

Increased severity of punishment for attacks deters VEOs from carrying out those attacks.

9; 59; 10; 23; 81; 24; 25; 26; 27; 82; 83; 87; 28

General Description of the Literature:

One of the enduring academic and military puzzles is whether state violence/punishment encourages or discourages future VEO violent behavior (Lichbach, 1987, Davenport 2007). In the 1970s, interest in Vietnam spurred development of a cost/benefit model of insurgency that suggested increased costs to insurgents (coercion, deterrence) could reduce violence (Leites and Wolf 1970) but had its share of critics (Shultz 1978, 1979). Some of the earliest theoretical and empirical work suggested government coercion increased VEO violence (Gurr 1970). Coercion and accommodation often occur at the same time (Rasler 1996), thus it can be difficult to disentangle their effects (Lichbach 1987). More recent research suggests that state coercion is contingent upon the type of VEO contention (Lichbach 1987, Moore 2000), the timing of coercion (Rasler 1996), short term and long term impacts (Rasler 1996), the regime type of the state (Gupta, Singh, and Sprague 1993), and the consistency of the coercive response (Lichbach 1987, Moore 2000). Even more recently, scholars have attempted to disaggregate the type of coercive response to investigate how decapitation (Jordan 2009, Johnston 2010), targeted killings (Hafez & Hatfield 2006, Wilner 2010, and Zussman & Zussman 2006), and house demolitions (Benmelech, Berrebi, and Klor 2010) influence future VEO activity. All three phases of the literature are pursued by many different kinds of conflict scholars, including political scientists, economists, sociologists, operations researchers, and others. The quality of the empirical findings has increased as data and methods have improved over time, but the general contours of the debate remain roughly the same, albeit with a little more nuance.

Detailed Analyses

9: *Increased severity of punishment for attacks deters VEOs from carrying out those attacks.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Moore (2000) finds support for Lichbach (1987) in data gathered from Peru and Sri Lanka events data, 1955-1991. In sum, VEOs will substitute tactics when faced with state repression; violent repression of nonviolence increases future VEO activity. Recent events in Libya also seem to support this story. Gupta, Singh, and Sprague (1993) find that democracies that repress are not as effective as autocracies at deterring future VEO behavior. They find this using time series data on 24 countries. In a single time-series study of Iran around the revolution in 1979, Rasler finds that repression decreases VEO/protest activity in the short run, but increases it in the long run. Again, Moore (2000) does not find support for either Rasler (1996) or Gupta, Singh and Sprague (1993) in his study of Peru and Sri Lanka. Francisco (1995), using predator-prey models and data from Israel, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia, finds that backlash and strategic adaptation follows harsh coercion of dissidents. In other words, dissidents will ramp up activity and/or change tactics under harsh coercive state responses. While scholars and practitioners continue to amass more and better data, one systematic cross-national test to end this debate has never been done (if such a thing is possible). The bulk of the evidence, however, suggests state coercion increases violence or makes the group shift tactics and that perhaps only autocracies can create complete quiescence through harsh deterrence. For the particular case of more stringent criminal justice measures against VEOs, see hypothesis 59 below, while for harsh - often extra-legal - reprisals, see hypothesis 10 below.

Empirical Support Score: 2 = Multiple qualitative and/or quantitative studies with mixed results (i.e., some in favor, some against the hypothesis) but more negative than positive findings.

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: One important context is regime type. Consistently brutal autocracies are able to deter. Recent cases such as Burma, Zimbabwe and North Korea provide evidence. In contrast, the democracy movements in the Middle East lend support to Moore (2000), Lichbach (1987) and others who argue that inconsistent repression/accommodation can simply embolden challenges to the state (violent or otherwise). Democracies likely cannot deter with violence (Gupta, Singh, and Sprague 1993). Whether this is because they are constrained by their population or their brutality is not credible is unclear, but the weight of case evidence seems to point in this direction. Rasler (1996) suggests that coercion can be useful in the short term but counterproductive in the long term. Since her study is only of Iran around the revolution, it is unclear if this applies to other states or time periods. A study undertaken by Young (2008) of violence in Iraq supported Rasler's (1996) argument and found more militarized COIN operations lead to an immediate decline in violence but increase in the long run violence trend against US soldiers. Finally, LaFree, Dugan, and Korte (2009) find that most British counterterrorist interventions in Northern Ireland actually increased future terrorism. Only one intervention, akin to a troop surge, had a pacifying effect on future violence.

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

59: *"Get tough laws" will be ineffective in reducing VEO activity.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: "Get tough laws" is another way to attempt to deter VEOs from future activity. The bulk of evidence from economists and criminologists is that these measures do not work. Work by Enders, Sandler and Cauley (1990) and Enders and Sandler (1993) look at specific interventions and generally refute this claim. While metal detectors reduced future hijackings, get tough laws enacted by Reagan in 1984 had no effect on future violence (Enders and Sandler 1993). Similarly, backlash is more likely than deterrence from harsh legal means (LaFree, Dugan, and Korte 2009). Barros (2003) suggests banning political parties also does not reduce VEO activity. In a series of case analysis of VEOs in Canada and the US, Ross (1995) and Ross and Gurr (1989) find that government coercion or legal action has little influence on groups surviving or perpetrating attacks in the future. They attribute public backlash or group burnout to the ending of VEO activity.

Empirical Support Score: 5

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Again, this has direct implications for deterring VEOs. Mostly, this hypothesis has been tested on single countries, usually democracies, in the post-war era. Since data on autocratic counterterrorism is difficult to attain, this explains the focus of the academic research.

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

10: *Harsh reprisals, including threats of death, severe sanctions, public humiliation, or the killing of family members, may deter VEOs from action.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: There is no empirical research on threats to killing family members. There is one published study; however, that finds a decrease in insurgent attacks as the probability of indiscriminate violence increases (Lyll 2009). Lyll's (2009) findings are limited to

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the Chechen war from 2000-2005, and in follow up work by Lyall (2010) finds that the use of Pro-Russian Chechens in counterinsurgent operations reduces future violence. Since Russians are more apt to kill members of the population, but Chechens are more likely to kidnap people, this finding suggests that targeted repression may be more useful than indiscriminate repression against members of the population associated with the insurgency (Lyall 2010).

The only study that directly addresses this topic is a working paper by Benmelech et al. (2010) that investigates the impact that house demolitions have on future suicide attacks in Israel. This is a sound empirical study within a fairly constrained time period and location. They find that house demolitions in response to violence (i.e. against the bombers or the direct members of the network) decrease future attacks. In contrast, precautionary demolitions, or those that are not related to the identities of the perpetrators, increase future attacks. This finding fits with a larger conventional wisdom in COIN that discriminate violence can decrease future VEO activity, but indiscriminate violence will spur more VEO activity. Most published studies qualitative and quantitative suggest harsh violence leads to more insurgent activity (e.g. Rasler 1996, LaFree et al. 2009).

Empirical Support Score: 2

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: The results are applicable as these kinds of punitive strategies might be used in other ways or contexts. Evidence from Israel should be treated with care as this is a unique case for a number of reasons and probably the most studied/quantified case. Again, to the extent that the response is more discriminate (accurately sorting guilty parties from bystanders), the results should be more deterrent.

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

23: *Targeted killings of mid-level terrorist operatives can have a deterrent effect by increasing the personal risks for those who plan and prepare terrorist attacks.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: There is no empirical evidence for this claim.

Empirical Support Score: 0 = No empirical support (for or against the hypothesis)

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: N/A

Applicability Score: Not Applicable – There is no empirical support in any context.

81: *Targeting foot soldiers with arrest and long-term, isolated punishment may deter individual VEO action as they perceive such to be a greater deterrent than death.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: N/A

Empirical Support Score: 0 = No empirical support (for or against the hypothesis)

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: N/A

Applicability Score: Not Applicable – There is no empirical support in any context

24: *Targeted assassination of leaders (decapitation) reduces VEO activity.*

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Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Killing leaders could reduce the “stock” of terrorism/violence by removing the operational brains as well as the motivator for such attacks. Cronin (2009) rightly points out that there are two kinds of decapitation: killing and imprisonment. She concludes (by comparing cases) that arresting leaders like Guzman in Peru does more for damaging a VEO than killing them. She also suggests that removal of the leader and its effect on future VEO activity is contingent upon the type of group. One that enjoys a great deal of public support may just produce a new leader whereas more cult-like fringe groups may be debilitated from the loss of the leader. Jordan (2009) provides the only published cross-national quantitative evidence of how decapitation influences VEO activity. She finds that decapitation is generally ineffective at reducing VEO activity and argues that large, religious, established organizations, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, are the most resilient to decapitation. In a subsequent working paper, Johnston (2010) refutes this and suggests that decapitation can be effective in counterinsurgency campaigns. After correcting some research design flaws of Jordan (2009), he finds that decapitation can decrease VEO activity and end their campaigns in favor of the counterinsurgent. Wilner (2010) examines targeted killings in Afghanistan by Coalition forces against Taliban leaders. His analysis is case comparison and hints that it is effective at degrading professionalism, diminishing Taliban success rates, and weakening morale.

Empirical Support Score: 2 = Multiple qualitative and/or quantitative studies with mixed results (i.e., some in favor, some against the hypothesis) but more negative than positive findings.

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Both Jordan (2009) and Johnston (2010) have large cross-national databases of decapitation. Johnston (2010) also includes cases of attempted decapitation in his analysis where Jordan (2009) does not. Recent events in Sri Lanka seem to support Johnston’s claim.

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

25: *Removal of the leader of a VEO leads to fragmentation and outbidding and escalation.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Martha Crenshaw’s current NSF project (Mapping Terrorist Organizations) is the only empirical work on this topic. This is still an open question.

Empirical Support Score: 0 = No empirical support (for or against the hypothesis)

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: N/A

Applicability Score: Not Applicable – There is no empirical support in any context.

26: *Killing political leaders leads to more backlash than killing operational leaders.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: N/A

Empirical Support Score: 0 = No empirical support (for or against the hypothesis)

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: N/A

Applicability Score: Not Applicable – There is no empirical support in any context.

27: *If a VEO has widespread popular support, then killing the leader (decapitation) is less effective.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Cronin (2009) suggests that this is the case, but also conditions this impact by the structure of the organization, and Jordan (2009) seems to imply this but never directly tests. Johnston (2010, 29) suggests that his study implies that “popular support can certainly play an important role in insurgency and counterinsurgency, the present study finds no evidence that targeting militant leaders undermines effectiveness in irregular war.” Johnston (2010) also claims that his study cannot be used to compare tactics as it only addresses the strategic success of this approach.

Empirical Support Score: 2 = Multiple qualitative and/or quantitative studies with mixed results (i.e., some in favor, some against the hypothesis) but more negative than positive findings.

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: See Above

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

82: *Arresting a VEO leader is a more effective means of influencing the VEO than killing him.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Only two studies directly address this specific sub-hypothesis. First, Cronin (2009) presents many anecdotes that suggest arrests may be more effective than killing of leadership. Kaplan et al. (2005) also use data from Israel during the Second Intifada to show that arrests, not targeted killings, decrease future attacks. However, the Kaplan study does not focus on VEO leadership.

Empirical Support Score: 1

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: See above

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

83: *Imprisonment of leaders leads to increased VEO activity.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Cronin (2009) and Kaplan et al. (2005), using different approaches, find evidence to the contrary— that imprisoning leaders reduces VEO activity. Cronin (2009) does suggest that imprisoning leaders can lead to more violence if the leader is allowed to communicate with the outside world and incite violence (like the blind Sheikh Omar Abd al-Rahman did after the World Trade Center bombing in 1993) or when members of the organization attempt to free the leader from prison (like the members of Baader –Meinhoff in Germany).

Empirical Support Score: 2 = Multiple qualitative and/or quantitative studies with mixed results (i.e., some in favor, some against the hypothesis) but more negative than positive findings.

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: See above

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

87: *Increased apprehension of members can decrease VEO activity.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Kaplan et al. (2005) suggest that this is a more effective tool than targeted assassination. Using a formal model and evidence from Israel, they find that targeted killings do not influence the stock of terrorists but that preventive imprisonment does.

Empirical Support Score: 7 = Single, high-quality quantitative analysis supporting the hypothesis.

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Single quantitative case analysis applied to Israel during the 2nd Intifada.

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

28: *Targeted killing will increase VEO activity.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Much of this literature focuses on targeting killings of leadership. Zussman and Zussman (2006) looked at targeting killings across the board but compare the effects of leaders versus non-leaders. Since the 2nd Intifada in Israel, the Israeli government has employed targeted assassinations as counterterrorism policy. This policy like other militarized counterterrorism could decrease the capability of the group, increase the supply of recruits, or both (Zussman and Zussman 2006). This leads to three potential outcomes for this policy: targeted assassinations increase VEO activity (recruitment effects), decrease VEO activity (reduction in supply of actors), or have no effect (recruitment effect equals reduction in supply). Zussman and Zussman (2006) find that stock markets respond positively to targeted killings of high-ranking leaders and are negative towards lower ranked leaders. If stock market expectations are a proxy for expected benefits, then this suggests only killing high-ranked officials should matter. Hafez and Hatfield (2006), using time series analysis, find that these same targeted assassinations in Israel have no short term or long term effect on terrorism. Kaplan et al. (2005) find, again in Israel during the same time period, that assassinations do not decrease VEO activity.

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: Mostly this question has been discussed in the context of the Second Intifada in Israel. Recent applications to Afghanistan, however, ignore temporal dynamics.

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

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