media freedom. Less claimed attacks in Eastern Europe imply that governments may hide claims of responsibility because governments do not want to appear weak. Perhaps strict media-controls prevent journalists from publishing news stories involving claims of responsibility. However, when examining attack characteristics such as numbers of victims killed, suicide terrorism, target groups, and weapon types, the results indicated variations in unclaimed, claimed, and attributed attacks between time periods in both regions.

Suicide terrorism was uncommon in Eastern Europe and Western Europe, and attacks involving ten or more victims were also less frequent. Thus, claiming responsibility for rare attacks that cause large damage may demonstrate a group's strength. Findings indicate that claimed attacks increase when there is a suicide attack and when there are high numbers of victims killed or wounded. These findings therefore support the theory that terror groups claim responsibility for attacks that signal a group's strength (Min, 2013). The results demonstrated that claimed attacks were less frequent when the target was private citizens and property. It was suggested that attacks on private citizens and property would increase attribution since the media might have an amplified focus when these victims are targeted. Contrary to expectation, attacks on private citizens and property did not increase attributed attacks. Perhaps many of these attacks involve attacks on property, and these attacks may not result in vast media coverage. A lack of media coverage may perhaps reduce attributed attacks. Molotov cocktail attacks increased unclaimed attacks, and one suggestion is that these attacks might involve few victims, and therefore these attacks might not demonstrate a group's strength which may be important for terror groups if they wish to claim responsibility.

This research has also explored lies in claiming behaviour in terrorism because it was necessary to establish that a claim of responsibility does not equal a terror groups'

involvement in a terror attack. In the introduction of this thesis, an example of a terror attack that involved a claim of responsibility which was withdrawn was provided. It was asked why a terror group first would claim responsibility, and then withdraw the claim by providing a statement where any involvement was denied. After conducting this research, perhaps we are better equipped to answer such questions. As explored, terror groups might claim responsibility for attacks that demonstrate strength. It is likely that shooting down a plane signals a group's strength because it takes precision and technology to do so. However, when the group found out that the target was a passenger plane with civilian victims, the fear of negative consequences might have led the terror group to withdraw the claim. Importantly, to this day, the terror group's involvement in this attack is still contested. The question of how the terror group could access this sort of weapon type is disputed. Thus, this example illustrates that attributing responsibility for terror attacks is challenging.

*Future Recommendations*

This research has explored how patterns in claiming behaviour may change between time periods, depending on attack characteristics such as weapon types used, and numbers of victims killed or injured. Although it was a little outside the scope of the research question, the research established that the use of claiming methods have changed. A phone call or a letter were common claim modes in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but in more recent years, the use of social media and e-mail to claim responsibility have become more frequent. The results from this research showed that claims of responsibility have not increased between time periods in Eastern Europe and Western Europe, which might suggest that even if there are more available claiming methods in contemporary times, it has not led to a growth in claims of responsibility. Future research should consider the relationship between social media and claims of responsibility. There is a possibility that access to social media enables lower-ranked members to claim responsibility for attacks, even without permission from the leadership (Abrahms and Conrad, 2017: 303). Therefore, research on claiming behaviour would benefit from qualitative analysis in terms of exploring who is actually publishing claims of responsibility, and the internal conflicts that may be present within a terror organisation. For example, it is suggested that lower-ranked members in a terror group are more willing to claim responsibility for attacks on civilian targets, compared to the leaders (Abrahms and Conrad, 2017). Similarly, when establishing the credibility in a claim of responsibility, it would be interesting to analyse the written claims provided by a terror organisation. A claim of responsibility is usually written by one individual, and the statement tends to be attributed to the entire group. As Cordes (2001: 164-5) notes, the individual who

wrote the statement certainly includes some form of personal elements into the text. Thus, claiming behaviour in terrorism offers multiple ways to explore this subject.

Future research on claiming behaviour would also benefit from a new focus on claimed, unclaimed, and attributed attacks, and it is therefore crucial that the GTD and other terrorism databases provide necessary information to study this phenomenon. As explored, the 'Claimed' variable in the GTD lacks information. It is also argued that 'the codebook lacks clear inclusion criteria, and views a claim of responsibility as something you know when you see it' (Hansen, 2021: 1394). Importantly, the GTD does not comment on the credibility of claims included in the data (Hansen, 2021: 1387), and this information would also be useful when establishing whether an attribution is based on suspicion or credibility. Thus, it would be of importance to include what indicators led the researchers to assign responsibility to a specific terror group. Whether it was the weaponry used in a terror attack that made it possible to assign responsibility, or whether it was a combination of attack characteristics that led to an attribution would also be of interest to explore. Moreover, it would be useful if the GTD as well as other public databases collect information about hoax claims of responsibility. Details such as the date of the claim of responsibility would also offer important material to analyse. Because terror groups sometimes claim responsibility for attacks years after the incident occurred, it would be of interest to explore characteristics of those claims. Another aspect that also would be useful to include in databases, is whether a terror group publicly denied involvement in a terror attack. There are instances where suspected perpetrator groups publicly deny any involvement in an attack, and it would also be of interest to examine attack characteristics for denial of responsibility.

*Implications*

This study provides new insights into the relationship between claiming behaviour and time periods in terrorism. This research has found that claiming responsibility for attacks varies depending on number of victims killed or injured, whether an attack was a suicide attack or not, target group and weapon type. Research on claiming behaviour also has implications for when to detect lies in attribution and claimed attacks. Perhaps terror groups might lie about their involvement when an attack demonstrate a group's strength?

Uncertainty related to anonymous terror attacks can cause increased fear in a society (Rorie, 2008), and from a counterterrorism perspective, it is problematic not to know who perpetrated an attack. A political reaction to terror attacks in Europe is oftentimes increased security (Amnesty International, 2017; Engene, 2013), and these security measures might

restrict certain civil rights, such as media freedom (Bjørnskov and Voigt, 2020). By understanding that most terror attacks involve unknown perpetrators, the fear and panic that emerges in a population after a terror attack may be reduced. Perhaps restrictions on civil rights may be less needed if citizens and politicians are well-informed about terrorist groups' claiming behaviours, and their tendency to escape attribution. Importantly, citizens' fear and insecurity may be reduced. The power of statistics may therefore be essential when informing the public and politicians.

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# Appendices

**Appendix 1:** Chi-square test: Mode for claim of responsibility by year.

| Pearson Chi-Square Tests | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Mode for Claim of Responsibility |
| Year | Chi-square | 8962,752 |
| | df | 168 |
| | Sig. | ,000* |
| Results are based on nonempty rows and columns in each innermost subtable. *. The Chi-square statistic is significant at the ,05 level. | | |

**Appendix 2:** Chi-square test: Mode for claims of responsibility by year (Eastern and Western Europe).

| Pearson Chi-Square Tests | | | Year |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eastern Europe | Mode for Claim of Responsibility | Chi-square | 42,386 |
| | | df | 3 |
| | | Sig. | ,000* |
| Western Europe | Mode for Claim of Responsibility | Chi-square | 331,740 |
| | | df | 3 |
| | | Sig. | ,000* |
| Results are based on nonempty rows and columns in each innermost subtable. | | | |
| *. The Chi-square statistic is significant at the ,05 level. | | | |

**Appendix 3:** Confirmed perpetrator by unclaimed or claimed attacks.
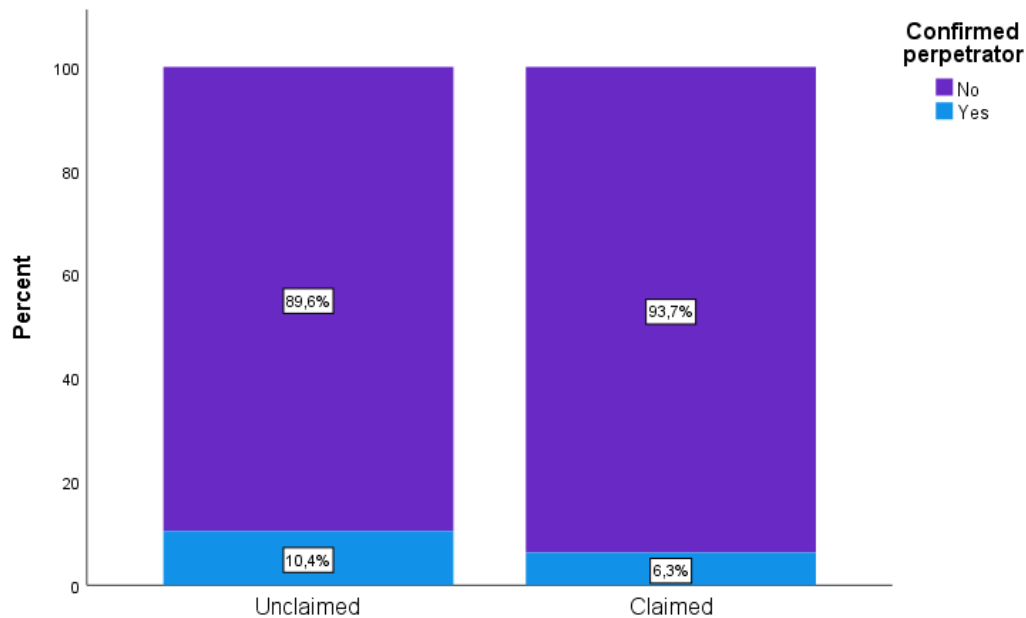
Chi-square test for confirmed perpetrator by unclaimed or claimed attacks:

| Pearson Chi-Square Tests | | |
|---|---|---:|
| | | guncertain1 |
| claimed | Chi-square | 25,091 |
| | df | 2 |
| | Sig. | ,000* |
| Results are based on nonempty rows and columns in each innermost subtable. *. The Chi-square statistic is significant at the ,05 level. | | |

**Appendix 4:** Weapon types used in Eastern Europe and Western Europe

*weapsubtype1_txt * region_txt Crosstabulation*
Count

| | Eastern Europe | Western Europe | Total |
|---|---:|---:|---:|
| Unknown Explosive Type | 597 | 754 | 1351 |
| Unknown Gun Type | 851 | 229 | 1080 |
| Projectile (rockets, mortars, RPGs, etc.) | 954 | 43 | 997 |
| Arson/Fire | 113 | 618 | 731 |
| Other Explosive Type | 268 | 344 | 612 |
| Molotov Cocktail/Petrol Bomb | 46 | 411 | 457 |
| Vehicle | 173 | 175 | 348 |
| Automatic or Semi-Automatic Rifle | 274 | 48 | 322 |
| Pipe Bomb | 3 | 317 | 320 |
| Gasoline or Alcohol | 18 | 291 | 309 |
| Grenade | 232 | 44 | 276 |
| Landmine | 156 | 3 | 159 |
| Letter Bomb | 11 | 140 | 151 |
| Knife or Other Sharp Object | 24 | 100 | 124 |
| Handgun | 48 | 66 | 114 |
| Time Fuse | 27 | 80 | 107 |
| Dynamite/TNT | 61 | 39 | 100 |
| Remote Trigger | 80 | 16 | 96 |
| Blunt Object | 18 | 60 | 78 |
| Suicide (carried bodily by human being) | 55 | 15 | 70 |
| Rifle/Shotgun (non-automatic) | 32 | 17 | 49 |
| Hands, Feet, Fists | 28 | 13 | 41 |
| Sticky Bomb | 28 | 9 | 37 |
| Unknown Weapon Type | 16 | 10 | 26 |
| Pressure Trigger | 11 | 10 | 21 |
| Other Gun Type | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| Poisoning | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Rope or Other Strangling Device | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Suffocation | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| System missing | 244 | 119 | 363 |
| Total | 4378 | 3974 | 8352 |

**Appendix 5:** Chi-square test: Claiming behaviour by year, including region.

| Chi-Square Tests | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| region_txt | | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Eastern Europe | Pearson Chi-Square | 1036,941[b] | 42 | ,000 |
| | Likelihood Ratio | 1133,431 | 42 | ,000 |
| | Linear-by-Linear Association | ,501 | 1 | ,479 |
| | N of Valid Cases | 4378 | | |
| Western Europe | Pearson Chi-Square | 212,453[c] | 42 | ,000 |
| | Likelihood Ratio | 210,462 | 42 | ,000 |
| | Linear-by-Linear Association | 32,011 | 1 | ,000 |
| | N of Valid Cases | 3974 | | |
| Total | Pearson Chi-Square | 960,987[a] | 42 | ,000 |
| | Likelihood Ratio | 998,803 | 42 | ,000 |
| | Linear-by-Linear Association | 12,327 | 1 | ,000 |
| | N of Valid Cases | 8352 | | |
| a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 17,88. | | | | |
| b. 3 cells (4,5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3,23. | | | | |
| c. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12,80. | | | | |

**Appendix 6**: Chi-square test: Claiming behaviour by region.

| Pearson Chi-Square Tests | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Region |
| Claiming behaviour | Chi-square | 631,935 |
| | df | 2 |
| | Sig. | ,000[*] |
| Results are based on nonempty rows and columns in each innermost subtable. | | |
| *. The Chi-square statistic is significant at the ,05 level. | | |

**Appendix 7:** Chi-square test: Claiming behaviour by time period in Eastern Europe and Western Europe.

| Chi-Square Tests | | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Region | | | | |
| Eastern Europe | Pearson Chi-Square | 1,333[b] | 2 | ,513 |
| | N of Valid Cases | 4378 | | |
| Western Europe | Pearson Chi-Square | 34,472[c] | 2 | ,000 |
| | N of Valid Cases | 3974 | | |
| Total | Pearson Chi-Square | 30,032[a] | 2 | ,000 |
| | N of Valid Cases | 8352 | | |
| a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 516,84. | | | | |
| b. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 102,87. | | | | |
| c. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 347,71. | | | | |

**Appendix 8:** Most active perpetrator groups in Eastern Europe and Western Europe (1998-2019). Generics included.

| 20 Most Active Perpetrator Groups in Eastern Europe (1998-2019) | | 20 most active perpetator groups in Western Europe (1998-2019) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Group Name | Number of terror attacks | Group Name | Number of terror attacks |
| **Unknown** | 2762 | **Unknown** | 2040 |
| Donetsk People's Republic | 628 | Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA) | 248 |
| Chechen Rebels | 316 | Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC) | 132 |
| Luhansk People's Republic | 210 | Dissident Republicans | 120 |
| Albanian extremists | 46 | Anarchists | 80 |
| Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) | 44 | The New Irish Republican Army | 66 |
| Caucasus Emirate | 44 | Jihadi-inspired extremists | 63 |
| National Liberation Army (NLA) (Macedonia) | 35 | Conspiracy of Cells of Fire | 56 |
| Caucasus Province of the Islamic State | 27 | Oglaigh na hEireann | 48 |
| Pro-Russia Militia | 24 | Anti-Muslim extremists | 46 |
| Muslim extremists | 22 | Informal Anarchist Federation | 43 |
| Gunmen | 21 | Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA) | 41 |
| Armed Forces of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria | 12 | Irish Republican Army (IRA) | 37 |
| Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs | 10 | Loyalists | 33 |
| Right Sector | 8 | Muslim extremists | 32 |
| Cossack Separatists | 8 | Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA) | 31 |
| Ukrainian nationalists | 6 | Neo-Nazi extremists | 24 |
| Albanian National Army (ANA) | 6 | Revolutionary Struggle | 23 |
| Neo-Nazi extremists | 5 | Red Hand Defenders (RHD) | 23 |
| Kharkiv Partisans | 5 | Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) | 22 |
| Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) | 5 | Anti-Semitic extremists | 22 |

**Appendix 9:** Chi-square test: Claiming behaviour by time period, including victims killed or wounded.

| *Pearson Chi-Square Tests* | | | Year | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | 1998-2008 | 2009-2019 |
| | | | Victims killed or wounded | Victims killed or wounded |
| Eastern Europe | Claiming behaviour | Chi-square | 76,664 | 156,521 |
| | | df | 6 | 6 |
| | | Sig. | ,000* | ,000* |
| Western Europe | Claiming behaviour | Chi-square | 62,928 | 105,722 |
| | | df | 6 | 6 |
| | | Sig. | ,000* | ,000* |
| Results are based on nonempty rows and columns in each innermost subtable. | | | | |
| *. The Chi-square statistic is significant at the ,05 level. | | | | |

**Appendix 10**: Chi-square test: Claiming behaviour by region, only suicide attacks.

| *Pearson Chi-Square Tests* | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Suicide attacks | | | | |
| | | | region_txt | |
| | | | Eastern Europe | Western Europe |
| | | | Year | Year |
| Claiming behaviour | | Chi-square | 7,560 | 1,547 |
| | | df | 2 | 2 |
| | | Sig. | ,023* | ,461[b,c] |
| Results are based on nonempty rows and columns in each innermost subtable. | | | | |
| *. The Chi-square statistic is significant at the ,05 level. | | | | |
| b. More than 20% of cells in this subtable have expected cell counts less than 5. Chi-square results may be invalid. | | | | |
| c. The minimum expected cell count in this subtable is less than one. Chi-square results may be invalid. | | | | |

**Appendix 11:** Chi-square test: Claiming behaviour by region, including target group.

| *Pearson Chi-Square Tests* | | region_txt | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Eastern Europe | | Western Europe | |
| | | Year | | Year | |
| | | 1998-2008 | 2009-2019 | 1998-2008 | 2009-2019 |
| | | Target group | Target group | Target group | Target group |
| Claiming behaviour | Chi-square | 51,313 | 266,182 | 13,469 | 120,751 |
| | df | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Sig. | ,000[*] | ,000[*] | ,036[*] | ,000[*] |
| Results are based on nonempty rows and columns in each innermost subtable. | | | | | |
| *. The Chi-square statistic is significant at the ,05 level. | | | | | |

**Appendix 12:** Chi-square test: Claiming behaviour by region, including weapon type.

| *Pearson Chi-Square Tests* | | | | Year | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1998-2008 | 2009-2019 |
| | | | | Weapon type | Weapon type |
| region_txt | Eastern Europe | Claiming behaviour | Chi-square | 22,892 | 163,921 |
| | | | df | 8 | 8 |
| | | | Sig. | ,004[*,b,c] | ,000[*] |
| | Western Europe | Claiming behaviour | Chi-square | 99,994 | 117,600 |
| | | | df | 8 | 8 |
| | | | Sig. | ,000[*] | ,000[*] |
| Results are based on nonempty rows and columns in each innermost subtable. | | | | | |
| *. The Chi-square statistic is significant at the ,05 level. | | | | | |
| b. More than 20% of cells in this subtable have expected cell counts less than 5. Chi-square results may be invalid. | | | | | |
| c. The minimum expected cell count in this subtable is less than one. Chi-square results may be invalid. | | | | | |