

Understanding the Interrelationship Between Global Terrorist Attacks and the Citizen's Wellbeing: The Complexity of Terrorism

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Abstract

Terrorism is a global phenomenon that over the last 44 years more than 140,000 terrorist events have been carried out. In the period from 1970-2001, the five countries with the largest number of terrorist attacks were Colombia, Peru, El Salvador, United Kingdom, and India. On the other hand, in the post-2001 context, the five countries with the largest number of terrorist attacks were Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, and Thailand. One method for measuring in an aggregate way, how many people have suffered under terrorist attacks at national level is to analyze the correlation between some national wellbeing indicators and the number of terrorist attacks. The aim of this study is to analyze empirically the correlation between the global terrorist attacks and the countries wellbeing indicators. Five indicators show a strong relationship with the number of terrorist attacks in the case of the four most attacked countries in the post-2001 context. The authors consider that their findings can support the design of new strategies for preventing terrorist activities taking into account certain socio-economic and political drivers. The authors conclude that as such drivers are socio-complex, so it is necessary to adopt the complex adaptive system (CAS) approach to provide a new way of thinking about terrorism.

Keywords

Terrorist attacks, national wellbeing, global governance, corruption, drugs

There is not a consensual definition of terrorism that encompasses attacks, whether against civilian noncombatants or armed military (Ranstorp 2007). One of the most widely used definitions of terrorism is provided by the U.S. Department of State. According to the definition included in the Title 22 of the U.S. Code, Section 2656f(d), "terrorism is premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups and clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience". The term "noncombatant" includes civilians and the military personnel who are unarmed or not on duty (U.S. Department of State 2004). While the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines

terrorism as "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives". Both definitions of terrorism share a common theme: The use of violence intended to influence a course of action that furthers a political or social goal.

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