

Political reforms can lower VEO activity.

145; 14; 137

General Description of the Literature:

Scholars who argue that political reforms may lower VEO violence are from the relative deprivation and similar traditions within political science (Gurr 1970, Gurr 1993, Gurr 2000). Three studies suggest that power-sharing arrangements decrease VEO activity (Lake and Rothchild 1996, Weingast 1998, Walter 2002). Gvineria (2009) argues that when VEOs (specifically, terrorist organizations) have their goals either partially or fully met through political reforms, they will either disband or transition to nonviolent politics. Cronin (2006) also discusses how achieving goals related to reforms can dampen VEO violence; however, she notes that organizations with unrealistic goals (like al Qaeda) are less likely to be swayed by more limited political reforms and that while political reforms achieved through nonviolent processes may sway some factions of VEOs to nonviolence, they are also likely to produce splintering, with the splinters continuing to act violently. Some scholars in the rational choice tradition also argue that, given limited resources and the high costs of violence, rational actors will substitute nonviolence for violence, when legal, nonviolent options are available (Lichbach 1987, Enders 2007).

Detailed Analyses

145: *Political reforms can lower VEO activity.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Braithwaite and Sobek (2004) analyze how concessionary and retaliatory policy decisions made by Israel influenced the number of international terrorist attacks on the state. In a statistical analysis of data from 1968 to 1996, they find that levels of international terrorism decrease in response to Israel's employment of concessionary policies. Enders and Sandler (1995) find that a rational terrorist chooses illegal/violent means to achieve their political goals when the state inhibits the terrorist's means of achieving their goals in a legal manner and that it is more cost efficient for both to allow the terrorist the legal opportunity. Furthermore, results showed that terrorism occurrences were reduced when the state government appeared strong in its resolve to deter attacks. Collins (2010) examines potential solutions to the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico based upon previous studies. In this particular case of native rebellion against the Mexican government, Collins suggests that a reduction in ethnopolitical violence can be obtained from political-social reforms involving autonomy, integration, and pluralism.

Empirical Support Score: 9 = Multiple empirical analyses, including at least one quantitative and one qualitative study supporting the hypothesis.

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Many of the studies cited are direct analyses of VEO behavior, including terrorist organizations and ethnic insurgents.

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

14: *Lowering of widespread effective repression and societal control will increase VEO activity.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: This hypothesis has been examined primarily in the context of democratization. The common argument is that in newly democratizing states institutions have not yet sufficiently developed to meet all the demands of newly mobilized forces, while at the same time, instruments of repression have weakened. The result is that, in the short term, internal violence may increase (Prazauskas 1991, Snyder 2000, Jackson 2002). Cederman et al. (2010) find an increased likelihood of civil war onset over governmental composition after democratization. However, Gurr and Moore (1997) and Saxton (2005) find that decreases in repression decrease grievances and through that mechanism, decrease violence.

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: All empirical studies reviewed deal directly with VEO behavior. However, one is limited to VEO activity at the level of civil war; two others are limited to ethnopolitical VEOs.

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

137: *Inducements such as “political and economic reform” aimed at the potential support base of VEOs can move these actors away from VEO support.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: A large number of studies focused on ethnic conflict argue for or against specific political and/or economic reforms. The most frequently mentioned reforms are related to the decentralization of state political and economic authority, for example, through granting autonomy or implementing various forms of federalism. Significant studies finding that decentralization decreases VEO activity are Cohen (1997), Gurr (2000), Saideman et al. (2002), Horowitz (2000), and Brancati (2006). However, other studies (typically focused on a single region) find that decentralization, under certain conditions, can increase rather than decrease violent activity (Brubaker 1996, Leff 1999, Mozaffar and Scarritt 1999, Roeder 1999, Bunce 2004).

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: Multiple studies focus on VEO activity specifically.

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

General comments:

The term "political reform" is very broad. The potential for counter-mobilization, especially in ethnic conflicts, seems to be high. That is to say, if political reforms to meet the demands of ethnic VEOs are implemented, it is likely that other ethnic VEOs will mobilize against those demands. Additionally, other ethnic VEOs may increase violence in order to reap similar concessions from the state (contagion). Some examples are provided in Gurr (1993, 2000).

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