Are the (causal) stories of different operationalizations of terrorism different?

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Abstract: The argument over what terrorism is has been ongoing in academia for more than 50 years from those that define any kind of threat of violence or violence by nonstate actors as terrorism to those that restrict terrorism to just attacks against civilians to those that point out that much of the violence against civilians is perpetrated by states and thus we need to include the state in the definition of terrorism. What has been missing in much of this discussion has been the analytical ramifications of different operationalizations of terrorism. Focusing on nonstate terrorism this paper examines empirically if the causal story of what explains incidents of terrorism at the state level changes if we change how we are defining and thus operationalizing terrorism by examining how factors like regime type, state repression and state wealth have (or do not have) different impacts on the likelihood of the amount of terrorist incidents a country is likely to suffer if we operationalize terrorism differently.

Introduction

Terrorism in the news every day- but this overarching concern in many countries often means very different things to different people. There has long been a debate over what nonstate actor terrorism means and since September 11th at least the term "terrorism," has been over-used and taken advantage of as an analytical concept (Richards, 2014). There are many definitions of nonstate terrorism[1], but what the word actually means is hotly debated amongst scholars and policy makers (Goodwin, 2006). Researchers and policy makes have debated the phrase for years, and the divide on the topic has affected research and theorizing about the topic. How one defines terrorism clearly impacts how researchers measure and model the theoretical basis of terrorism (Asal et al., 2012) but what has not been examined before as far as we know is if the definition of terrorism actually impacts the causal story

Researchers have developed their own categorical guidelines in defining terrorism but these definitions have varied widely. Some see terrorism as about any kind of attack by nonstate actors while others specify attacks against civilians and others argue that attacking security personnel off the battle field is also terrorism (Asal et al., 2012). Some even argue that the key defining aspect of terrorism is if the violent nonstate actor controls territory (Sánchez-Cuenca,

[1] We should note that while not rejecting the idea of state terrorism this paper will be focusing on nonstate actor terrorism and from now on when we refer to terrorism and the definition and operationalization of terrorism we will be focusing on nonstate actor terrorism.

and De la Calle 2009). While existing literature has examined the causes of terrorism what is missing in the literature is if how researchers define terrorism actually impacts the factors that help explain it. One might think that there would be an important difference between the factors that account for why violent nonstate actors might target civilians and why they might target civilians, government workers and security personnel (a more general definition of terrorism) which would suggest that the arguments over how to define terrorism have a causal and not just an ethical base but we don't actually know this to be true. In this paper we briefly discuss the arguments over how terrorism is defined, discuss some of the arguments related to what causes terrorism and then do quantitative analysis to see if there are different causal stories to be told based on the correlation of factors to different operationalizations of terrorism. We operationalize terrorism in three ways using the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) (LaFree and Dugan 2007) aggregated in different ways. Specifically we examine counts of incidents and fatalities for attacks only against civilians, for attacks against civilians and government people and finally for a combined total of civilians, government people and security personnel as captured by the GTD.

Defining terrorism

The definition of terrorism can be quite contentious. Some will define terrorists as being whoever they don't like (Asal et al. 2012). Defining terrorism based on the reason that the act of violence was committed by a group one does not like creates a classification that voids any distinctive features about terrorism compared to other forms of violence (Richards, 2014) besides bias. As Merari (1993) points out, the issue in allowing personal bias to guide classification of terrorism is not really research or frankly useful because "As long as the term 'terrorism' simply denotes a violent behavior which is deplorable in the eyes of the user of the term, its utility is in propaganda rather than in research." Because of this much of the academic literature attempts to find a consistent definition of terrorism to apply across cases and not just according to bias (Asal et al. 2012).

Even amongst those who attempt to define terrorism consistently though and not based on political preferences can disagree very strongly on the best way to define terrorism. While much of the literature focuses on terrorism at the state level, researchers have pointed out that if terrorism is the wanton killing of civilians than we also need to consider the killing of civilians of terrorism and we should not discount state terrorism as well (Stohl 1984). In this paper though we will focus specifically on nonstate actor terrorism and even without the question of if states can commit terrorism the question of what terrorism means is very contentious. Sánchez-Cuenca, and De la Calle (2009) for example define terrorism from an actor-based approach that focuses on the violence that is perpetrated by insurgents, or violent rebel groups that lack territorial control. Thus for Sánchez-Cuenca, and De la Calle (2009) terrorism is not about who the targets are but who the perpetrators are within the context of nonstate actors. This argument suggests that those that do have established territory are deemed guerillas, and their analogous violent actions are referred to as guerilla warfare (Merari, 1993). Guerilla warfare and terrorism both seek to increase violence and gain recognition, but the need to seek and overrule territory is a main goal of guerillas, in an effort to disrupt state power, provide a safe haven for recruitment and training, and establish a military capability (Sánchez-Cuenca, and De la Calle 2009; Merari, 1993).

This definition has problems though. It implies that terrorism is committed by purely terrorist organizations, a designation that rarely exists (Richards, 2014). Tilly (2004) explains that although groups that specialize in terror exclusively do form and exist, they are usually unstable and short-lived, whereas it is more common that a various assortment of actors adopt terrorism strategies. Because of this most definitions of terrorism focus on what the target of attacks actually are. Target based approaches define the perpetrating group as terrorists if they commit terrorism by targeting a particular type of target. This classification is beneficial, for it does not limit observations to just activities of underground groups that are particular to a type of ideology or cause (Richards, 2014). Rather, it views terrorism as a strategy and particular method of violence used by a wide range of actors such as insurgents, states, guerillas, social movement extremists, etc (Goodwin, 2006). What that particular method of violence is though is an open question to many. Much of the literature on defining terrorism focuses on elements that are not key to the operationalization of the actual behavior itself.

Defining by the Goal

Many researchers focus on the goal of the perpetrators arguing that without a political or social goal, these violent acts can be defined as violent crime, rather than terrorism (Enders & Sandler, 2011). Many definitions deem that terrorists must have political goals, though this classification may not be necessary (Gibbs, 1989). Goals of terrorism are wide and varied.

According to the literature goals of terrorists can vary over time, between and within groups of perpetrators (Kydd & Walter, 2006). Furthermore, goals can be separated into short-term and long-term goals. Short-term goals of terrorism include (1) gaining publicity to communicate a message (Crenshaw, 1981; Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011; Kydd & Walter, 2006), (2) disorientation of the target institution (Crenshaw, 1981; Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011; Kydd & Walter, 2006), (3) the fall of target economy (Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011), (4) revenge for acts that perpetrators were held responsible (Goodwin, 2006), and (5) violent overreaction by the target government (Crenshaw, 1981; Goodwin, 2006; Kydd & Walter, 2006). The long-term goals of terrorism include (1) the redistribution of power or influence (Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011; Kydd & Walter, 2006), (2) disruption of reconciliation between former opposing groups (Goodwin, 2006), (3) territory control (Goodwin, 2006; Kydd & Walter, 2006), (4) recruitment and retention of group members (Kydd & Walter, 2006; Goodwin, 2006; Merari, 1993), and (5) policy change and political concessions (Kydd & Walter, 2006; Merari, 1993). Though goals are different for different perpetrators, the aforementioned are those that are most common, and have sustained importance over time. The most common and frequently found in definitions of terrorism is the goal of publicity.

According to this literature perpetrators of terrorism recognize the importance in achieving widespread publicity and media attention so that they can achieve the above goals. As Crenshaw (1981) argues, the basic reason for all acts of terrorism is to gain recognition or attentions, for the attention increases publicity for their cause and provokes citizen unrest, which can influence political and social reaction (Crenshaw 1981; Merari, 1993). The more attention that is focused on the act and the perpetrators, the more pressure there is on policy makers to ensure a change that will prevent future attacks, and these changes can benefit the perpetrators. Also, increased publicity can lead to recruitment of members to support more extreme acts of violence and allow the group to become internationally legitimized (Merari, 1993). Growth in popularity can even lead to gain of territory, giving perpetrators access to guerilla advantages, such as space for training and recruitment, which can lead to the acquisition of weapons and capabilities, reinforcing the

extremity of terror tactics. More importantly, widespread media attention allows perpetrators of terrorism to victimize a population greater than their target, a key method in terrorism.

This approach argues that there is a reason why terrorism induces fear when the phrase is reverberated on news channels and through media outlets: the perpetrator intended for such. A violent act would not be classified as terrorism if it were not perpetrated for a political or social goal, but terrorists are aware that their goals would be ignored without the uproar of the public. This reaction is only attained when the violent tactics generate a large psychological impact for victims beyond the immediate targets (Richards, 2014). Therefore, terrorism can be viewed at as a violent strategy based on psychological impact to motivate a social or political goal (Merari, 1993; Richards, 2014). The victims of such acts are widespread, beyond the targets. The topic of targets of terrorism, specifically, is a divergent pathway for different definitions of terrorism.

Defining terrorism by the goal is problematic from an operationalization perspective for several reasons. First of all the focus on publicity is potentially very problematic for there are powerful arguments that at least some terrorist are conducting such behavior to appeal to a higher power and not to attract attention from other human beings (Juergensmeyer 2003). Second and of equal importance, we know of no database of terrorist events where all, most or even a sample of perpetrators of events being characterized have been interviewed to see if each event was perpetrated specifically to gather attention or really why specifically each event was committed for what goal in the short term or the long term.

Defining by the target

If we turn to the actual operationalization of terrorism in databases, this operationalization of terrorism – the particular method of violence that is terrorism- can vary widely (Asal et al., 2012). Specifically, there is a question of who can be the target of terrorism. Some definitions argue that the target of terrorism must be civilians or non-combats, while other do not make this distinction (Young & Findley, 2011). Most definitions agree that terrorist attacks, include attacks against civilians as terrorism (Enders & Sandler, 2011), but the divergence emerges when analogous attacks target non-civilians, such as government and security targets. As Merari (1993) argues terrorism is not about discriminating which are the targets:

> In its modern manifestations, terror is the totalitarian form of war and politics. It shatters the war convention and the political code. It breaks across moral limits beyond which no further limitation seems possible, for within the categories of civilian and citizen, there isn't any smaller group for which immunity might be claimed ... Terrorists anyway make no such claim; they kill anybody.

Because terrorists are willing to kill anybody to achieve their goals, some argue that all targets should be included in the definition of terrorism. Richards (2014) found that only 70 of the 250 definitions of terrorism that he examined specified that targeting civilians was a necessary condition of terrorism, whereas the remainder of the definitions used more general nomenclature. Such generalizations though can be problematic.

If it is true that terrorism can be utilized against civilians and non-civilians, such as government and security targets, there is a question of whether attacks against the general compilation of these targets are rooted in the same causes as those that target just civilians, or just civilians and government. As Goodwin (2006) and Crenshaw (1981) argue, there is the existence of selective terrorism, which is directed towards specified targets that are held responsible for social or political policies that the perpetrator opposes, and indiscriminate, or categorical, terrorism, which can be directed towards anonymous targets because of their involvement in a particular religious or ethnic group, nationality, or social class. Presumably, these different forms

of terrorism are chosen for different reasons, and, therefore, potentially have different causes. The form of terrorism that is utilized is most likely determined by looming circumstances. If the targets differ for selective and indiscriminate terrorism, and these types have different causes, is it possible that the causes of terrorism can change when varying different targets of terrorism? Evidence suggests that targets of terrorism are not random, and that perpetrators use rational choice when choosing their target, based on perceived risk (Sandler & Lapan, 1988), suggesting that different processes may be responsible for targeting different groups.

Coding terrorism based on targeting civilians compared to civilians and non-civilians allows for the examination of the structural and cultural conditions that are permissive or enabling of a terror attack (Asal et al., 2012). In examining terrorism in this way, it can be discovered if the specification of a civilian target is indicative of a distinct causal model, as compared to the causal model of terrorism against civilians and government targets, and civilians and non-civilians (government and security targets). In other words – is there a different causal story if we look at terrorism as something that is just the targeting of civilians or if it includes government or security forces?

The causes of (which) terrorism?

Much of the empirical quantitative literature has focused on the causes of country level variance in terrorism on a relatively small set of variables. Variables like regime type, country population, country wealth (often measured by GDP per Capita, discrimination and or rights and regime durability appear in many analyses of the likelihood of terrorism[2]. Crenshaw (1981) and others argue that modern, wealthy and urban societies create environments that are permissive to vulnerabilities, including, but not limited to, the increased number of targets and accessibility to opportunities for attacks(Campos & Gassebner, 2009; Travers, 2004). Much of this research also finds that population size of the target country significantly and positively predicts transnational terrorism (Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011 ; Drakos and Gofas (2006). A large body of research has shown that political freedom and democracy is related to terrorism in a non-monatomic way in that semi-democracies, or countries with intermediate political freedom are more prone to terrorist attacks, as they do not have the effective defense that is capable of democratic or autocratic societies (Abadie, 2004; Drakos & Gofas, 2006; Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011; Krueger & Latin, 2007). This result implies that transitioning to a different political regime may result in temporary increases in terrorism (Abadie, 2004). This transition can be accompanied by international relationships. For example, political proximity to the United States has been found to significantly increase the likelihood of being a target of terrorism (Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011). The U.S. is not unique in this case, but rather the general hypothesis that is supported by Plümper and Neumayer (2010) is that political alliances with enemies of the perpetrators are likely to increase terror attacks in the target country. Some research has also shown that discrimination and oppression is also related to terrorism (Piazza 2011; Ghatak 2015). These analyses have used different terrorist event datasets covering different periods of time and different countries – and some examine domestic terrorism while others examine only transnational terrorism. As far as we know though none of these analyses use exactly the same variables and the same dataset and simply vary the dependent variable to see if more or less

[2] See for example Enders, and Sandler (2011) or Piazza (2011).

restrictive operationalizations of terrorism have different causal explanations. This is what we set out to do in our analysis below.

Data and Methodology

In order to assess the differences and similarities between explanatory variables that are commonly used in terrorism research in relation to different groups of targets, we use two different measures of terrorism severity as our dependent variable that are then separated into three sets of target groups. The dependent variable measures include the absolute number of attacks and the number of target fatalities caused by such attacks. Each of these dependent variables is examined with respect to three different target groups, which include all targets (civilian, government, and security targets), civilian and government targets only, and civilian targets only. Thus, six different dependent variables are obtained for each country-year pair: the number of attacks against all targets, the number of attacks against civilian and government targets only, the number of attacks against civilian targets only, the number of target fatalities from attacks against all targets, the number of target fatalities from attacks against civilian and government targets only, and the number of target fatalities from attacks against civilian targets only.

The data for the dependent variables is obtained from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) (START, 2013). The GTD was chosen because it is the largest terrorism database to date, containing information on over 140,000 attacks in 172 countries from 1970-2014. Furthermore, the GTD is the only terrorism database that contains information on both international and domestic attacks. We choose to include both domestic and international attacks in the analyses, as to gain a better understanding and explore different targeting decisions of terrorism as a whole. Furthermore, since the analyses focus on characteristics of the target country, and the attempt to uncover differences in target group choices, the delineation between weather an attack was homegrown or not should have little to no difference in the results and comparisons. The GTD was filtered by the three target groups of interest, and observations were dropped if the target type was unknown, missing, or labeled as a violent political party. Observations were also excluded if attacks were deemed as possibly unintentional. Unfortunately, the ability to eliminate attacks that may be unintentional is only available from 1998.

The unit of analysis is country-year. Each country-year entry that is missing for the corresponding dependent variable is recorded as a zero-entry. Unfortunately, the GTD is missing data from the year 1993, and although marginal estimates are reported for that year, we have excluded all observations from 1993 from our analysis to obtain a more accurate model. Our final sample consists of 158 countries over the time period from 1972 to 2011, due to data availability.

Since our dependent variables are counts, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression models may provide biased estimates. Furthermore, all sets of dependent variables are highly skewed and non-normal, with a the largest proportion of counts nearing zero, so OLS estimates would be inefficient in modeling the data. Count data is usually best modeled using Poisson or Negative Binomial Regression. However, Poisson modeling assumes equal conditional mean and variance of the dependent variable. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of each dependent variable. It is obvious that the equal mean and variance assumption is violated, and the data is overdispersed. Poisson estimates of overdispersed data can yield inefficient estimates

of coefficients and inflated z-values (Long, 1997). Overdispersed data is best modeled using Negative Binomial Regression, as such models account for a dispersion parameter. Therefore, a fixed-effects negative binomial regression model is assumed.

Table 1 : Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variables

Target Group	*D.V.*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
All Targets	Incidents	17.34	69.57
	Targets Killed	36.38	203.04
Civilian & Government	Incidents	13.12	53.5
	Targets Killed	10.77	107.4
Civilian	Incidents	10.25	43.03
	Targets Killed	20.36	127.07

The negative binomial model assumes that the occurrence of zero counts follows the model. However, the model does not account for excess zeros. Excess zeros occur when there is unobserved heterogeneity in the model. Specifically in relation to terrorism, there can be two processes occurring that should be modeled: (1) the zero entry may be the result of a country never being a target of terrorism or (2) the zero-entry could be zero for one observations, but positive for a country in another time period. Zero-Inflated models are utilized to examine these separate processes. In such a model, a separate set of covariates models non-zero propensities with a specified standard model, while another set of covariates models the zero-always propensities. Though it is impossible to report that a country has a zero probability of being a target of terrorism, the data available in the GTD are subject to the reporting of the incidents. Therefore, there may be measurement error in the estimates of incidents and fatalities of a given country-year pair, due to under-reporting. Drakos and Gofas (2006) find a statistically significant and negative relationship between the level of democracy and the zero-always propensities of terrorist attacks. They attribute the relationship to the fact that the level of freedom of the press is encompassed in, and highly correlated to, Polity measures, which are usually used as a proxy for democracy. Following this intuition, we assume a zero-inflated negative binomial fixed- effects model to examine the differences in covariates between target groups for incidents and fatalities. We can confirm that the model is zero-inflated by assessing results from the the Vuong test (Vuong, 1989), which compares the probability of observing results under the standard model and the zero-inflated model, and chooses the model with the higher probability.

The set of covariates employed in the analyses are commonly identified correlates in terrorism literature, and include various characteristics of a country's profile such as political affiliation, economic performance, regime durability, ethnic discrimination, and population. The choice of measurements and predicated relationships reflect the discussion in the literature review.

Political profile is captured by the polity score provided by the Freedom House dataset (Freedom House, 2014). This measure was chosen, as opposed to other available polity measures, as estimates are available for the most observations. Freedom House also provides the most comprehensive measurement of political freedom, as it encompasses political rights, civil liberties, and the polity score from the Polity IV dataset. The measure averages the political rights and civil liberties scores from the Freedom House dataset (Freedom House, 2014),

transforms these resulting scores to a 0-10 scale, and then averages this score with the Polity score from the Polity IV dataset (Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr, 2013) that is also transformed to a 0-10 scale. A higher score corresponds to more democratic regimes. The 0-10 score is then standardized and converted to a z-score for our analyses for two reasons. First, it is typical to convert index measures to a z-score, as the change in the dependent variable resulting from a standard deviation change in the measure is easier and more intuitive to interpret than a one-unit change in a user-specified index. This transformation is supported further by the fact that the standard deviation (3.45) for the polity score is greater than one. Second, since we are also interested in exploring the non-linear relationship between polity and each of our dependent variables, standardizing the measure and then taking the square of the z-score of polity eliminates multicollinearity problems that would bias our estimates, otherwise.

Our models explore polity in three ways. First, each model examines polity to see if it is significant in the zero-inflated portion of the model. Specifically, polity is predicted to be significantly and negatively related to always-zero incidents and fatalities for all target groups. This result would suggest that the more democratic a country is, the less likely it is of being an always-zero terrorism target, which, by our specifications, would mean that the more democratic countries have less under-reporting bias in our measures. Second, the linear relationship between polity and terrorism attacks and fatalities is explored to see if this relationship changes based on who the target group is. Finally, we examine the non-linear relationship between polity and terrorist incidents and fatalities across target groups, as much research has shown that semi-democracies are most prone to terrorism, as opposed to strictly democratic or strictly autocratic (Abadie, 2004; Drakos & Gofas, 2006; Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011; Krueger & Latin, 2007). We will examine if all of these relationships remain consistent between target groups for results of both terrorist incidents and fatalities.

Economic performance is captured with the measure of Real GDP per Capita in constant US dollars at the base year 2005 from the Expanded Trade and GDP Data (Gleditsch, 2013). Again, since we are also interested in the non-linear relationship between GDP per capita and each of the dependent variables, we must transform the variable to avoid multicollinearity with the squared counterpart. Thus, to avoid multicollinearity, subtracting the grand mean of the variable centers the data, and then the natural logarithm of the value is obtained. Centering the variable solves for multicollinearity and does not change the interpretation of the effect size of the coefficient, so it is an optimal and useful practice. Squaring the resulting natural logarithm of the centered GDP per capita captures the nonlinear relationship. Terrorism literature reveals mixed results related to the linear relationship between economic performance and terrorism severity, so our analyses will examine if these mixed relationships are the result of specifying different target groups. These mixed result may also be a result of a non-linear relationship. Ghatak and Gold (2015) and Enders, Hoover, and Sandler (2014) find a strong negative statistically significant relationship between the squared natural logarithm of GDP per capita and domestic terrorism incidents, indicating that middle-income countries are more vulnerable to attacks. We will further examine this relationship to see if it changes with respect to different target groups.

To measure discrimination we use the Ethnic Power Relations ERP dataset (Wimmer, Cedarman, and Min, 2009). Much of terrorism research has examined discrimination with the proxy ethnic fractionalization. However, this type of data only measures the amount of ethnic diversity in a country, not the amount of discrimination. The EPR dataset identifies all politically relevant ethnic groups for a given country for a given year, and measures their access to political

power to examine if the group is discriminated against, for if a group does not have access to political power, they are likely to be discriminated against in various other factions of society. The EPR dataset also provides the fraction of the population that each ethnic group comprises for a given country-year pair. Therefore, the percentage of the each country's discriminated population for a given year was calculated as a measure of ethnic discrimination. Previous literature has identified a positive relationship between ethnic discrimination and terrorism severity, hypothesizing that marginalized groups may challenge the power using terror tactics. We are interested in if this relationship changes based on the target group.

The Polity IV dataset is used to define regime durability (Marshall, et al., 2013). Regime durability is measured as the number of years since the last regime change, or the number of years that the current regime has been in power. Regime durability is frequently found to be a negative predictor of terrorism, as the longer a current regime has power, the more likely the country has the ability to fortify a strong counter-terrorism policy (Eyerman, 1998; Li, 2005). However, this relationship may change based on the target group.

The natural logarithm of the population is included as a control variable and data is derived from UN Statistics (National Accounts Main Aggregate Database, 2014). The overwhelming majority of research finds that population size of the target country significantly and positively predicts transnational terrorism (Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011). Therefore, we are interested in if this relationship and the strength of such holds across all target groups.

Finally, a measure of women's rights is included in the full model. Data for the women's rights measure derives from the Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights dataset (Cingranelli and Richards, 2010). However, this data is only available for 154 out of the 158 countries examined in the other models. Furthermore, the CIRI dataset only spans 1981-2011, reducing the sample size for the full model. This explanatory variable was created by averaging the CIRI women's economic rights index and the CIRI women's political rights, and then standardizing the average to result in a z-score for women's rights. A higher score indicates more rights. To our knowledge, women's rights have yet to be examined as a cause or correlate of terrorism. However, women's rights are another type of liberty that is accompanied with more democratic regimes. Therefore, we are interested to see if women's rights display the same relationship as the polity score, and if this same relationship is consistent with respect to all target groups.

Empirical Results

The models in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 present the results of the five models designed to examine the differences and similarities in the covariates of terrorist attacks and fatalities between samples of all targets, civilian and government targets only, and civilian targets only. The models in Tables 2, 3, and 4 examine the absolute number of attacks against a target country as the dependent variable and are differentiated by attacks against all targets, attacks against civilian and government targets only, and attacks against civilian targets only, respectively. The models in Tables 5, 6, and 7 examine the number of fatalities from the terrorist attacks as the dependent variable and are differentiated by fatalities from attacks against all targets, fatalities from attacks against civilian and government targets only, and fatalities from attacks against civilian targets only, respectively. Within each table, the first column shows the simple model, Model I, which includes the polity z-score, GDP per capita (ln), ethnic discrimination (%), regime durability, and population (ln). Models II and III add the squared counterparts of the

polity z-score and the GDP per capita (ln), respectively. Model IV examines these squared variables simultaneously. Model IV displays the full model, which includes the women's rights z-score. Each tables is divided into two panels. The first panel provides the standard model to estimate the non-zero counts for each dependent variable, while the second panel displays estimates for the zero-always process. Each model reveals a statistically significant z-test for the Vuong-test, rejecting the null hypothesis that the standard negative-binomial model is preferred to the zero-inflated model. Therefore, the zero-inflated negative binomial is specified in each analysis. Furthermore, robust standard errors are used in an attempt to adjust for heterogeneity in the model and inflated standard errors that arise from large samples.

A brief overview of Tables 2, 3, and 4 reveals similar results in covariates for explaining the absolute number of terrorist attacks across all target groups. All measures of polity receive strong empirical support. First, as hypothesized, across all models (I, II, III, IV, and V) and target groups, polity plays a strong role in the probability of a country being classified as an always-zero target of terrorism. The negative relationship implies that democracies have a smaller probability of being an always-zero terrorism target. This finding supports Drakos and Gofas (2006), who hypothesize that this relationship is premised on the fact that democracies have greater press liberties and are not subject to under-reporting bias. Therefore, it is not that autocracies have a high probability of never experiencing terrorism, but rather they have a high probability of not reporting terrorism, and thus have a greater probability of being an always-zero terrorism target due to this systematic error. The effect of polity is also statistically significant in the standard models for all attack types. The linear standardized measure of polity is positively related to the rate of terror attacks at a statistically significant level in models I, II, III, IV, and V in Tables 2, 3, and 4. This finding is concurrent with previous literature that proposes that democracies promote more civil liberties and, therefore, can facilitate organization of terror groups, leading to domestic attacks (Eubank and Weinberg, 1994). However, our models caveat this finding by uncovering a non-linear relationship between polity and the rate of attacks across all groups of targets. The negative statistically significant relationship between the squared standardized polity measure and attacks suggests that the previous finding only hold true up until a certain point of democracy level, at which point the rate of terror attacks start to decline across all groups of targets. Therefore, our findings hold true across all target groups and supports the previous consistent relationship that countries with intermediate political freedom are most susceptible to terrorist attacks, as they do not have the defense capabilities of pure autocratic of democratic regimes (Abadie, 2004; Drakos & Gofas, 2006; Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011; Krueger & Latin, 2007).

As mentioned previously, the relationship between the GDP per capita and terrorism attacks is met with mixed results in previous terrorism literature. In our analyses, the natural logarithm of the centered GDP per capital is negatively and significantly related to incidents for models I and II across all target specifications, and no longer significant after the squared polity score is included in the model. Though several studies have found that lower economic performance yields higher terrorism rates, these studies have not properly controlled for political landscape (Krieger and Meierricks, 2011). Our findings support previous literature in revealing that the relationship between economic performance and terror attacks is weak, but we extend literature by uncovering that this relationship is weak after controlling for political landscape, and by finding this relationship across all target groups. Though the linear relationship between GDP per capita and terror attacks fails to retain significance, we also examine the non-linear relationship between the natural logarithm of the GDP per capita and terror attacks. Though

Tables 3 and 4 reveal a similar pattern as the linear relationship between the natural logarithm of the GDP per capita and terror attacks, Table 2 shows that the GDP per capita squared is statistically significant and negative in all models for attacks against all targets. This finding suggests that when an attack is conducted against all targets, and thus indiscriminate, the GDP per capita plays a prominent role in the decision to target that country. Specifically, the negative relationship between the squared variable and terror attacks against all targets suggests that as the natural logarithm of the GDP per capita increases, as does the rate of attacks against all targets until a certain point, when in which it beings to decrease. This finding supports Ghatak and Gold (2015), and reveals that in choosing to attack a country with an indiscriminate target, middle income countries are most likely to become a target. This relationship can be attributed the fact that terrorists in poor countries may not have the money and skill to achieve a successful attack, whereas extremely rich countries may be more successful at discouraging terrorism by offering alternative pathways to economic advantage. Therefore middle income countries may have the perfect mix of characteristics to allow them to be the prime target for an indiscriminate attack.

Ethnic discrimination is consistently and positively associated with terrorism attacks across all models and all target groups. This finding suggests that the overwhelming majority of research that has found weak or non-significant relationships between discrimination and terror incidents may have simply been utilizing the wrong measure of discrimination. Whereas these studies have occupied the measure of ethnic fractionalization to proxy discrimination, the measure used in our analysis actually captures the frictions between different ethnic groups in each country and, therefore, properly examines the relationship between discrimination and terror attacks.

Regime durability is consistently and negatively associated with terrorism attacks across all models and all target groups. This supports previous findings from Piazza (2007), who found that state failure and political instability had a strong positive relationship to increased terrorism production. Since the GTD is comprised mostly of domestic terrorism occurrence, the increased terrorism production would result in increased terrorism targeting for the same country. Perhaps, the less the change in political regime, the more content a country's citizens are, so the less likely a group is to express grievances through violent actions.

All models across all target groups remain consistent with previous literature, which has found that the population of a country is positively and statistically significantly related to terror attacks. This relationship can be explained with many reasons. First, a more populated contrary is more likely to have a larger number of political parties, which can yield greater conflict, resulting in terrorism. Second, countries with larger populations may have a more difficult time in stopping groups from organizing to perform terror attacks. Third, a larger population means more people to recruit to conduct terrorist activities. All of these reasons assume that the attack is domestic. However, a large population can be an attractive characteristic for international attacks, as well, as a large population may result in more damage, a compelling feature for terror attacks.

Finally, Model V indicates that the level of women's rights in a country is not significantly related to the propensity of terrorist attacks for any subset of targets. This finding is novel, as previous terrorism research has failed to examine such a relationship.

Tables 5, 6, and 7 further this analysis and comparison of covariates by focusing on the severity of the attacks, rather than the occurrence, as measured by the number of fatalities across target groups corresponding to fatalities from attacks against all targets, fatalities from attacks against civilian and government targets only, and fatalities from attacks against civilian targets

only, respectively. Examination of variables shows some slight difference between target groups with respect to the linear and non-linear relationship between the natural logarithm of GDP per capita and fatalities, but significance and relationships of the remaining variables stay consistent across all target groups. However, some variables that were related to occurrences of attacks seem to be unrelated, or have an opposite effect on severity of attacks.

Polity remains negatively and significantly related to the probability of a country being classified as an always-zero target of terrorism. This finding would not be expected to change because if a country is under reporting attacks, they would not report fatalities resulting from such attacks. This relationship remains consistent across all target groups, providing further evidence for a zero-inflated model to account for under-reporting bias. The linear effect of polity in the standard models for terrorism fatalities remains significant across all target groups, but has the opposite effect than the variable has in relation to occurrence of terrorism. Whereas polity had a positive effect on the rate of terrorist attacks, the linear relationship between the standardized polity score and fatalities is negative and statistically significant across all target groups. However, the non-linear relationship between the standardized polity score and terrorism fatalities remains negative and statistically significant in Models III, IV, and V across all target groups. This indicates that though fatalities still follow an inverted-U relationship with polity, the relationship has a long right tail. Explicitly, fatalities from attacks across all target groups increases quickly across all target groups, and then starts to decline for the larger proportion of standardize polity scores. Therefore, countries that are closer to autocratic regimes, but are not completely autocratic, tend to experience more fatalities than do more democratic countries. This relationship can be a result of the lack of health care and medical care provided in less democratic countries. Such countries may not have the adequate medical care to minimize the number of fatalities from such attacks, making the outcome more severe for the lower polity countries. In completely autocratic countries, attacks are less likely, as previously shown, so there would be less fatalities in response to less attacks. Combining these hypotheses provides a basis for why the maximum fatalities of the curvilinear relationship between polity and fatalities falls in line with more autocratic regimes.

The main differences between correlates of terrorism severity across target groups are with respect to the linear and non-linear effects of the natural logarithm of GDP per capita. Similar to the models for terrorism attacks, the linear effect of the natural logarithm of GDP per capita is negative for the all targets group and the civilians only target group, but the effect is only significant in Models I, II, III, and V for all target fatalities, and in Models I, II, and III for civilian-only fatalities. For these target subgroups, the non-linear effect of the natural logarithm of GDP per capita is not statistically significant, except in Model II in Table 5. These findings indicate that the effect of these relationships is being driven by the non-linear effect of the political institution, for when the squared version of standardized polity is included, the linear and non-linear effect of the natural logarithm of GDP per capita becomes extremely weak or non-significant. The analysis of civilian and government-only fatalities, however, reveals a positive and statistically significant effect of size resulting from the linear effect of the natural logarithm of GDP per capita, as indicated in Models III, IV, and V of Table 6. The nonlinear relationship between the natural logarithm of GDP per capita and civilian and government-only fatalities is also positive. This relationship indicates that extremely poor-income countries and extremely rich-income countries have more civilian and government-related fatalities from terrorism than do countries that near towards to median GDP per capita. This result can arise from the congruence of two phenomenon. Poorer countries do not have the means to treat

injuries from terror attacks, while richer countries may be more likely to be more transparent about the fatalities from their attacks, since they have the means to do so. This relationship may only be positive for the civilian and government subset because terrorists may feel the need to target government officials for their attacks as a way to blame them for the deprivation of a poor country, or fault them for garnering the most money from a rich country. Increases in fatalities in such countries may reflect the terrorists need to send a message to government.

The effects of minority discrimination and the natural logarithm of the population remain positive and statistically significant across all target groups. Therefore, findings prevail and show that the larger the percentage of the population that is discriminated against, the larger the log odds of terrorism severity. This relationship withstands for the effect of the natural logarithm of the population. The standardized index for women's rights remains insignificant, as well, across all target groups. However, contrary to the models for occurrences of terrorist attacks, the effect of regime durability is only statistically significant in Model IV of Table 5, the all targets fatalities subgroup, and even in this model, the effect is not substantially significant as the 95% confidence interval for the variable begins at 0.0001. This finding indicates that although political stability is negatively related to the number of terrorism attacks, it is not related to the severity of terrorist attacks against any target subgroup.

Regression tables

Table 2: All Attacks Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial					
Variables	**Model I**	**Model II**	**Model III**	**Model IV**	**Model V**
	n=5,527	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=4,298*
	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.
	Panel A: Zero- Inflated Negative Binomial				
Polity	-0.5018	-0.4766	-0.4776	-0.4625	-0.4482
	(0.003)**	(0.005)**	(0.001)***	(0.001)***	(0.016)*
Polity Squared	-	-	-1.3139	-1.2576	-1.3217
	-	-	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
GDP Per Capita (*ln*)	-0.5334	-0.6177	-0.3230	-0.3641	-0.3208
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.001)***	(0.215)	(0.019)*
GDP Per Capita (*ln*) Squared	-	-0.1661	-	-0.0475	-0.0007
	-	(0.004)**	-	(0.433)	(0.992)
Discrimination	0.0257	0.0298	0.0258	0.0263	0.0297
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Regime Durability	-0.0042	0.0011	0.0058	0.0068	0.0038
	(0.247)	(0.775)	(0.062)	(0.045)*	(0.341)
Population (*ln*)	0.9021	0.8306	0.8787	0.8639	0.9354
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Women's Rights	-	-	-	-	-0.0472
	-	-	-	-	(0.724)
Constant	-11.3684	-10.1293	-10.2130	-9.9823	-11.1342
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
	Panel A: Zero- Inflated Negative Binomial				
Polity	-3.1888	-3.1663	-2.5635	-2.5892	-2.5317
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Constant	-3.9260	-3.8712	-3.3725	-3.3902	-4.0626
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Log Likelihood	-12057.3400	-12040.6800	-11970.6900	-11969.4700	-10012.26
Wald Statistics	351.5500	285.1300	424.9700	432.4400	471.3400
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***

Table 3: Civilian & Government Attacks Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial					
Variables	**Model I**	**Model II**	**Model III**	**Model IV**	**Model V**
	n=5,527	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=4,298*
	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.
	Panel A: Zero- Inflated Negative Binomial				
Polity	0.3518	0.3847	0.3625	0.3830	0.4877
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Polity Squared	-	-	-0.8040	-0.7782	-0.6715
	-	-	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
GDP Per Capita (*ln*)	-0.1474	-0.2027	-0.0026	-0.0360	-0.0705
	(0.022)*	(0.000)***	(0.968)	(0.510)	(0.241)
GDP Per Capita (*ln*) Squared	-	-0.0860	-	-0.0402	-0.0517
	-	(0.004)***	-	(0.147)	(0.102)
Discrimination	0.0270	0.0280	0.0261	0.0264	0.0288
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Regime Durability	-0.0128	-0.0108	-0.0071	-0.0064	-0.0075
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Population (*ln*)	0.8685	0.8458	0.8444	0.8371	0.8649
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Women's Rights	-	-	-	-	-0.1112
	-	-	-	-	(0.149)
Constant	-11.7561	-11.3190	-10.8315	-10.6961	-11.3078
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
	Panel B: Zero- Always Inflated Equation				
Polity	-3.2508	-3.2472	-2.5136	-2.5312	-2.9850
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Constant	-4.6497	-4.6495	-4.3294	-4.1631	-5.8504
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Log Likelihood	-12980.5700	-12971.6300	-12910.0000	-12908.2100	-10574.1500
Wald Statistics	795.8500	849.5200	848.4900	872.3400	819.7500
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***

Table 4: Civilian Attacks Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial					
Variables	**Model I**	**Model II**	**Model III**	**Model IV**	**Model V**
	n=5,527	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=4,298*
	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.
	Panel A: Zero- Inflated Negative Binomial				
Polity	0.2858	0.3147	0.3065	0.3179	0.4191
	(0.003)**	(0.001)***	(0.001)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Polity Squared	-	-	-0.8030	-0.7879	-0.7248
	-	-	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
GDP Per Capita (*ln*)	-0.1556	-0.2059	-0.0105	-0.0300	-0.0536
	(0.020)*	(0.000)***	(0.880)	(0.608)	(0.407)
GDP Per Capita (*ln*) Squared	-	-0.0712	-	-0.0216	-0.0252
	-	(0.021)*	-	(0.456)	(0.458)
Discrimination	0.0307	0.0319	0.0295	0.0298	0.0324
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Regime Durability	-0.0117	-0.0099	-0.0061	-0.0057	-0.0069
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Population (*ln*)	0.8912	0.8715	0.8681	0.8638	0.8902
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Women's Rights	-	-	-	-	-0.0946
	-	-	-	-	(0.260)
Constant	-12.4014	-12.0263	-11.4909	-11.4134	-11.9720
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
	Panel B: Zero- Always Inflated Equation				
Polity	-3.0133	-3.0042	-2.2901	-2.3003	-2.4030
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Constant	-4.1307	-4.1211	-3.5995	-3.6112	-4.7810
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Log Likelihood	-11560.3800	-11555.1100	-11501.0100	-11500.5700	-9479.5350
Wald Statistics	753.4200	793.0700	775.9000	788.5900	712.9500
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***

Table 5: All Fatalaties Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial					
Variables	**Model I**	**Model II**	**Model III**	**Model IV**	**Model V**
	n=5,527	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=4,298*
	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.
	Panel A: Zero- Inflated Negative Binomial				
Polity	-0.5018	-0.4766	-0.4776	-0.4625	-0.4482
	(0.003)**	(0.005)**	(0.001)***	(0.001)***	(0.016)*
Polity Squared	-	-	-1.3139	-1.2576	-1.3217
	-	-	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
GDP Per Capita (*ln*)	-0.5334	-0.6177	-0.3230	-0.3641	-0.3208
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.001)***	(0.215)	(0.019)*
GDP Per Capita (*ln*) Squared	-	-0.1661	-	-0.0475	-0.0007
	-	(0.004)**	-	(0.433)	(0.992)
Discrimination	0.0257	0.0298	0.0258	0.0263	0.0297
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Regime Durability	-0.0042	0.0011	0.0058	0.0068	0.0038
	(0.247)	(0.775)	(0.062)	(0.045)*	(0.341)
Population (*ln*)	0.9021	0.8306	0.8787	0.8639	0.9354
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Women's Rights	-	-	-	-	-0.0472
	-	-	-	-	(0.724)
Constant	-11.3684	-10.1293	-10.2130	-9.9823	-11.1342
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
	Panel A: Zero- Inflated Negative Binomial				
Polity	-3.1888	-3.1663	-2.5635	-2.5892	-2.5317
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Constant	-3.9260	-3.8712	-3.3725	-3.3902	-4.0626
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Log Likelihood	-12057.3400	-12040.6800	-11970.6900	-11969.4700	-10012.26
Wald Statistics	351.5500	285.1300	424.9700	432.4400	471.3400
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***

Table 6: Civilian & Government Fatalities Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial					
Variables	**Model I**	**Model II**	**Model III**	**Model IV**	**Model V**
	n=5,527	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=4,298*
	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.
	Panel A: Zero- Inflated Negative Binomial				
Polity	-1.5127	-1.5190	-1.4332	-1.5040	-1.4762
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Polity Squared	-	-	-1.0693	-1.3609	-1.5351
	-	-	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
GDP Per Capita (*ln*)	-0.0164	-0.0082	0.2803	0.4321	0.4219
	(0.894)	(0.950)	(0.024)*	(0.009)**	(0.009)**
GDP Per Capita (*ln*) Squared	-	0.0425	-	0.1965	0.2197
	-	(0.579)	-	(0.021)*	(0.017)*
Discrimination	0.0458	0.0453	0.0398	0.0365	0.0438
	(0.001)***	(0.002)**	(0.003)**	(0.002)**	(0.000)***
Regime Durability	0.0046	0.0035	0.0079	0.0033	0.0031
	(0.228)	(0.452)	(0.093)	(0.493)	(0.538)
Population (*ln*)	1.0329	1.0474	1.0265	1.0803	1.1992
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Women's Rights	-	-	-	-	0.1019
	-	-	-	-	(0.557)
Constant	-15.2002	-15.4754	-14.3610	-15.1945	-17.0830
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
	Panel B: Zero- Always Inflated Equation				
Polity	-3.5851	-3.5831	-3.1429	-2.5312	-2.7954
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Constant	-3.1054	-3.1028	-2.7513	-4.1631	-2.8309
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Log Likelihood	-5481.8050	-5481.2660	-5460.0020	-5451.0730	-4889.3420
Wald Statistics	191.2800	193.1700	547.1100	334.1300	416.4100
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***

Table 7: Civilian Fatalities Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial					
Variables	**Model I**	**Model II**	**Model III**	**Model IV**	**Model V**
	n=5,527	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=5,527*	*n=4,298*
	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.
	Panel A: Zero- Inflated Negative Binomial				
Polity	-0.5421	-0.5687	-0.5606	-0.5548	-0.4290
	(0.00)**	(0.001)***	(0.001)***	(0.000)***	(0.025)*
Polity Squared	-	-	-0.9992	-1.0610	-1.0368
	-	-	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
GDP Per Capita (*ln*)	-0.3701	-0.4059	-0.2607	-0.2264	-0.2279
	(0.020)*	(0.000)***	(0.017)*	(0.066)	(0.113)
GDP Per Capita (*ln*) Squared	-	-0.0725	-	0.0473	0.1152
	-	(0.173)	-	(0.434)	(0.094)
Discrimination	0.0342	0.0358	0.0334	0.0326	0.0347
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Regime Durability	-0.0026	0.0000	0.0062	0.0051	0.0023
	(0.482)	(0.998)	(0.086)	(0.173)	(0.594)
Population (*ln*)	0.9526	0.9177	0.9183	0.9356	1.0354
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Women's Rights	-	-	-	-	-0.1824
	-	-	-	-	(0.117)
Constant	-12.8945	-12.2806	-11.7340	-12.0104	-13.8041
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
	Panel B: Zero- Always Inflated Equation				
Polity	-2.9271	-3.0042	-2.3606	-2.3311	-2.3601
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Constant	-3.4983	-4.1211	-2.9237	-2.9148	-3.7248
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
Log Likelihood	-9833.7900	-9830.9130	-9787.1060	-9786.0790	-8220.8390
Wald Statistics	298.8100	311.4900	337.9900	462.5800	451.2800
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***

Discussion and conclusion

While there have been very heated conversations about what the right way to define terrorism and if only civilian targets should be considered terrorism (Asal et al. 2012) this has not led to an investigation of whether or not different operationalizations of the target would have different causal explanations. In our analysis above we investigated three different operationalizations of terrorism and what we found in terms of differences was- not much. The only real difference we found in our analysis in terms of the impact of different independent variables related to GDP per Capita which differed related to the target type in question. When it comes to explaining why this is the only difference it may be related to the extreme of wealth making the targeting of government more attractive in very poor and very rich countries – but this is not a particularly compelling explanation and does not explain why the same logic would not happen in the middle of the road countries as well.

More important though is that for the most part, and except for this exception related to wealth the different definitions of terrorism do not seem to be generating different stories. This is particularly important given that the story of attacking just civilians is not different (even for GDP per Capita) than the story for the analysis focusing on events that also target military personnel. This suggests that at least at the country level of analysis that while the ethical arguments related to how we define terrorism are important that the basic explanations of violence writ large are simply not that different regardless of the target. Given the large efforts that academia and policy makers have put into drawing strong lines between different kinds of violence this raises important questions about if such lines drawn between different kinds of political violence are useful from a policy or academic perspective.

This analysis though is just a first crack at this question. Our efforts here suggest that there is utility in separating at the country level the targeting of civilians, government personnel and soldiers and see if when we do not aggregate these group do we still get the same causal stories. The next and more challenging step after that would be to look at this analysis at different levels of analysis. Are the explanatory factors for organizational violence different by target or are they also substantively very similar as they are here. Finally if possible it would be very interesting to investigate at the individual level if different stories at the personal level impact different targeting of violence.

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