

Public Abstract

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Title: The Dilemma of Liberal Democracies: An Aggregate Analysis of Counterterrorist Efforts

How do countries cooperate with one another in the new world of global terror? What are the consequences of their actions? Despite the fact that the War on Terror is led by liberal democracies, and that most international terrorist attacks are directed at liberal democracies, this study looks at a set of countries and concludes that democracy actually hinders a country's ability to participate in military action. Instead of cooperating militarily to eliminate a terrorist group, countries are more likely to avoid military confrontation and shore up defenses at home, lest they become a weak and attractive target to terrorist attacks. Military intervention proves to be an unpopular strategy that results in a loss of lives and political popularity. As a result, most democratic populations punish their leaders if their country engages in military action. Furthermore, these actions can provoke terrorists into launching more attacks as revenge for invading in the first place. Suicide attacks are one way to drum up this opposition. This study also finds that suicide attacks are driven by separate motivations than regular attacks and shows that international security often leaves an odd man out. States that are the weakest attract the most attacks. Hence, despite the high visibility of the United States and its democratic allies in fighting the War on Terror, the decision to engage in military action is actually due to a country's military might and its membership in NATO. Most democracies prefer to protect themselves rather than cooperate to defeat an enemy.