

A Further Exploration of State Fragility and Terrorism

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Project Scope:

I explore the relationship between state fragility and terrorism. Terrorism is defined by the Global Terrorism Database as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence to obtain a political, economic, religious or social goal through fear, coercion or intimidation”. I use the GTD1 domestic and international terrorism event data from 1970 to 1997. State fragility is defined by the Political Instability Task Force as “civil conflicts, political crises, and massive human rights violations that are typically associated with state breakdown”. There are 4 specific types of events: revolutionary wars, ethnic wars, adverse or disruptive regime transitions, and genocides / politicides or “complex” which is when more than one type of fragility co-occurs. I have found that the number of terrorist events and even fatalities and episodes of state fragility are related over time, and the relationship grows after 1979. There is also a concentration by type of fragility, such that many more terrorist events occur in states suffering from “complex” fragility. State fragility appears to be an important predictor of where and when terrorist events occur.

Recent Progress:

I am in the process of disaggregating these “complex” events to find a more precise way of categorizing them and to explore whether the picture of terrorism changes if different combinations of fragility co-occur. I am also in the process of finding and conceptualizing control variables for each country, like GDP, income inequality, degree of international openness or trade and others for a multivariate analysis.

Future Plans:

I plan to analyze the relationship in a multivariate framework. It is highly important to analyze the relationship while controlling for other characteristics of these countries that may render the terrorism-fragility relationship unimportant. In addition, I plan to model the data with a group-based statistical format to see if any patterns emerge between countries beyond the degree of fragility they have experienced.

Relevance to listed research areas:

I believe my research fits into the “Social, Economic and Behavioral Sciences” area, because I am exploring why terrorism occurs in which specific countries and in which specific years.

Publications: I have published once with my mentors on this project. See below:

LaFree, Gary, Laura Dugan, and Susan Fahey (2007). "Global Terrorism and Failed States." In *Peace and Conflict*, 2007, eds. J. Joseph Hewitt, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, Ted R. Gurr. Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm Publishers.