

*Establishing norms (“taboos”) against certain attack modalities will reduce VEO attacks of that modality.*

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**127; 128; 134**

General Description of the Literature:

Researchers in the fields of politics, strategy and international affairs have examined the relationship between government actions and terrorist attack modalities, as well as the normative acceptability of violence that must be present for these attack modalities to occur. However, little directly relevant empirical evidence exists. These researchers have discussed the link that exists between community/cultural acceptance of violence and the participation in violent terrorist activities (Hayes and McAllister 2005; Kelley 2001; Khashan 2003; Richardson 2006; Shulte-Bocholt 2006). Davis and Jenkins (2002) suggest that the more serious the attack that extremists believe they can achieve, the less the deterrent effect of government action. Thus, there exists the need for global norms, such as those laid out by the Geneva Convention, that have some consequence if violated (Simon and Martini 2005). These norms, or taboos, should be directed at all attack modalities, but particularly those which can cause the most amount of damage including mass casualty attacks (Davis & Jenkins 2002) and WMD attacks (Whiteneck 2005). Simon and Martini (2005) agree that these norms may help to reduce various attack modalities by extremist organizations. Merari (2000), however, noted that most terrorism is domestic, and thus would not be impacted by norms of international conduct.

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Detailed Analyses

**127:** *Establishing norms (“taboos”) against certain attack modalities will reduce VEO attacks of that modality.*

**Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence:** There is no directly relevant empirical support.

**Empirical Support Score: 0 = No empirical support (for or against the hypothesis)**

**Applicability to Influencing VEOs:** N/A.

**Applicability Score:** Not Applicable – There is no empirical support in any context.

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**128:** *Establishing norms (“taboos”) against mass casualty attacks will reduce VEO attacks of that modality.*

**Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence:** According to Davis and Jenkins (2002), throughout history taboos against mass casualty attacks have emerged and then disappeared. These authors note that currently, these taboos are again almost non-existent and thus must be established in order to restrain attacks of this modality. This hypothesis has not been tested.

**Empirical Support Score: 0 = No empirical support (for or against the hypothesis)**

**Applicability to Influencing VEOs:** N/A.

**Applicability Score:** Not Applicable – There is no empirical support in any context

**134:** *Establishing norms (“taboos”) against CBRN will reduce VEO attacks of that modality.*

**Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence:** Parachini (2003) suggests that one way to control WMD-style attacks are to instill taboos against state sponsors of subnational WMD attacks. Auerswald (2006) describes examples of these sanctions resulting from the enactment of such policies as UNSC Resolution 1540, which declared trafficking in WMD materials to be a global crime.

**Empirical Support Score: 1 = Anecdotal support only for the hypothesis**

**Applicability to Influencing VEOs:** While these anecdotes suggest taboos against CBRN attacks may work on the state level, McCauley and Payne (2010) caution that the use of taboos regarding the use of biological weapons will not easily influence non-state actors. This assumption may extend to other CBRN weapons.

**Applicability Score:** Low Confidence – Empirical results are derived from alternative contexts and the researcher does not believe that they will necessarily apply to the VEO context, but there might be *some possibility* that they do apply.

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### General Comments

It is difficult to causally link norms to a decreased use of a particular modality. This hypothesis may have more support if it specifically addressed norms within the VEO’s constituency. Already, terrorist groups break norms in asymmetric attacks in order to gain more media attention.

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