

Decentralization in decision making can lead to a decrease in VEO activity.

183

General Description of the Literature:

Most arguments regarding decentralization suggest a change or increase in VEO activity when decision-making becomes decentralized. Decentralization can lead to more criminalization of the VEO or links to criminal organizations. There is some discussion in public administration/policy and political science on this topic and more specialized terrorism journals.

Detailed Analyses

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Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Theoretical and case support for this hypothesis is weak at best. As mentioned above, most of the arguments suggest decentralization will either change the form of contention (i.e., terrorism to more criminal behavior, Dishman (2005)) or increase the frequency of the problem (Lesser et al. 1999, Arquilla & Ronfeldt 2001). In particular, Arquilla & Ronfeldt (2001), among others (Levitt 2004), suggests that networks of decentralized actors cannot be defeated by conventional military tactics and suggest using network tactics against networks to defeat these decentralized actors (Deibert and Stein 2002). Luis Beam (1992), a former Klansman, in his famous essay on “leaderless resistance”, self-consciously advocates a decentralized decision process to counter the US government. There is no large cross-national evidence to support this hypothesis, nor are there detailed thick descriptions of cases where this hypothesis is supported.

Empirical Support Score: -1

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: This hypothesis has direct implications for influencing VEOs. The amount of pressure applied by the US government can influence the structure of the organization. Again, since there is a lack of clear empirical studies of this hypothesis or the alternative hypothesis, this might be an area to invest some energy in understanding.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs

Bibliography:

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