

An increase in VEO attacks in one location will lead to an increase in adjacent locations (contagion effect).

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General Description of the Literature:

Midlarsky, Crenshaw and Yoshida (1980) explain contagion effect in terrorism suggests that the occurrence of terrorism in one country may increase the probability of its occurrence in other countries by means of a demonstration effect. Drakos and Gofas (2006, 78) define addictive contagion and infectious contagion. They suggest the patterns of contagion are hierarchical, meaning that larger, more visible, and generally more respected units are the first to engage in a behavior actively and then the less highly ranked units imitate that behavior. The three authors also argue that when objective grievances are manifestly not the cause of terrorism, the contagion process may be responsible. Braithwaite and Li (2007) argue that countries that have significant experiences with terrorist incidents are often located within terrorist hot spots. Contagion is also a factor in civil war as reported by Buhaug and Gleditsch (2008) and Gurr (1993). Each of these studies demonstrates how civil wars can spill over into other countries.

Detailed Analyses

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Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Neumayer and Plumper (2010) test the hypothesis that international terrorism is spatially dependent along civilization lines in the Post-Cold war period and particularly so for certain inter-civilization combinations. Braithwaite and Li (2007) use a pooled time series cross sectional analysis of 112 countries from 1975 to 1997, and find that when a country is located within a terrorism hot spot neighborhood, it is highly likely to experience a large increase in its number of terrorist attacks in the next period. They use Poisson and negative binomial models to conclude that there was a contagion effect between Latin America and Western Europe during 1973 to 1974 (Braithwaite and Li 2007, 4). Interestingly, the results were in reverse order from what was expected, meaning Western Europe seemed to have imitated the methods of Latin America even though Western Europe was much more prominent than Latin America. (Midlarsky, Crenshaw and Yoshida (1980) defend this oddity by concluding that perhaps the contagion effect is more applicable to terrorist groups, rather than states.) The results indicate that a country's history in terms of terrorist activity appears as a significant determinant of its future trajectory. The results also indicate that the level of activity in a country's geographic location is a determinant of its own level of terrorism. This finding supports the infectious contagion in the form of spatial diffusion. There has also been work done on the contagion of civil war. For example, Gurr (1993) reports that rebellion by ethnic groups was contagious was often manifested as terrorism. This effect was also demonstrated for Muslim groups. Buhaug and Gleditsch (2008) report that contagion of civil war is more likely in separatist conflicts that entail ethnic kinships that straddle borders.

Empirical Support Score: 3 = Multiple qualitative and/or quantitative studies with mixed results (i.e. some in favor, some against the hypothesis), but more positive than negative findings.

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: There is enough evidence to support the claim that increase in VEO activity in one location could impact the level of activity in adjacent locations. There are; however, other

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factors such as grievances and civilization similarities, that could also influence the spread of activity, and filtering out these other factors has been the greatest challenge so far to the “contagion effect.” Overall; however, there is reason to believe that VEO activity can spread throughout adjacent countries.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs.

Bibliography:

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