Deadly Dates

The Effect of Holy Days on Terrorism

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Question

How do Islamic holy days affect the incidence of terror attacks?

Evidence for an Increase

"Jihad fighters... [t]his month of Jihad (Ramadan) has come with all its blessings and with the double reward [granted to Jihad fighters] in its course. Come closer to Allah through the blood of infidels, do not relent in spilling [their blood]...!"

-Saud Bin Hamoud al-Utaybi
Senior Member of AQAP

Evidence for a Decrease

- Ashura commemoration in Karbala, Iraq (2012)
  - 2 million+ pilgrims gathered in Karbala for the holiday
  - No attacks occurred

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  - Religious respect (Hassner 2011)

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  - Increased likelihood during long holidays (Ramadan)

Theory

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  - Skyjackings and kidnappings (Landes, 1978)

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  - $\rightarrow$ Imposes relatively more terror than other days

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  - Leads to hetergenous holiday effect

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- Muharram & Ashura in Pakistan

Hypotheses

	Day Type	Expectation
	Non-holiday	Baseline
H1:	Short Islamic Holiday	↓
H2:	Long Islamic Holiday	↑

Data

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- Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq (2004-2014)

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  - Road density

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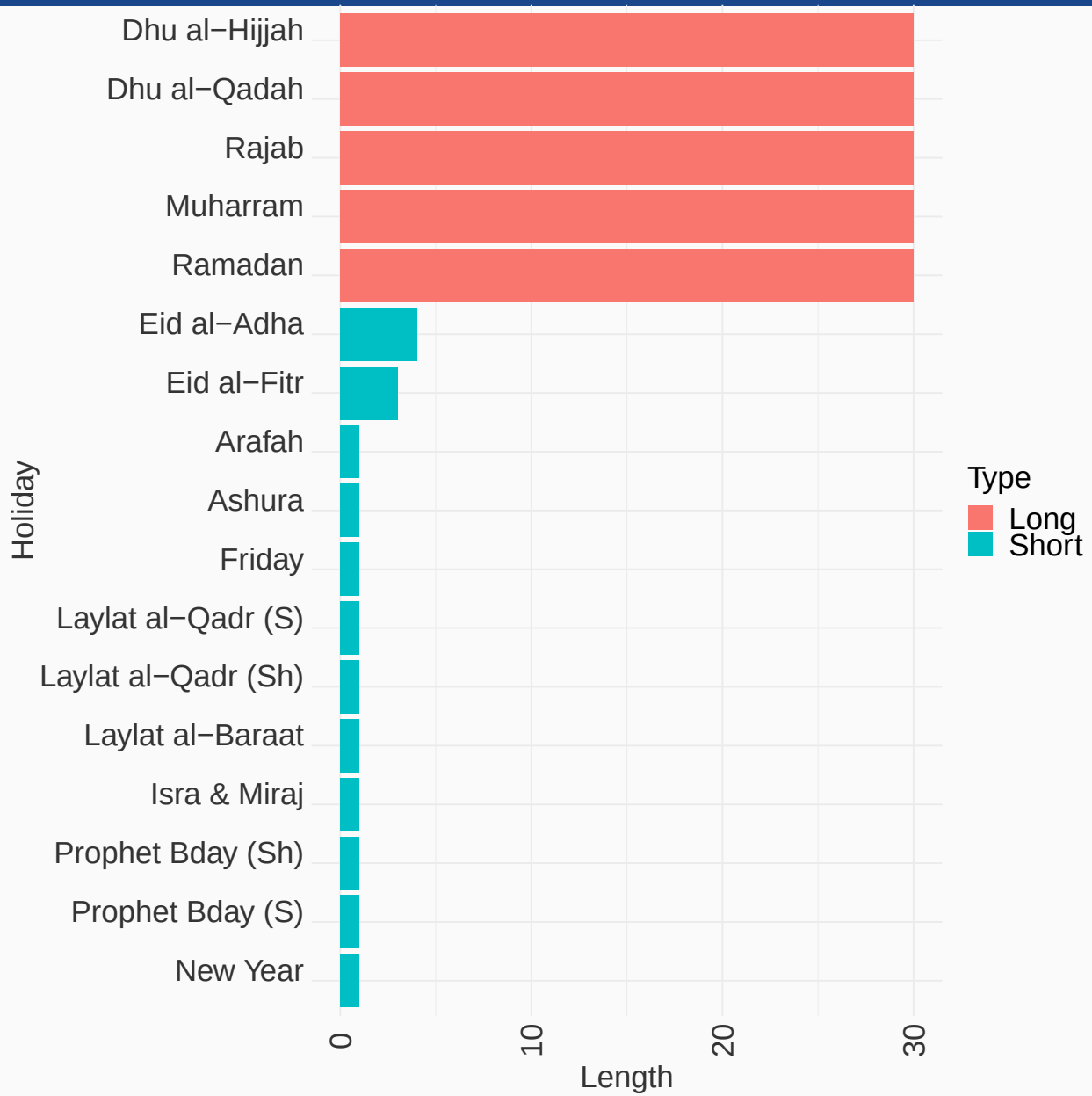
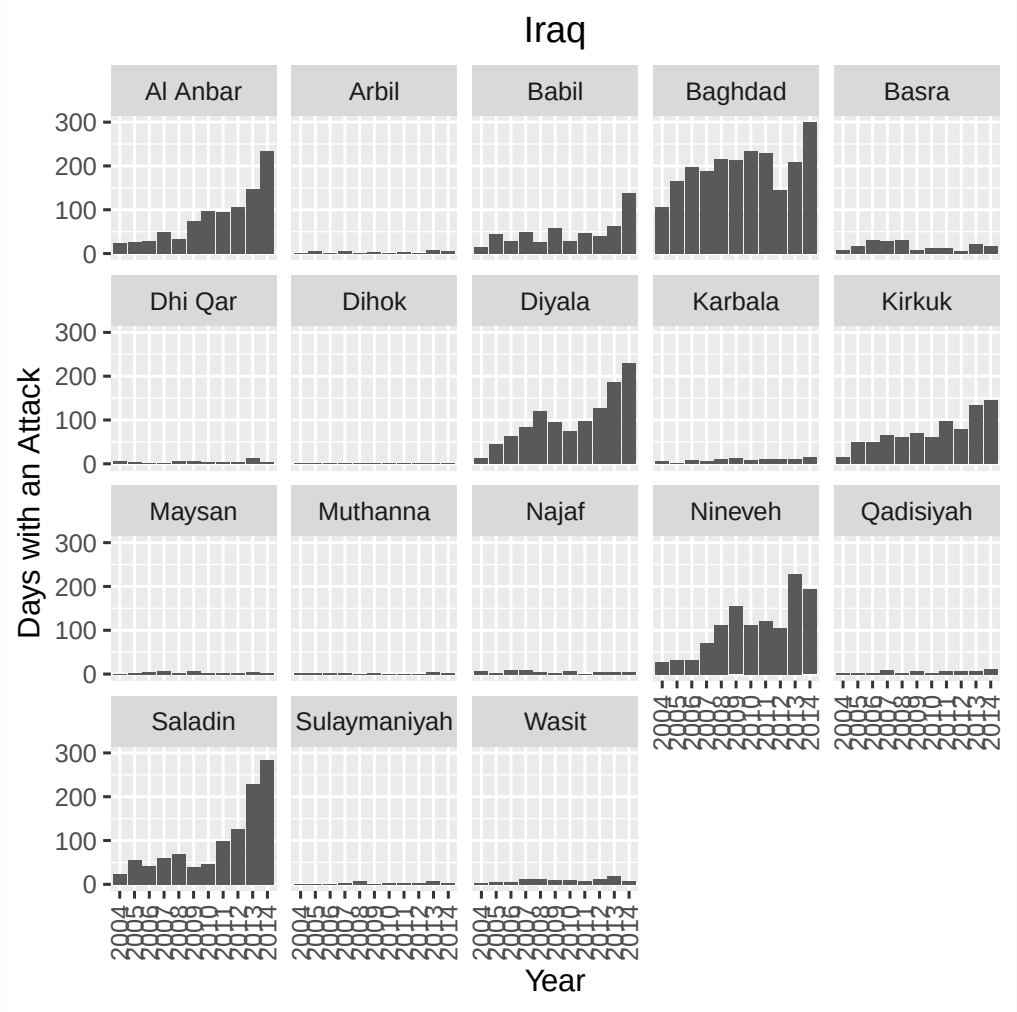
  - Different categorization scheme

Key Independent Variable



Variation in attacks by provinces



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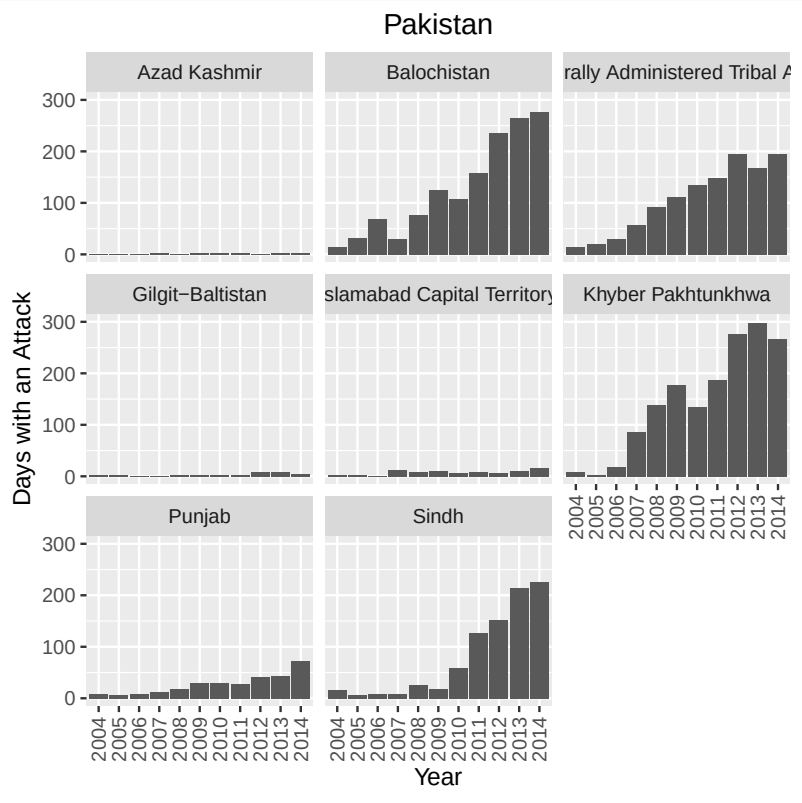

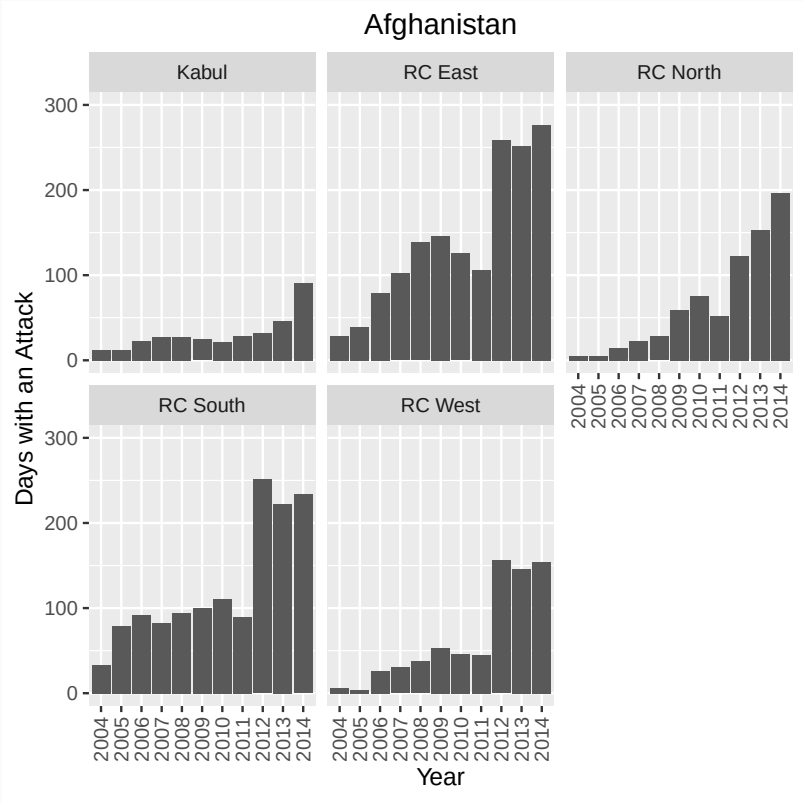

Model

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  - Predictors at different levels: population and temperature

$$p(y_{ijk} = 1) = logit^{-1}(\beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot X_{1ijk} + \beta_2 \cdot X_{2jk} +$$

$$\beta_3 \cdot X_{3k} + provyear_{jk} + prov_k)$$

Results

Logistic Regression Results

Expectation	Day Type
H1: ↓	Short Holiday

*p < .05

Logistic Regression Results

Expectation	Day Type	Coef
H1: ↓	Short Holiday	-0.276*

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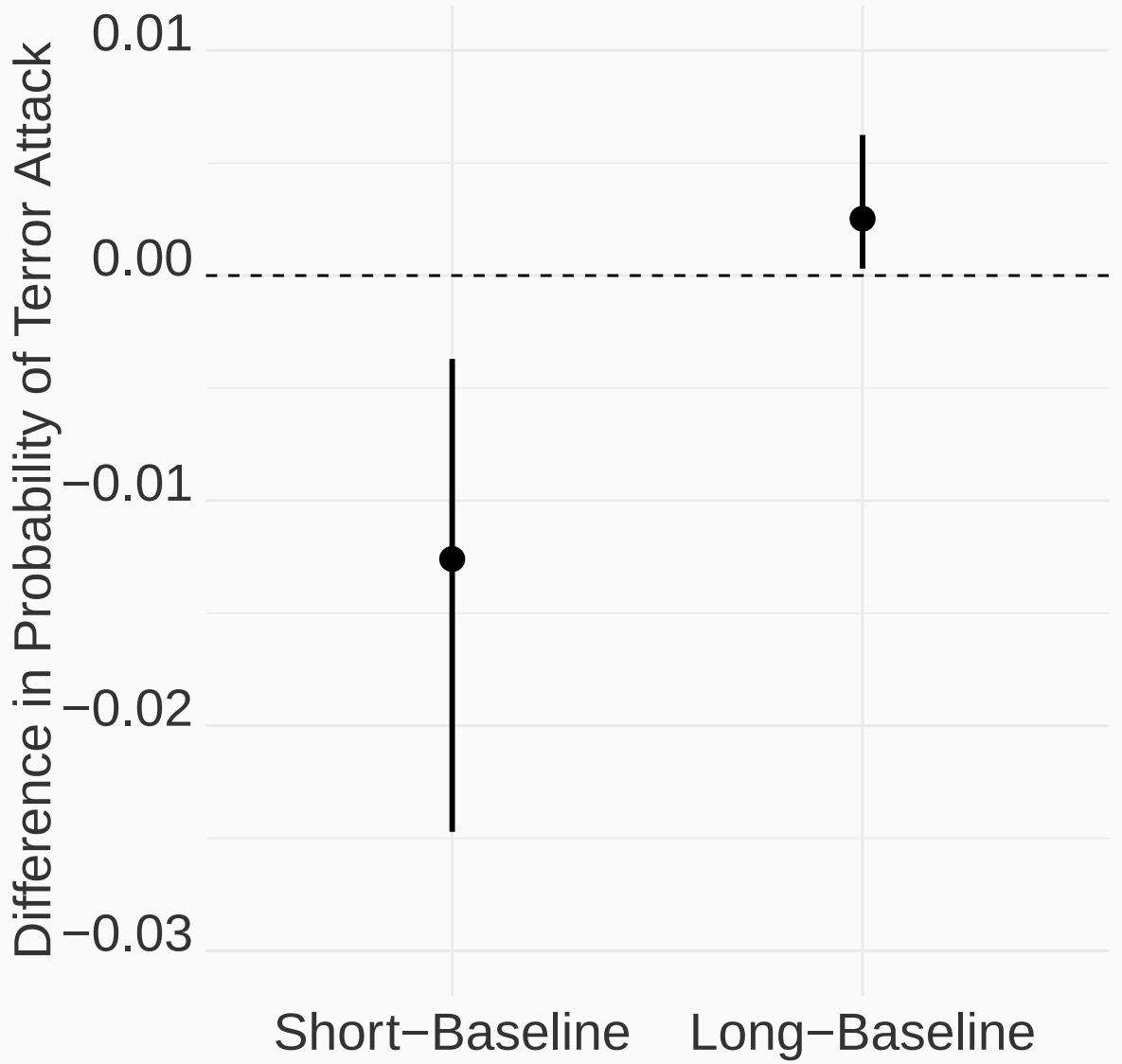
First Differences



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- Model government/terrorist learning

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