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The Effect of Terminal Levels of Education, National Economic Prosperity and Rates of Islamic Terrorism in the Middle East

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INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Terrorism, as it is known in its modern interpretation, has been prevalent since the 1st century. The use of violence against non-militant targets and civilians to achieve a political goal has become a hot button issue. Warfare has transformed from one nation facing another to non-governmental actors attacking nations. This evolution was brought to the forefront with the September 11th attacks on the United States, which destroyed the twin towers in New York City. While this was the most public and successful terrorist attack in modern history, terrorism has roots, which stem back to political assassinations in the Roman Empire. However, today the Middle East is at the anterior of the dialogue due to high levels of violence in countries such as Yemen, Pakistan, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. It is important to note that the high levels of violence in these regions does not equate to an increased likelihood of domestic and international terrorism. Rather, this paper will conclude that in areas with low levels of economic prosperity, education, and literacy coupled with unstable governments and radical religion, there is a higher likelihood of terrorist organizations being active. Thus, the purpose of this research paper is to answer the following question: What causes the formation and success of terrorist organizations in the Middle East?

The objective of this research design is to explicate the variables that lead groups and

individuals to radicalize and commit acts of terrorism. First, this paper will discuss the importance of international policy and theory in the late 20th century and the 21st century. Secondly, it will describe how other authors and researches have investigated this problem and the conclusions they made. Third, utilizing the pre-researched independent variables this paper will demonstrate the shortcomings and reliability of previous data and conclusions. Fourth, the paper will alter the operationalization of the dependent variable in order to address the shortcomings of previous findings. Lastly, conclusions will be drawn from previous research to demonstrate a correlation between the above variables.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this paper, certain terms are operationalized in order to remove ambiguity in their meanings. Terrorism, for the purposes of this paper, should be understood as acts of violence against civilian, military, governmental, and non-governmental organizations with the specific intent of achieving political, spiritual, or social goals. Terrorist organizations are defined as any group that has executed, or plans on executing attacks against the aforementioned. For the purpose of this research Middle Eastern countries that state-sponsor terrorism are as follows: Iraq,

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Syria¹⁴⁶. OECD is defined as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Terminal Education is defined as the mean level of education that is reached per country (with available data). No education is defined as having attended no formal education. Incomplete primary education is not completing grades kindergarten through 6, while 'primary school' is having completed grades 6-12. Lower secondary is having completed an associate's degree, while upper secondary is having completed a bachelor's degree or equivalent, and post-secondary is having completed graduate level work.

IMPORTANCE

The issue of domestic and transnational terrorism has grown exponentially since its emergence in gothic times. Frequency of terrorist attacks, lethality, and success rates have risen drastically due in part to the increase of military strength of superpowers such as the United States, the U.K., and Russia. The military strength of these nations and others, force groups such as ISIS, Boko Haram, and Al-Qaeda¹⁴⁷ to adopt practices, which deviate from the norm of nation versus nation warfare. The leaders of terrorist organizations understand that a frontal war would usher complete destruction of themselves and the goals that they attempt to pursue. For this reason, guerilla tactics and total war have become the primary vessels for violence. These tactics are not innovative and have been utilized by many groups dating back to the Greco-Roman era. The most infamous act of terrorism from that period is the utilization of the Trojan horse. With acts of violence targeted, not at nations, but rather against civilians and soft, non-military targets, the importance of understanding the motivating factors for engaging in terrorism is more vital than ever

before. The reasons that fuel individuals to engage in these acts vary; however, understanding the rationale and motives will allow nations to better understand and combat transnational terrorism in the future.

POLICY AND THEORY

The goals of Middle Eastern based terrorist organizations are similar in nature but ambiguous in specificity. Shughart identifies that there is limited vision and goal beyond the destruction of all western civilization¹⁴⁸. Due to the limited scope of these organization's motives, it is often unclear how best to quell the rising tide of terrorism. Without the ability to meet these organization's wishes peacefully, it is evident that the predominant and most expedient option is to remove them violently. Like all warfare, it is essential to understand the motives of one's enemy. For this reason, there is a necessity to understand why individuals engage in often self-harming and lethal tactics. Quintan Winktorowicz and Karl Kaltenthaler, authors of "The Rationality of Radical Islam," contend that individuals who participate in terrorism frequently seek selective spiritual

¹⁴⁶ "State Sponsored Terrorism." U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State, n.d. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.

¹⁴⁷ Shughart, William F., II. "The Handbook on the Political Economy of War." *Terrorism in the Rational*

Choice Perspective. Google Books, n.d. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.

¹⁴⁸ IBID

DATE	COUNTRY	LOCATION	F*	I*	GROUP	DESCRIPTION
5/12/2013	Yemen	Sanaa	68	275	Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)	A suicide bomber then 12 gunmen attacked the Ministry of Defense.
21/02/2013	Syria	Damascus	62	201	Unknown	A car bomb exploded near the baath party offices in Damascus City.
6/02/2013	Syria	Al-Buraq	61	-	Al-Nusrah Front	An explosives-laden vehicle detonated at a bus stop near a military factory killing civilian employees.
5/12/2013	Central African Republic	Bangui	54	-	Anti-Balaka Militia	Gunman attacked a mosque in km-five neighborhood, Bangui City.
3/04/2013	Afghanistan	Farah	53	95	Taliban	A suicide bomber and nine assailants dressed as soldiers and armed with guns and grenades attacked a courthouse.
21/03/2013	Syria	Damascus	50	84	Unknown	A suicide bomber detonated himself at al-eman mosque in Damascus City.
24/04/2013	Iraq	Mosul	46	-	Unknown	Assailants attacked a police headquarters and held 17 hostage.
6/07/2013	Nigeria	Mamudo	46	4	Boko Haram	Assailants set fire to a school and shot at students and staff who were fleeing the burning building.
3/03/2013	Pakistan	Karachi	45	151	Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	An explosives-laden car detonated in outside a Shiite mosque.

* F= FATALITIES, I = INJURIES

DATE	COUNTRY	LOCATION	F*	I*	GROUP	DESCRIPTION
17/09/2013	Nigeria	Beni Shiek	142	-	Boko Haram	Gunmen dressed in military uniforms set up illegal checkpoints and shot civilians.
22/07/2013	Syria	Khan Al-Assal	123	-	Al-Nusrah Front	Assailants attacked soldiers and civilians in the town of Khan al-assal.
10/01/2013	Pakistan	Quetta	107	169	Lashkar-E-Jhangvi	Suicide bombers detonated inside of a snooker hall and attacked responders to the first explosion.
16/08/2013	Pakistan	Quetta	91	169	Lashkar-E-Jhangvi	An explosives-laden water tanker detonated in a vegetable market.
22/09/2013	Pakistan	Peshawar	87	131	Jundallah	Two suicide bombers detonated outside of all saints church in Peshawar City.
2/08/2013	Afghanistan	Sherzad District	82	-	Taliban	Assailants ambushed a joint military and police convoy.
18/08/2013	Afghanistan	Gulistan District	82	22	Taliban	Assailants attacked a police convoy in Gulistan district.
21/09/2013	Kenya	Nairobi	72	201	Al-Shabaab	Assailants with automatic weapons and grenades attacked the westgate mall in Nairobi and held patrons hostage.
11/06/2013	Syria	Hatla	70	-	Al-Nusrah Front	Gunmen attacked the Shiite village of Hatla.
20/12/2013	Nigeria	Bama	70	-	Boko Haram	300 Assailants attacked a Nigerian army barracks and kidnapped some soldiers.
16/01/2013	Algeria	In Amenus	69	8	Al-Muq'oon Biddam Brigade (Those who Sign with Blood)	Terrorists seized a British Petroleum gas complex and held 800 people hostage.

* F= FATALITIES, I = INJURIES

incentives¹⁴⁹. These incentives are divided into two categories: those who use acts of terrorism as a vessel for spiritual salvation, and those who are seeking self-empowerment against perceived oppressors. The two groups are similar in nature due to participation in radical activities, but the motives that fuel them are drastically different.

The authors contend that those who participate in terrorist organizations have limited prior knowledge and formal education in the teachings of Islam. For this reason, they are often susceptible to skewed and incorrect interpretations of scriptures. This correlation between education and the likelihood of individuals to incorrectly interpret scripture, highlights the broader Muslim community's rejection of skewed Islam practices. James A. Piazza suggests that there is a link between economic factors and the likelihood of individuals joining terrorist organizations¹⁵⁰. Piazza contends that coming from a lower economic background affords the individual a target for which to carry out violent acts. As is true with many forms of crime, Piazza argues that low economic standing provides a path for these individuals into the world of terrorism. This buttresses the arguments of Winktorowicz and Kaltenthaler who also demonstrate a link between economic factors and terrorist involvement.

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

Seung-Wang Choi of the University of Illinois, Chicago, demonstrates there are a number of variables that can lead to nations having higher levels of domestic and transnational terrorism. He accounts for several variables such as income inequality, democracy, state-failure, population, and a variable designating post-cold war conditions¹⁵¹. Choi establishes weak social structures such as poor schooling, and weak political systems, as attributes to a strong possibility of a nations serving as a quasi-incubation area for terrorist groups. Choi further determines that for every one unit of national industrial growth (keeping all other above factors constant) the incident rate of terrorism is at a one percent decrease¹⁵². This study would suggest that there is a direct linear relationship between growth of a nation's industrial power and the likelihood of terroristic tendencies.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Wiktorowicz, Quintan. "The Rationality of Radical Islam." *Political Science Quarterly* 121.2 (2006): 295-319. JSTOR. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.

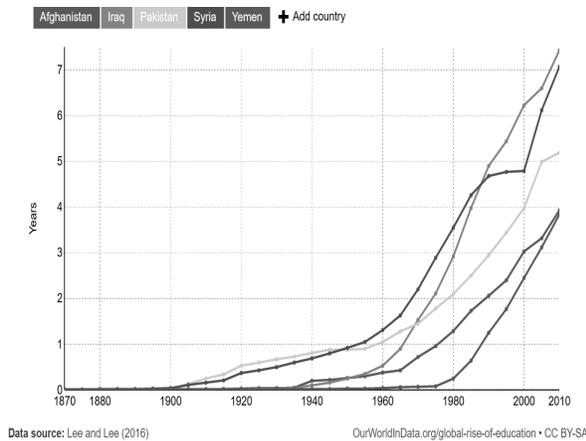
¹⁵⁰ Piazza, James A. "Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination, and Domestic Terrorism." *Journal of Peace Research* 48.3 (2011): 339-53.

¹⁵¹ Whan-Choi, Seung. "The Relationship between Terrorism and Economic Growth: Research." *Journalist's Resource*. N.p., 14 Sept. 2016. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.

¹⁵² IBID

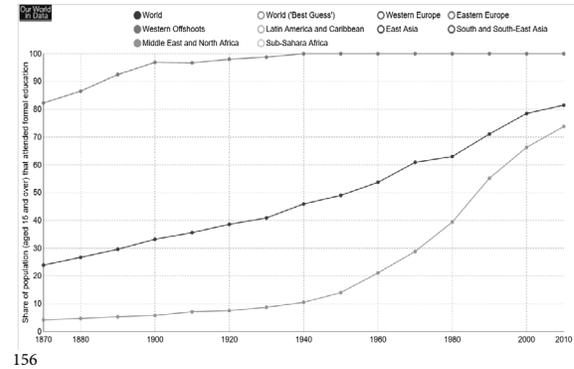
¹⁵³ IBID

As indicated from the table above, the data collected ranges from January of 2000 to July of 2013, the group responsible, fatalities, injuries, the group responsible, and the description of the



The data for these graphs can be found in appendix A at the end of this paper.

attack. In order to limit selection bias, Choi utilized the Global Terror index, which records terror attacks across the globe, non-discriminant of the nations from which the attacks occurred. Utilizing Choi's findings, and the chart below, we are able to cross reference the number and brutality of the attacks to the levels of education in these countries. For the purpose of this paper, non-Middle Eastern countries have been excluded from the data collection.¹⁵⁴ The chart above shows the mean level of education from 1870 to 2010. The data was collected by historical enrollment data, subdivided by education level and gender¹⁵⁵.



The chart above depicts the projected mean level of education from across the globe by total population, as well as, historical data collected based off the statistical parameters listed above. The data was collected based off census data for all reporting countries, and is stratified based on seven education categories. The parameters for each grouping are based on the final level of education attained. From the year 2000 to 2015, which were the years that encompassed Choi's research, there were 6.87 billion people surveyed. Of these roughly 7 billion individuals, surveyed globally, 791.48 million reported having no education, 317.15 reported having incomplete primary, 901.16 reported having primary, 1.13 billion reported lower secondary, 1.26 billion reported upper secondary, 615.18 million reported having post-secondary, and 1.84 billion being under 15 years of age. Similarly, the chart compares two regions of the world to the global average level of education. In 2010, 82% of the global population reported to having attended some form of formal education. As the graph depicts, in the same year, the Middle East and North Africa reported as only having 74% of their respective populations attending some form of schooling¹⁵⁷.

When compared to Choi's findings it is evident that there is a relationship between nations that have low levels of formal schooling attendance and terrorist activities. As the above

¹⁵⁴ Lee, Jong-Wha, and Hanol Lee. "Global Rise of Education." Our World In Data. Journal of Development Economics 2016, n.d. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.

¹⁵⁵ IBID

¹⁵⁶ "Projection of the World Population by Level of Education." Our World In Data. Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital (2015). Wittgenstein Centre Data Explorer Version 1.2., 01 Aug. 2016. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.

¹⁵⁷ IBID

data depicts, the mean levels of education for the selected countries is far lower than that of the national average. While this is not conclusive of individuals joining terrorist organizations, there appears to be a correlation between the nations who suffer from terrorist attacks and their levels of education. This claim is supported through the empirical evidence stated on the same graph. The graph demonstrates that western off-shoot country's education levels are at or near 100%. This is further supported by the levels of terrorist activities in these nations. Countries like the U.S. and Canada have dramatically higher levels of education, and drastically lower levels of domestic terrorism as compared to its eastern counterparts. It would appear that there is a casual relationship between level of education and terrorism if all factors were held constant.

While the data suggests that a relationship exists, there is room for skepticism due to the data collection methods. Census collection is a valuable tool for collecting basic information; however, where it falters lies with the inherent bias that comes with it. When collecting data on such a massive scale there is a high statistical probability for a type I error, or incorrect rejection of a true null hypothesis. This information is based on the population's inherent notoriety for falsifying census interviews, questionnaires and other data collecting information. It is for this reason that a third variable is required to prove the strength of the underlying relationship.

The third variable to be tested is economic growth in the countries listed in Choi's research. Below are the GDP growth rates for Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Syria, and Iraq from 2007 to 2017.

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Afghanistan GDP	Last	Previous	Highest	Lowest	Unit	
GDP Annual Growth Rate	-2.40	2.20	28.60	-2.40	percent	[+]
GDP	19.30	20.05	20.54	0.54	USD Billion	[+]
GDP per capita	619.80	632.10	651.00	372.90	USD	[+]
GDP per capita PPP	1808.00	1844.00	1899.30	1088.00	USD	[+]

¹⁵⁸ Afghanistan GDP 1960-2017 | Data | Chart | Calendar | Forecast | News." Afghanistan GDP | 1960-2017 | Data | Chart | Calendar | Forecast | News. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.

Yemen GDP	Last	Previous	Highest	Lowest	Unit	
GDP Annual Growth Rate	-28.10	-0.20	7.70	-28.10	percent	[+]
GDP	37.73	43.20	43.20	4.17	USD Billion	[+]
GDP Constant Prices	2573931046.53	4145474979.43	4618172671.61	1210614137.35	YER THO	[+]
Gross National Product	6052056580.27	7585871524.14	7585871524.14	109019140.00	YER THO	[+]
GDP per capita	774.50	1103.80	1310.10	774.50	USD	[+]
GDP per capita PPP	2649.31	3775.82	4481.55	2649.31	USD	[+]

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Pakistan GDP	Last	Previous	Highest	Lowest	Unit	
GDP Growth Rate	4.71	4.04	10.22	-1.80	percent	[+]
GDP Annual Growth Rate	4.71	4.04	10.22	-1.80	percent	[+]
GDP	271.05	244.36	271.05	3.71	USD Billion	[+]
GDP Constant Prices	11777594.00	11138150.00	11777594.00	8216160.00	PKR Million	[+]
Gross National Product	12465443.00	11687052.00	12465443.00	3778155.00	PKR Million	[+]
Gross Fixed Capital Formation	1647288.00	1558295.00	1647288.00	1268315.00	PKR Million	[+]
GDP per capita	1142.70	1114.20	1142.70	304.69	USD	[+]

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Syria GDP	Last	Previous	Highest	Lowest	Unit	
GDP Annual Growth Rate	-2.30	3.23	6.90	-2.30	percent	[+]
GDP	73.67	59.15	73.67	0.86	USD Billion	[+]
GDP Constant Prices	1469703.00	1420833.00	1469703.00	950245.00	SYP Million	[+]
Gross Fixed Capital Formation	30033.60	26904.20	30033.60	3224.50	SYP Million	[+]
GDP per capita	1700.39	1686.93	1700.39	563.07	USD	[+]
GDP per capita PPP	4684.72	4501.74	4684.72	2810.84	USD	[+]

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Iraq GDP	Last	Previous	Highest	Lowest	Unit	
GDP Annual Growth Rate	11.00	2.40	54.16	-56.40	percent	[+]
GDP	180.07	228.70	234.60	1.70	USD Billion	[+]
GDP Constant Prices	48104042.40	49536408.20	69794974.80	1105299.00	IQD Million	[+]
Gross National Product	224153528.60	240917008.90	240917008.90	20594974.80	IQD Million	[+]
GDP per capita	5119.30	5131.20	5303.40	1427.10	USD	[+]
GDP per capita PPP	14459.00	14492.60	14979.00	4030.70	USD	[+]

As shown in the graphs above, each country respectively has had a negative growth rate or lower reported GDP. While there may be a multitude of macro economic variables to explain the reasons behind the slow growth or low GDP, the data suggests that countries that have poor economic conditions can be quasi-incubators for terrorist organizations. According to Choi, there is a direct relationship between economic growth and the rates of domestic and transnational terrorism. Due to this relationship, and the negative externalities that are associated with poor economic conditions, states like the ones stated above have become quasi-incubators for terrorist activities. According to Winktorowicz and Kaltenthaler, it is factors such as these, which drive individuals to utilize

¹⁵⁹ IBID

¹⁶⁰ IBID

¹⁶¹ IBID

violent means to satisfy a spiritual and economic goal¹⁶².

CONCLUSION

The issue of terrorism has plagued the global community since the beginning of civilization. With new advancements in lethal technology, and backed by a religion that terrorists believe provides spiritual immunity; it remains vital to understand the motives and methods by which terrorism is successful. This paper has demonstrated that there are three variables, which give terror organizations the ember to thrive: education, national economic development, and government stability. With the presence of these factors in the geo-political landscape, governments can better understand the motives by which individuals will commit terrorist acts. Terrorism has been met with a great deal of violence. If a relationship does exist between the aforementioned factors and rates of Islamic terrorism, then nations can utilize this information to develop peaceful approaches to economic aid. By aiding countries who are plagued with terrorism, it will open pathways for governments to increase social spending on education. Other readers analyzing the relationship of class discrimination can further improve upon this research design and the effects that it has on domestic terrorism. By adding more dependent economic variables to the discussion, the scope of the research design can be increased to include non-middle eastern countries who struggle with domestic and transnational terrorism.

APPENDIX A

Entity	year	CC	Total_Yrs_School
Afghanistan	1985	AFG	1.73
Afghanistan	1990	AFG	2.06
Afghanistan	1995	AFG	2.4
Afghanistan	2000	AFG	3.03
Afghanistan	2005	AFG	3.32

Iraq	1985	IRQ	3.98
Iraq	1990	IRQ	4.9
Iraq	1995	IRQ	5.44
Iraq	2000	IRQ	6.23
Iraq	2005	IRQ	6.6
Iraq	2010	IRQ	7.43
Pakistan	1985	PAK	2.5
Pakistan	1990	PAK	2.95
Pakistan	1995	PAK	3.44
Pakistan	2000	PAK	3.98
Pakistan	2005	PAK	4.99
Pakistan	2010	PAK	5.19
Syria	1985	SYR	4.26
Syria	1990	SYR	4.68
Syria	1995	SYR	4.77
Syria	2000	SYR	4.79
Syria	2005	SYR	6.12
Syria	2010	SYR	7.07
Yemen	1985	YEM	0.64
Yemen	1990	YEM	1.25
Yemen	1995	YEM	1.77
Yemen	2000	YEM	2.45
Yemen	2005	YEM	3.12
Yemen	2010	YEM	3.84

¹⁶² Wiktorowicz, Quintan. "The Rationality of Radical Islam." *Political Science Quarterly* 121.2 (2006): 295-319. JSTOR. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.