

DEVELOPING A GLOBAL TERRORISM DATA BASE

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Abstract

Although the research literature on terrorism has expanded dramatically since the 1970s, the number of studies based on systematic empirical analysis is surprisingly limited. One of the main reasons for this lack of cutting-edge empirical analysis on terrorism is the low quality of available statistical data. In response, there has been growing interest in open source terrorist event data bases. One of the major problems with these data bases in the past is that they have been limited to international events—those involving a national or group of nationals from one country attacking targets physically located in another country. Past research shows that domestic incidents greatly outnumber international incidents. In response, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) has been collecting an open source event data base that includes both domestic and international terrorist events. The GTD currently includes about 70,000 events, making it about seven times larger than any of the other existing event data bases. In this presentation, I briefly describe our data collection efforts, the strengths and weaknesses of open source data in general and the GTD in particular, and provide some examples of the analytic utility of this new resource.