Cross-national correlates of the level of terrorism

Introduction

The current paper aims at uncovering the factors that promote terrorism. The incidents of terrorist attacks increased in the western countries after 9/11. The incidents of terrorists’ attacks in the west represent a small percentage (4.4%) of the total attacks that occurred in the world. These incidents caused 2.6 percent of deaths in these countries during the period of the last fifteen years. The likelihood of terrorist attacks is more high non-western countries due to the weaker regulatory framework and violence. The most affected countries of terrorism include Syria, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Afghanistan. Terrorism is defined as, “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (Criss). Several factors contribute to terrorist activities such as political instability, ineffective states, corruption, the weaker rule of law and lack of accountability (Schumacher and Schraeder).

Literature review

Voice of accountability has a significant relationship with terrorism. The evidence considers corruption, government effectiveness, transparency and accountability as important indicators for controlling terrorism. The World Bank reveals, “the level of corruption is measured by the perception of corruption (CPI; Transparency International) and the political situation by the political instability indicator (as measured by the worldwide governance indicator) and the GTI indicator (referring to the Global Terrorism Index” (World Bank). Corruption is seen as an abuse of power that affects the political and state's decisions regarding terrorism. Corruption prevailing at different levels undermines the procedures of controlling terrorism. The corrupt activities like accepting bribes affect the process of controlling terrorism. The literature identifies a causal link between corruption and terrorism. Corruption at the state level is the dominant reason for high terrorism in countries like Nigeria and Syria. Corrupt politicians in Iraq have the process of controlling terrorism. The facts depict that state in Iraq supports Daesh and local militants that weakens the security and provides wider opportunities for terrorism. The prevalence of financial and administrative corruption derails the security establishment in the country. This is also the reason for the wider gap between the public and security services of Iraq. The corrupt officials that seize the funds are unwilling to spend them on security enhancement. It thus weakens the internal security and fails to protect the people. The report of OECD recognizes corruption as the central factor of uncontrolled terrorism in Iraq. The findings indicate that corruption and poor governance decline state's ability to fight terrorism. Corruption provides increased opportunities for international attacks and supports cross-border terrorist financing. The existence of corruption in the military and defense sector weakens the legitimacy and ability to halt terrorist groups. Frauds and corruption in defense cause misuse of public money and contributes to insecurity. Prevalence of corruption in police also undermines the ability to control terrorism. Corruption in judiciary allows terrorist groups to escape pre-trial detention that weakens the overall process of justice (OECD).

Literary evidence suggests a significant correlation of the rule of law with terrorism. It remains one of the significant factors in controlling terrorism. Countries that lack strong states and stable states are more likely to face terrorist incidents. Weak or failing states are unable to control terrorism in their countries (Newman). Good governance is a strong indicator for controlling corruption. Terrorism in African countries like Nigeria is due to poor governance or ineffective government. The evidence suggests that the prevalence of terrorism is high in third-world countries due to ineffective government. East Africa is considered as a region that faces the highest threats of terrorism. The government of Nigeria and other African countries that fail to adopt strict regulatory frameworks promote terrorism. Boko Haram is a prominent Islamist group that is involved in the killings of thousands of people. Adoption of good governance practices has a significant impact on controlling terrorism (Mutanda).

Political instability is another factor that increases the likelihood of terrorism. Evidence suggests that political instability was associated with the Arab Spring that caused surge of Global terrorism in 2014. Domestic political instability was apparent in the forms of riots, a greater level of terrorist activities and revolution (Schumacher and Schraeder). Political instability remains one of the significant cause of terrorism in Iraq. The evidence depicts that Syrian-civil war was also the result of political instability. Inappropriate political system failed in controlling the terrorist activities that made these groups strong. Evidence also indicates that terrorism in western countries is controlled due to political instability. In Iraq, single-party dictatorship failed to control terrorism in the country. The main causes of terrorism in Iraq include the propagation of Jihadist Salafi's. The group was involved in causing sectarian disputes due to the state's incapability of establishing adequate security (Karami).

The Global Terrorism Index considers accountability of states and institutes as a critical factor for controlling terrorism. The countries that adopt strict accountability or transparency measures are more likely to control terrorism. Lack of accountability in countries like Nigeria, Iraq, and Syria have strengthened terrorist groups. Accountable states like the United States, United Kingdom, and Norway have managed to control their terrorism rates (World Bank). The World Bank has considered the absence of violence as an important indicator of terrorism. The countries where the prevalence of violent groups is high are more likely to face terrorism. Violence has a significant correlation with terrorism. The prevalence of violent groups like Jihadists in the countries; Afghanistan and Iraq have contributed towards terrorism. Al-Qaeda and ISIS are strong violent groups that are involved in terrorist attacks. Afghanistan faces the challenges of eliminating terrorist groups due to ineffective government and absence of the rule of law (Mutanda).

Methodology

Global terrorism index identifies the significant correlation of terrorism with the Governance indicators identified World Bank including; Voice of Accountability, Political Stability, Absence of Violence, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law and Corruption Control. Kaufmann et al., (2010) recognize these variables as Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) that provide cross-country comparisons. The indicators are developed after considering a hundred variables from 31 different sources. The variables are used for determining the level of terrorism in cross-countries.

The methodology conducts a comparison of two groups the western countries (Norway, United States, France, Belgium, and Netherlands) and third-world countries (Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Nigeria and Pakistan). The comparison of the WGI indicators among these groups will show how these variables impact terrorism (World Bank). The study relies on the secondary data retrieved from the website of the World Bank that provides estimated scores of WGI for the selected countries. The scores are recorded for 2017 to examine the recent status of terrorism in these countries (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi).

Findings

Table 1: Attacks in western countries between 2006-2014

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Countries | Attacks | Deaths |
| Norway | 3 | More than 75 |
| United States | 41 | More than 50 |
| France | 9 | 9 |
| Netherlands | 2 | More than 5 |
| Belgium | 2 | More than 3 |

The evidence provided by the Global Terrorism Index (2016) depicts that the rate of terrorism declined in the countries having the highest terrorism impacts that include Syria, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Afghanistan. Highest reduction in deaths is recorded in Nigeria as 3.100 fewer people were killed in 2016 compared to the previous year. The major factor has been a decline in the 80 percent of killings of the people of Boko Haram. No decline has been recorded in Iraq, so it remains one of the most affected countries from terrorism in the world. The reduction is non-satisfactory because the prevalence of terrorism is still high.

Table 2: Countries with the highest deaths due to terrorist attacks

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Countries** | **Percentage** |
| Iraq | 38% |
| Afghanistan | 17.8% |
| Syria | 8.2% |
| Nigeria | 7.1% |
| Pakistan | 3.7% |

The deaths rates in these countries decreased, but they are still high compared to the western countries. In 2016, a drop of 1,832 deaths was recorded in Nigeria, in Syria, it declined by 24 percent compared to the previous year. A decline of only 4,574 deaths was recorded in Afghanistan (Table 2). The governance indicators depict that the Voice of accountability is high in western countries. Lowest accountability is recorded in Syria (2), Iraq (21), and Afghanistan (22) (Table 3).

Table 3: Voice of accountability

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Countries** | **Scores** |
| Norway | 100 |
| United States | 82 |
| France | 86 |
| Netherlands | 99 |
| Belgium | 95 |
| Iraq | 21 |
| Afghanistan | 22 |
| Syria | 2 |
| Nigeria | 35 |
| Pakistan | 28 |

The World Governance Indicators (WGI) identify political stability and absence of violence as critical factors for controlling terrorism. The score depicts that western countries having high scores of these indicators include Norway (90) and the Netherlands (80). The countries with violence and lack of political stability include Afghanistan, Iran, Nigeria, Syria, and Pakistan (Table 4).

Table 4: Political stability and absence of violence

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Countries** | **Scores** |
| Norway | 90 |
| United States | 59 |
| France | 54 |
| Netherlands | 80 |
| Belgium | 63 |
| Iraq | 2 |
| Afghanistan | 0 |
| Syria | 1 |
| Nigeria | 5 |
| Pakistan | 2 |

The findings also reveal that western countries are high in government effectiveness compared to third-world countries. The countries with the lowest government effectiveness include Syria (2), Afghanistan (9) and Iraq (10).

Table 5: Government effectiveness

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Countries** | **Scores** |
| Norway | 99 |
| United States | 93 |
| France | 88 |
| Netherlands | 97 |
| Belgium | 85 |
| Iraq | 10 |
| Afghanistan | 9 |
| Syria | 2 |
| Nigeria | 16 |
| Pakistan | 31 |

The WGI also estimated the scores on regulatory quality that has a significant correlation with terrorism. The findings indicate that the Netherlands has highest regulatory quality with a score of 99. The third-world countries scoring low on these indicators include Syria (3), Afghanistan (7) and Iraq (10).

Table 6: Regulatory quality

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Countries** | **Scores** |
| Norway | 96 |
| United States | 93 |
| France | 84 |
| Netherlands | 99 |
| Belgium | 87 |
| Iraq | 10 |
| Afghanistan | 7 |
| Syria | 3 |
| Nigeria | 17 |
| Pakistan | 29 |

The WGI indicator of the rule of law is also linked to the prevalence of terrorism because Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq scored the lowers. This indicates that these countries are lacking the effective rule of law.

Table 7: The rule of law

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Countries** | **Scores** |
| Norway | 100 |
| United States | 92 |
| France | 89 |
| Netherlands | 97 |
| Belgium | 88 |
| Iraq | 4 |
| Afghanistan | 5 |
| Syria | 1 |
| Nigeria | 19 |
| Pakistan | 24 |

The findings of the World Banks also show that western countries are better in controlling corruption as they score high compared to the third-world countries. Significant different appears between the two groups. Third-world countries inability to control corruption has increased terrorism.

Table 8: Control of corruption

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Countries** | **Scores** |
| Norway | 100 |
| United States | 89 |
| France | 88 |
| Netherlands | 95 |
| Belgium | 90 |
| Iraq | 7 |
| Afghanistan | 4 |
| Syria | 2 |
| Nigeria | 13 |
| Pakistan | 23 |

Conclusion

The results of the study depict a wider difference between the western and third-world countries. The prevalence of terrorism is high in Afghanistan, Iran, Nigeria, Syria, and Pakistan. The occurrence of terrorist incidents is high in these countries while fewer attacks occurred in western countries. The data obtained from the Worldwide Global Index of terrorism confirms the significant correlation of selected indicators with terrorism. The reason for the high prevalence of terrorist activities in third-world counties is lack of accountability, ineffective government, political instability and violence, the absence of the rule of law and corruption.

Work Cited

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