

Retaliation against foreign targets for VEO attacks against US increases VEO activity.

56

General Description of the Literature:

In a summary of their systematic review of terrorism, Lum, Kennedy and Sherley (2008) conclude military retaliation seems to increase VEO retaliation. They cite empirical work by Enders and Sandler (1993, 2000) that reports increases in attacks after the US raid on Libya in 1986 and Israeli reprisals against the PLO. Post (1987), Elan (1998), and Nevin (2003) analyze the effects of retaliation on terrorist groups' attacks. In his study of the mindset of a terrorist, Post asserts that a policy of reactive retaliation would not have a deterrent effect, and could instead reinforce the mindset of the terrorist. Furthermore, threatening a group could unite rather than divide its members. Elan describes the United States as an "interventionist superpower" whose involvement in international situations has increased terrorist attacks against it. Nevin, on the other hand, concludes that retaliation does not affect the intensity of terrorist attacks. In a similar study, Mallow (1997) questions the effectiveness of retaliation as a deterrent to future terrorist attacks, and highlights the risks associated with it. Brophy-Baermann and Conybeare (1994) look at Israeli retaliation to VEO actions. They observe that VEOs expect retaliation and that retaliations have a 'natural' rate. They report that only unanticipated retaliations will reduce terror. Their findings support the hypothesis that retaliatory policies set externally, rather than by Israel, are more effective.

Detailed Analyses

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Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Silke (2005, cited in Lum, Kennedy and Sherley 2008) concludes that the US raid on Libya in 1986 led to more terrorism. They also report that reprisals have only a short-lived effect. Enders and Sandler (1993, 2000) use time-series models to look at the effects of the 1986 Libya attack and Israeli reprisals and show that while terrorism decreased in some categories such as fatal attacks, it increased overall. The Brophy-Baermann and Conybeare (1994) empirical evidence from time-series (ARIMA) modeling draws the conclusion that Israeli reprisals are only effective if they are unexpected. VEOs expect reprisals right after attacks so these are not likely to be effective. Reprisals are more effective if they are timed according to an exogenous mechanism rather than according to government discretion. Their policy recommendations are that Israel should rely upon an externally-driven retaliatory policy that circumvents VEO expectations, and that the deterrence value of force is largely a moot point because the effect of such a policy quickly dissipates in the case of Israel. Nevi (2003) relies on data sets of terrorist activities during periods of conflict in Palestine, Morocco, Algeria, Northern Ireland, Spain, Sri Lanka and Peru and found no evidence that retaliatory actions either increased or decreased attacks thereafter. Nevi also reviewed international attacks carried out by Al Qaeda which were met by American retaliation on Iraq and Afghanistan, and concludes that the U.S. military intervention did not decrease incidents of terrorism. Similarly, Eland looked into catalogued incidents of U.S. interventions overseas and their effect on spurring anti-American terrorist attacks. He concluded that potential attacks on the U.S. could be reduced if the U.S. would adopt a policy of military restraint overseas.

Empirical Support Score: 8 = Multiple quantitative analyses supporting the hypothesis.

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Applicability to Influencing VEOs: The findings and hypothesis are relevant as military reprisals are policies that can be adjusted.

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

Bibliography:

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