

Anti-political and a-political attack

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Anti-political and a-political attack

We are concerned with differentiating two types of attack, *anti-political* and *a-political*. To do this we separate them along two primary attributes, whether the attack is *consequentialist* or *non-consequentialist* and what qualities of the political are contained in the attack (the *methods*, *goals*, and *consequences*).

By attack we mean a non-governmental use of force on someone or something. For example, destroying property is an attack, while protesting or doing non-violent civil disobedience is not.

Consequentialist versus non-consequentialist attack

A *consequentialist attack* is aimed at achieving a desired consequence or outcome. The attack itself is not the goal. Example: Boxing to win a prize fight.

In a *non-consequentialist attack*, the desired consequence or outcome is the attack itself. Example: Boxing because fighting is enjoyable. Note that non-consequentialist attack as described here can be considered a special case of consequentialist attack.

What is “political” about an attack?

We make a three-way distinction: An attack can use *political methods*, have *political goals*, and have *political consequences*.

The use of *political methods* would be a form of representational compromise or capitulation, and not considered attack. For example, voting or passing laws.

An attack with *political goals* specifically aims to result in a change in policy, legislation, or government. This takes the intention of the actor into account. Taking hostages to demand a change in government foreign policy would be an attack with political goals, although it may or may not have political consequences.

An attack with *political consequences* results in a change in policy or legislation or government that responds to the attack, whether or not the attack aims at those consequences. For example, theft can have political consequences because this might lead to a change in government policy by increasing policing, but thieves are generally not aiming to cause increased policing.

We consider political goals to be the most important dimension to differentiate anti-political from a-political attack. This is because, first, the use of political methods is not an attack, so we consider only non-political methods, and second, most attacks can have political consequences even if they are unintentional.

Anti-political attack

Anti-political attack may be seen as a special type of attack that is consequentialist with a political goal of specifically destroying the political. The consequentialist aim is not to change policy, legislation, or government, but to destroy the material and ideological conditions that allow policy, legislation, or government to exist. For example, thwarting electoral processes through sabotage (such as destroying voting machines), violence (blowing up people who try to vote), or propaganda (spreading anti-voting graffiti) would be examples of clear anti-political attack,

where the first two focus on the material conditions of government, while propaganda focuses on the ideological conditions. Demonstrating that certain problems considered political can be solved without political methods is also type of anti-political attack. In this way, pipeline sabotage would be an anti-political attack, because the actors both aim to stop the pipeline but also demonstrate that one does not need to wait for legislation or regulators to stop the pipeline.

A-political attack

A-political attack can be consequentialist or non-consequentialist, can have political consequences, does not use political methods, and does not have a political goal. The consequentialist a-political attack might be to exact revenge upon an enemy, which could have political consequences (enactment of new laws), but there is no political goal of changing legislation, policy, government. A non-consequentialist a-political attack might be throwing a brick through a window because it is fun. Even though there was no aim at any consequence, beyond the narrow aim of smashing the window, there could be political consequences (such as increased budgets for surveillance). However, because the intent of the action was not to cause some political change, it would be an a-political attack. Bloom-type random violence, like mass shootings, can have political consequences but no political goal.

A table with examples of anti-political and a-political attack

The table below enumerates and provides examples of the possibilities that arise from attack being consequentialist or not, having political consequences or not, and having political goals or not. In practice there are only 6 possibilities because it is not possible to have political goals without the action being consequentialist.

Case Number	Attack Type	Consequentialist	Political Consequences	Political Goals	Some Examples
1	Anti-political	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sabotage voting machines, insurrection, earth liberation, animal liberation
2	A-political	Yes	Yes	No	Mafia activity, gang wars
3	Anti-political	Yes	No	Yes	Sabotage
4	A-political	Yes	No	No	Most "common crime" (robbery, burglary)
5	A-political	No	Yes	No	Some Bloom-type random violence, mass shootings
6	A-political	No	No	No	Sports riot, jouissance

Case 1 Example: Anti-political, consequentialist, political consequences, political goals

Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) used a campaign with various tactics of attack to shut down the Huntingdon Life Sciences animal testing company. The goal of this campaign was to shut the company down, which is consequentialist, but also to further the cause of animal liberation, which is a political goal. Their actions had political consequences, including increased repression due to the passage of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act.

Case 2 Example: A-political, consequentialist, political consequences, no political goals

The Philadelphia Black Mafia engaged in heroin trafficking, gambling, burglary, armed robbery, extortion, racketeering, prostitution, loansharking, number running, and other illegal gambling rackets. Their attacks often targeted other individuals and groups in the illegal sphere, had clear aims of gaining money and power making them consequentialist, had no political goals, but did have political consequences including political corruption.

Case 3 Example: Anti-political, consequentialist, no political consequences, political goals

The March 5, 2023 attack on the under-construction police training facility (Cop City) in Atlanta is an example of anti-political attack that was consequentialist, with no political consequences, and political goals. There was a clear political goal of the attack, to stop the cop city by destroying construction equipment thereby running politicians and the Atlanta Police Foundation out of funding for the project, but there were no political consequences in terms of changes to policy or governance in the area.

Case 4 Example: A-political, consequentialist, no political consequences, no political goals

In the State of New Jersey vs. Loyd an individual broke into a home and stole property and firearms, as well as a 2006 Mercedes Benz. A doorbell camera at the home captured the burglar on video. Later that day, the Irvington Fire Department extinguished a vehicle fire; the car was the stolen Mercedes. Weeks later, police in Warren Township were dispatched to a burglary in progress. They arrested this person. The attack was consequentialist, aiming to steal the car, but with no political consequences or goals.

Case 5 Example: A-political, non-consequentialist, political consequences, no political goals

Tiqun's Bloom Theory gives several examples of unexplained acts of violence that are caused by alienation of Bloom. The authors point out that Bloom's unexplainable acts of violence are more politically damaging, rupturing or tearing at the fabric of the sense-making that is the spectacle and the bodily control that is biopower, than explainable goal-directed political acts of violence. Even though Bloom's intentions are not to cause a political effect, they nonetheless have political consequences. Thus, Bloom-like attacks are a-political. Theses on the Imaginary Party also has examples and reasoning.

Case 6 Examples: A-political, non-consequentialist, no political consequences, no political goals

Streamer Kai Cenat's video game console give-away caused a riot in Union Square that is likely an example of a-political attack. While some participating may have had particular consequences and political goals in mind, most were likely acting out of the desire for the consoles, the joy of the riot, and anger at the police for thwarting their frenzy and fun.

Blessed is the Flame presents a number of examples of Jewish resistance in concentration camps. As interpreted by the author, those resisting did not have a reasonable expectation of achieving political consequences or goals with their actions; they knew they would be killed regardless of their actions. However, they still acted. For this reason, according to our categorization, most of the actions in Blessed is the Flame would be considered a-political attacks: they were non-consequentialist (not expecting anything beyond the immediate action of stabbing a Nazi guard), did not use political methods, had no political consequences, and no political goals.

Mixed example: Acrid Black Smoke applies the analysis of Blessed is the Flame to the George Floyd Rebellion. The attacks here seem to be a mix of anti-political and a-political. Some rioters, furious about police brutality, were inflicting damage to the political system and government, with the aim of either getting rid of the police entirely, or getting rid of the government. Others were simply acting out of rage without considering the consequences or political at all, making their attacks a-political.

Should our attacks be anti-political or a-political?

It depends on what you want. If you have a specific political goal, then your attack would be anti-political. If you just want to have fun, then the attack is a-political, even though it may have political consequences (for example, demonstrating to others that acting without regard for the state or even death is possible, encouraging them to abandon the futurity that is the necessary condition of the state).

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