

# Neocolonialism and Transnational Terrorism

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## Project Summary

Extant literature on terrorism has focused on either domestic terrorism, or has examined domestic and transnational attacks as the same phenomena. I posit that the two form of terrorism are distinct in their motivations, and warrant separate examination. This is particularly true for target selection. Domestic terrorism, by definition, targets the state where the perpetrator is a citizen. Transnational terrorism requires the perpetrator to select another state to target. This project seeks to examine why terrorists select a particular state to attack. Previous work examined the use of terrorism against foreign invasion and colonialism, as well as its use in interstate war. I argue that in addition to these direct threats against a state's sovereignty, that more indirect threats, described by some as neocolonialism, will still be perceived in a similar fashion. Therefore, even when a formal colonial relationship does not exist between two states that are not at war, people will resort to terrorism if they feel it is the only way to defend their homeland.

## Theory

Terrorism is a coercive tactic often used by those that feel they do not have other options. When a stronger state threatens a weaker state, people may feel that their government is powerless to respond. As more powerful states can often absorb the damages that could come from reciprocal actions, weaker states may feel as if they have no option but to concede, or to fight an unwinnable war. This can lead to a feeling that the state is not autonomous, but rather at the mercy of stronger nations. This holds true even if a state is not yet at war with, or under the formal control of another. I consider this foreign encroachment on the sovereignty of a state to be neocolonialism. When backed into a corner by a neocolonialist state, the flight or fight response will be triggered. This can then lead to individuals or groups turning to terrorism as they feel that the only options are fighting in any manner possible, or surrendering to the will of stronger states.

## Neocolonial Threats

In order of predicted significance:

Presence of foreign troops during peace

- The presence of foreign troops means that a foreign government could mobilize quickly to attack a state if the domestic government does not fully cooperate.

Foreign support for the government in a civil war

- If a rebellion occurs to oust an unpopular or oppressive government, foreign support for the government will be seen as foreign interference opposing the will of the people.

Foreign support in a civil war:

- A foreign state providing support for any side indicates that said state is trying to influence an outcome between two or more domestic actors.

Territorial disputes

- If the people of a state see contested territory as rightfully theirs, a dispute will be considered as a foreign state trying to take their territory from them.

## Research Design

### Data

•**Dependent Variable:** count of the number of terrorist attacks by perpetrators from the home country against the target country

•**Independent Variables:**

•**Primary IVs:** Neocolonial threats (1,0)

•Neocolonial threats include territorial disputes, foreign support in civil war, and the presence of foreign troops when not at war.

•**Controls:** Interstate war (1,0), colonial relationship (1,0), regime type from Polity 2

•**Sample:** All transnational terrorist attacks in the Global Terrorism Database, from 1970-2011.

### Methods

•Negative binomial regression with clustered standard errors

•Unit of analysis is directed dyad-year

## Hypotheses

*H1: Threats to territorial sovereignty, such as colonialization or war with another state will increase the amount of terrorist attacks by the threatened country (home) against the threatening country (target).*

*H2: Indirect threats that do not involve actual takeover of the government or war, such as the presence of foreign troops outside of war, a territorial dispute, or foreign support for any side in a civil war, will increase the amount of terrorist attacks by the threatened country (home) against the threatening country (target).*

*H3: Supporting a government in a civil war will increase the amount of terrorist attacks more that supporting a rebel group.*

*H4: When democracies are threatened, they will be less likely to respond with terrorism*

## Conclusions

- The results show that not only do terrorist attacks against a country increase when said country directly threatens the home country, but neocolonial threats increase attacks as well (*H1 & H2*).
- Supporting a foreign government increases the amount of attacks against the supporting country, while the effects of supporting rebel groups does not reach statistical significance (*H3*).
- The results of democracy are less clear as the regime type of the target country appears to be more influential than that of the home country. In addition, the effects of regime type of the home country are in the opposite direction of that predicted (*H4*).
- One potential concern with the research design is that using all potential dyads creates too many observations. When using only politically relevant dyads and only major powers, the n falls to 97,072-99,917 and 43,794-41,375, respectively. The results for neocolonialism, civil war support for government and >1000 troops do not significantly change.

## Results

### Negative Binomial Regression of Foreign Interference

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>
War	<b>3.27***</b> (0.50)	—	—	—	—	<b>2.87***</b> (0.68)
Colony	<b>2.10***</b> (0.48)	—	—	—	—	<b>1.25***</b> (0.33)
Neocolonialism	—	<b>4.44***</b> (0.23)	—	—	—	—
Civil war support	—	—	<b>7.04***</b> (0.38)	—	—	—
Civil war support for government	—	—	—	<b>5.34***</b> (.41)	<b>5.34***</b> (0.41)	<b>5.34***</b> (0.41)
Civil war support for rebels	—	—	—	0.95 (0.86)	—	—
>1000 troops	—	—	<b>5.64***</b> (0.26)	<b>5.67***</b> (0.26)	<b>5.69***</b> (0.26)	<b>5.49***</b> (0.27)
Territorial dispute	—	—	<b>2.90***</b> (0.31)	<b>2.90***</b> (0.31)	<b>2.90***</b> (0.31)	<b>2.78***</b> (0.30)
Democracy home	0.28* (0.14)	0.31* (0.15)	0.31* (0.15)	0.31* (0.15)	0.31* (0.15)	0.31* (0.15)
Democracy target	<b>1.21***</b> (0.14)	<b>1.28***</b> (0.15)	<b>1.28***</b> (0.15)	<b>1.28***</b> (0.14)	<b>1.28***</b> (0.15)	<b>1.28***</b> (0.15)
Constant	<b>-6.46***</b> (0.14)	<b>-6.70***</b> (0.14)	<b>-6.70***</b> (0.14)	<b>-6.70***</b> (0.14)	<b>-6.70***</b> (0.14)	<b>-6.70***</b> (0.14)
Observations	1244954	1241358	1241358	1241358	1241358	
Log pseudo-like.	-20458.70	-19518.55	-195511.51	-19517.39	-19517.47	
$\chi^2$	141.11	460.98	868.40	818.42	816.32	

p < .05\*    p < .01\*\*    p < .001\*\*\*