

POLS 429: International Terrorism

Lecture 21 (03.04.2020): The Political effects of Terrorism

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Overview

- 1 Quick review
- 2 Introduction
- 3 Political Effects
- 4 Extra Material

Review

WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

- Ideological explanations: justify the use of suicide attacks.
- Quasi-ideological approach: adoption of suicide method as a function of ideology and other factors.
- Psychological approach: systematic factors of suicide attackers, attribution error.
- Structural factors: social pre-conditions.

Questions??

Terrorism: Political effects

- The relationships between terrorism and political outcomes, for example elections.
- Puzzle 1: Do incidents increase around elections?
- Puzzle 2: How terrorism affects voting behavior?
 - ① Partisan preferences.
 - ② Incumbent support.
 - ③ Voter turnout.
- Puzzle 3: Duration and survival of governments/leaders.
- Puzzle 4: Terrorism **threats** and electoral behavior.

Elections and Terrorism

Shorr Newman (2013)

- The puzzle: do election years "attract" more terrorism?
 - 2005: Countries with elections → 761 terror attacks.
 - 2004 (no elections): Same countries → 407 terror attacks.
- Election violence: "a sub-category of political violence, which occurs during the election period with the objective to influence the electoral process and by extension the election outcome".
- Examples:
 - Thailand: April 2006 (day of elections).
 - Swaziland: August 2008 (a month before election).

Elections and Terrorism

- Election violence - Why?
- Democracies → less terrorism.
- Elections are held regularly and offer a legal channel to voice public grievances.
- Elections → fragile regime stability.
- Incentive for some groups to engage in violence.
- Important role for the strength of democratic institutions and norms.

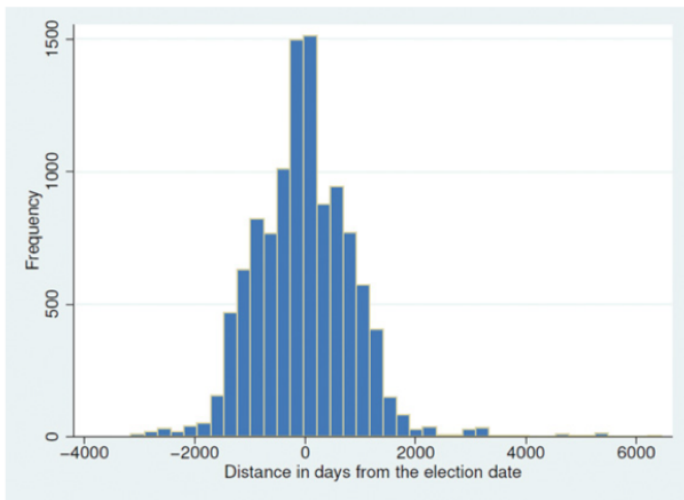
Elections and Terrorism

EMPIRICAL TEST

- Logic and expectation:
 - Terrorism (electoral violence) → influence the process and outcomes.
 - Expects more incidents closer to elections.
- Terrorism and elections - possible relationship:
 - 1 Before: influence the process (India 1999).
 - 2 After: protest outcomes (Philippines 2007).
- **Findings:** terrorism increases closer to elections, and subsides the further we move from the election date.
- Upon further review: time frame (2000-2005); data (GTD).

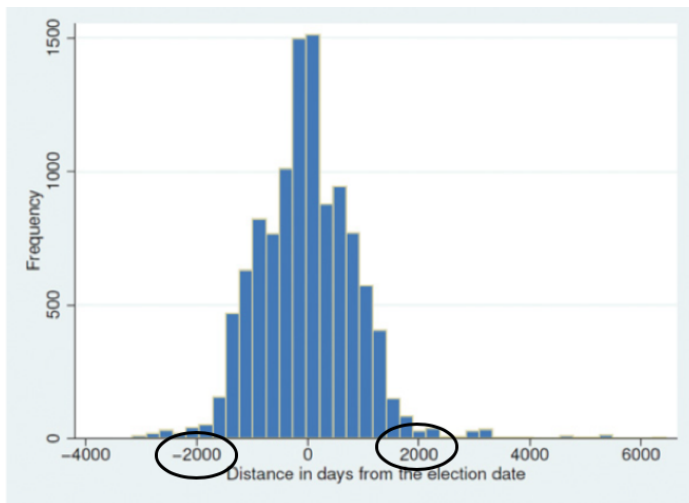
Elections and Terrorism

Closer look at results



Elections and Terrorism

Closer look at results: Number of days



Elections and Terrorism

Aksoy (2014)

- Institutional freedom and terrorism in democracies.
- Restrictions → more violence (inter-group competition).
- Permissiveness → election threshold, proportional representation.
- Data: democracies in West Europe (1950-2004).
- Domestic terrorism incidents.
- Findings → [▶ Greece](#) [▶ Factors](#)

Terrorism and Electoral Behavior

Berrebi and Klor (2008)

- Motivation: are terrorists behave strategically?
- Target democratic elections → coerce the public to pressure to government for concessions.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What is the effect of terror attacks on the public' political preferences?
- Test for effects closer to elections: 1 year; 3 months.

Terrorism and Electoral Behavior

Berrebi and Klor (2008)

- Israel (1984-2003): terror casualties increase support of right wing bloc, regardless of the PM's party.
- Why? Salient issue, so which party is more competent in security issues?
- Does terrorism increase polarization?
- Support for the right is increasing, especially in localities directly hit by terrorism.
- Total number of fatalities, and localities that are not harmed by direct attacks: support for conciliatory policies.

Terrorism and Electoral Behavior

Berrebi and Klor (2008)

- Terrorism 'directly' shape election results: May 1996 (Netanyahu wins by 30,000 votes).

Israel: March 1996

Jerusalem: 19 Killed



Tel Aviv: 13 Killed (Purim Massacre)



Terrorism and Electoral Behavior

TURKEY

- Results reinforce Israel case.
- Increased support for nationalist parties following PKK attacks on police forces.
- Public definition of terrorism (Huff and Kertzer, 2018).
- Increased support for nationalist parties when terror target civilians or military/police forces.

Terrorism and Electoral Behavior

SPAIN

- Surprising results: incumbent party lost, despite having a 4-5% advantage in most polls just days before the elections.
- Voters most affected by the attacks → switch their vote, or lean toward the opposition party.
- Most salient effect → marginal voters.
- Two reasons for the surprising result:
 - 1 How the Spanish government handled the attack
 - 2 Public oppose the military involvement in Iraq.
- Data collected after the elections and based on self-reporting (social desirability, confirmation bias).

Terrorism and Incumbent

- Increase in terrorism and the likelihood of an incumbent winning re-election?
- Voters may view the incumbent as responsible.
- Two theoretical explanations for voting:
 - ① Retrospective voting - punish government.
 - ② Valence theory - maybe not??
- Right wing and conservative parties are viewed as more dominant and effective in security issues.
- A conservative/right-wing incumbent will not 'suffer' from security threats.

Terrorism and Incumbent

- Overall, evidence for both theories.
- Spain → retrospective voting can be detrimental to incumbents.
- More support: war casualties and incumbent support.
- Strong evidence for *valence theory* and issue dominance for certain parties/leaders.
- Israel → incumbents do not suffer much from terrorism (especially right bloc parties).

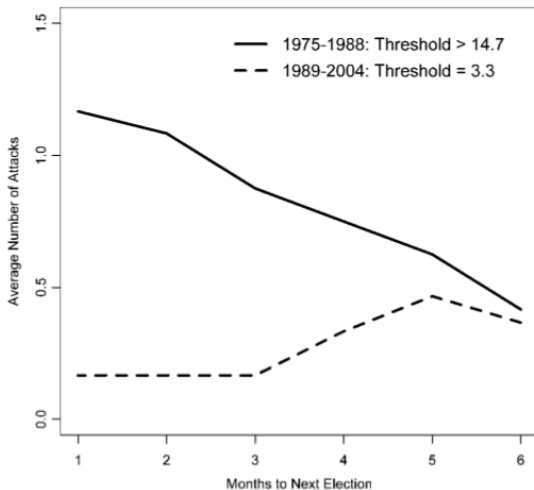
Recommended readings

More studies on the political effects of terrorism:

- ① Rose, William, Rysia Murphy, and Max Abrahms. "Does terrorism ever work? The 2004 Madrid train bombings." *International Security* Vol. 32, no. 1 (2007): 185-192.
- ② Criado, Henar. "What makes terrorism salient? Terrorist strategies, political competition, and public opinion." *Terrorism and political violence* Vol. 29, no. 2 (2017): 197-214.

Elections and Terrorism

Greece, 1975-2004



Elections and Terrorism

