

THE DILEMMA OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES:  
AN AGGREGATE ANALYSIS OF COUNTERTERRORIST EFFORTS

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ABSTRACT

What compels states to cooperate in the face of a global terrorist threat? What are the consequences of state action? International terrorist attacks have risen sharply in the 21st century, and liberal democracies often bear the brunt of the onslaught. Consequently, they are the ones to shoulder the responsibility of eliminating the threat. On a global scale, the elimination of a common terrorist threat resembles a prisoners' dilemma, with many states choosing to shore up defenses at home rather than bear the costs of a cooperative, preemptive strike abroad. Utilizing original data, this dissertation represents an empirical examination of the prisoners' dilemma of counterterrorism to determine what characteristics drive cooperation, whether that cooperation depends on the institutional characteristics of a state, and whether their response has any effects on terrorist retaliation.

The results confirm that states prefer instead to shore up defenses at home, rather than participate in military intervention. Furthermore, cursory evidence shows that terrorist organizations utilize suicide attacks with more deliberate consideration than normal attacks, which are more path-dependent. Overall, attacks have an insignificant effect on state action, confirming the logic that terrorists rely on the fear of the attack rather than its actual occurrence.