

International Military Interventions and Transnational Terrorist Backlash

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Abstract

Are states that engage in foreign military interventions vulnerable to subsequent transnational terrorist attacks? If so, do all types of foreign interventions stimulate terrorism? Using data on international military interventions for 125 to 182 countries during the period from 1970 to 2005, we demonstrate that intervening states experience more subsequent terrorism. More importantly, we show that politico-strategic use of military force abroad – for example, interference in another country’s domestic disputes, territorial interventions, or interventions to affect local politics and policy – leads to increased subsequent transnational terrorist attacks for the intervener. In contrast, socio-economic foreign military interventions, such as those geared towards providing humanitarian relief, protecting social groups or for economic motivations, do not result in more transnational terrorism as a result.

Do states that engage in foreign military interventions place themselves at a higher risk of subsequent transnational terrorist attacks? Various anecdotal examples point to a positive and significant relationship between foreign interventions and terrorist attacks against the intervener. U.S. military interventions in the Middle East have been repeatedly cited as an important motivator for anti-American terrorism, including the 1993 attack against the World Trade Centers and the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks by Al Qaeda. Indeed, Osama Bin Laden cited the legacy of U.S. military operations in Muslim countries as a justification for the use of terrorism against U.S. targets (see Lawrence 2005). The 2004 and 2005 suicide bombings of public transport systems in Madrid and London were launched, according to the perpetrators, in retaliation against Spain and the United Kingdom's participation in the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. The December 2016 assassination of the Russian ambassador to Turkey was, by acclamation of the assailant, in response to Russian air strikes against ISIS in Syria.¹ Most recently, on April 3, 2017 a suicide bomber suspected to be a Chechen rebel who returned from Syria after having fought alongside the Islamic State launched an attack on a St. Petersburg metro carriage that killed 11 people and wounded 45. Russian intelligence officials believe that this latest attack was "backlash" produced by Russian bombings of ISIS positions in Syria (Pinchuk 2017).

The concern that foreign military interventions trigger backlash in the form of increased risk of transnational terrorist attacks is one that is widely discussed in policy and nonacademic

¹ After fatally shooting Andrei Karlov, the Russian ambassador to Turkey, the assailant, Mevlüt Mert Altıntaş, shouted, "God is Great! Do not forget Aleppo, do not forget Syria!" (Arango and Gladstone 2016).

circles (see for example, Durani 2014; Norton-Taylor 2003; Zakaria 2015) and that has received recent attention as the United States has ramped up its use of aerial drone attacks in places like Pakistan and Yemen (see for example, Abbas 2013; Pilkington and MacAskill 2015).

International military interventions and their attendant collateral damage, it is argued, provoke strong feelings of resentment, both among the people experiencing the intervention and sympathetic observers. These resentments motivate direct and indirect support for nonstate militant organizations that “strike back” at the intervening country through terrorist attacks. Increased transnational terrorist attacks are, therefore, a consequent cost levied on perpetrators of international military interventions. This very dynamic was articulated in the 2006 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate, prepared for then President George W. Bush who was considering further foreign military interventions after its 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq. The report, summarizing the conclusion of several U.S. national intelligence agencies, argued that the invasion of Iraq had produced a strong negative backlash against the United States in the wider Muslim World that caused radical Islamist terrorist organizations to more effectively operate and recruit new members worldwide (Office of the Director of National Intelligence 2006).

Some scholarly work provides indirect evidence for the backlash phenomenon (for recent studies, see Azam and Thelen 2010; Choi and James 2017; Savun and Phillips 2009). In this study, we delve further into the effects of international military interventions on subsequent transnational terrorist attacks suffered by the intervening country. As a point of departure from previous work, we argue that not all military interventions prompt backlash from transnational terrorists. We maintain that the type of intervention matters. Guided by work conducted by Kisangani and Pickering (2007), we submit that it is important to differentiate military interventions motivated by and oriented around politico-strategic – “high politics” – from socio-

economic – “low politics” – objectives. While politico-strategic use of military force is expected to inflame subsequent transnational terrorist attacks, socio-economic interventions are not. We produce empirical results that are consistent with these theoretical predictions. Drawing on a statistical analysis on international military interventions for 125 to 182 countries during the period from 1970 to 2005, we offer evidence that international military interventions geared towards providing humanitarian relief, protecting social groups, or for economic motivations do not result in more transnational terrorism. However, interventions undertaken for political or strategic reasons result in higher levels of subsequent transnational terrorist attacks for the intervener.

Our empirical study contributes to the discussion on interventions and terrorism in several ways. First, it specifically examines the impact of international military interventions on transnational, rather than domestic, terrorist threats against the intervening countries. This separates the study from previous work on how military occupations result in more terrorist attacks against local targets or the intervening country’s forces. Second, the study argues, and finds, that only specific types of interventions increase the chances of terrorist backlash. In the next sections we outline the relevant literature, present and test our theoretical argument and then briefly conclude with the implications of the findings.

Literature Review

Our study fits within a wider empirical literature on the effects of international interventions and foreign occupations on terrorist activity. A large body of work has determined that terrorist activity increases in countries experiencing foreign military occupations or foreign military interventions (Asal 2006; Azam and Thelen 2010; Braithwaite 2015; Choi and Piazza 2017; Collard-Wexler, Pischedda and Smith 2014; Pape 2003; Pape and Feldman 2010; Piazza

2008; Santifort-Jordan and Sandler 2014). These studies present a variety of theoretical arguments linking interventions and occupations to terrorism. However, a couple of threads run consistently through them all that are consistent with our conception of international military intervention-fueled terrorism backlash.

According to the literature, the experience of foreign military occupations or interventions foments a strong nationalist resentment against the intervening power among the citizens of the occupied or intervened-in country and beyond, and this sentiment is exploited by militant groups that use terrorism. Nationalist rage in the occupied or intervened-in country licenses militants, in the public's eye, to use terrorism in response to foreign violation, particularly against local assets of the intervener and local collaborators (see Asal 2006; Neumayer and Plumper 2011). This impact on public sentiment is important because terrorism as a tactic is often taboo (see Crenshaw 1981). However, being on the receiving end of a foreign military occupation or intervention prompts the public to accept the legitimacy of using terrorism as a response. The nationalist backlash fueled by interventions and occupations also swells the pool of potential terrorist recruits (see Eland 2007) and supporters who can provide militant organizations with financial and political support, intelligence and noncooperation with authorities enabling more terrorism.

Moreover, some scholarship links foreign military interventions and occupations to the adoption of terrorism as a tactic by militants. Scholars note that interventions and occupations are undertaken by states with high capacities to project conventional military force internationally. They are much stronger, conventionally, than nonstate militants opposing the intervention or occupation. Therefore, occupations and foreign interventions produce an environment of conventional power asymmetry between the intervener and nonstate opponents.

Terrorism is a tactic of the conventionally weak (Crenshaw 1981; Enders and Sandler 2006; Kydd and Walter 2006; Wilkinson 2001). Therefore, it would not be surprising to see an increase in terrorist attacks against intervening or occupying countries, as militants turn to terrorism to compensate for their conventional weakness (see Condra et al. 2010; Pettinger 2015).²

Our study seeks to address two gaps within the existing body of empirical work on the impact of foreign military interventions and transnational terrorism. First, with the exceptions of Braithwaite (2015) – who examines military “footprint” within a country, a concept akin to occupation – and Neumayer and Plumper (2011) – who test the impact of provision of U.S. military aid on terrorist attacks against Americans – existing empirical studies neglect to test the thesis that international military interventions trigger transnational terrorism backlash. They only measure the impact of interventions or occupations on local terrorist activity, or on terrorist attacks perpetrated by nationals of the country experiencing the intervention or occupation. In contrast, our study provides a direct test of the backlash concept by empirically investigating the impact of a country’s engagement in a military intervention overseas on its subsequent experience of terrorism. We also recognize that terrorist backlash may not only come from citizens of the country experiencing the intervention, but also is perpetrated by citizens of other countries that are outraged by intervention and are sympathetic to the “victims” of the target country for the intervention.

² It is important to note, however, that more recent work has questioned whether weaker armed nonstate actors actually opt to use terrorism more frequently than conventionally stronger armed nonstate actors (see Fortna 2015).

Second, despite the fact that previous studies have advanced our scientific knowledge on use of military force and terrorism, they overlook the possibility that not all types of military interventions trigger terrorist backlash. We examine what types of interventions matter in provoking nationalist resentments against the intervention and, by extension, whether or not transnational terrorist backlash will likely occur. In the next section, we delve into how two different types of interventions lead to two opposing reactions from transnational terrorists.

Types of International Military Interventions and Backlash

We expect that international military interventions generally prompt transnational terrorist backlash for the intervening country, and that military interventions that are motivated by the goal of enhancing the political, military and strategic position of the intervener are specifically likely to provoke a transnational terrorist backlash against it. In contrast, we expect socio-economic military interventions that are typically launched to provide humanitarian and other types of assistance to the target country produce a little to no subsequent transnational terrorist attacks against the intervening country. We therefore categorize international military interventions into two essential types: those that are motivated by the goal of enhancing the political, military and strategic position of the intervener and those that are motivated by the goal of providing humanitarian aid, rescue or assistance. We rely upon a typology developed by Kisangani and Pickering (2007) to identify these two categories and theorize their differing impacts on terrorist backlash. In their study of diversionary military interventions, Kisangani and Pickering (2007, 284) argue that political leaders sometimes try to manage domestic opposition and challenges by sending troops overseas, but distinguish types of interventions between those motivated by the “benevolent use of force over low political issues” and “belligerent use of force over high politics issues.” The former, which the authors term “socio-

economic interventions” or “SEIs,” are benign uses of force that are less risky and costly in that they are less likely to be responded to with counterforce by other countries and are less likely to prompt a widening of armed conflict. In contrast, “political-strategic interventions” or “PSIs” are uses of armed force that are launched by countries mostly to buttress national power.

In explaining the effects of SEIs and PSIs, we conform to Kisangani and Pickering’s (2007, 286) operationalization.³ Politico-strategic interventions are those that are launched by states in order to protect their own military and diplomatic assets, to intervene on one side or another of a domestic political dispute in a country, to replace the political regime of a country, to attack rebels and other nonstate actors active within a country, to achieve strategic goals such as affecting stability, regional balances of power or to further ideological objectives, or to acquire, retain or demarcate territory. Socio-economic interventions include interventions to

³ Specifically, conforming to Kisangani and Pickering (2007), we code as PSI’s interventions to intervene in a domestic dispute (“domestic_dispute”), to affect domestic politics in the target country (“affect_policies”), to attack or pursue rebel forces (“pursuit_border”), to achieve strategic goals (“strategic”), to acquire, retain, delineate or specify the sovereignty of established or disputed territory (“territorial”) and to protect military or diplomatic assets (“military/diplomatic”). We code as SEI’s interventions to provide protection to social, religious or ethnic groups (“social_protective”), to protect economic or resource interests (“economic”) or to provide humanitarian assistance (“humanitarian”). Details on these specific types of interventions can be found in the IMI data codebook online in <https://www.k-state.edu/polsci/intervention/>. Although some interventions can be categorized both as a PSI and SEI, they are very rare in the data, comprising around 3.9 percent of observations.

avert humanitarian disasters, to protect social and ethnic groups that are under threat and to protect economic systems and resources.

Though their main concern revolves around the root causes of diversionary wars between two sovereign states, Kisangani and Pickering (2007) actually foresee an impact of SEIs and PSIs that is parallel to our expectations about the type of the intervention and terrorist backlash. They argue that socio-economic interventions are a less “risky” foreign policy decision for leaders than politico-strategic interventions because they are less likely to provoke military retaliation by the target state, or other states, and are less likely to escalate military tensions. Their recent study (2017) that examines the effects of hostile international military interventions on the physical quality of life of people in the target country further helps us to buttress our argument that politico-strategic interventions are particularly likely to produce transnational terrorist backlash.

Politico-strategic interventions, on the other hand, are likely to produce several conditions that may prompt terrorist activity. Foremost and as previously mentioned, PSIs are more likely to foment a nationalist backlash. This results in more terrorism on the part of residents of the target country along the lines envisioned by Asal (2006) and Neumayer and Plumper (2011) because PSIs are likely to be viewed as humiliating violations of national sovereignty. Politico-strategic interventions involving the intervener taking sides in a domestic political dispute, attempting to affect internal domestic politics, attempting to prompt regime change, or to acquire or change borders are frequently more intrusive to notions of legitimate self-governance by target states, and thus are more likely to provoke strong local resentments. These resentments, in turn, can be exploited by terrorists who seek to strike back at the intervening power.

Additionally, politico-strategic interventions are likely to affect physical and other conditions on the ground in the target country, enhancing popular grievances and thereby improving the strategic environment for terrorists who seek to recruit and mobilize populations in support of their goals. First, by weakening the target government or damaging infrastructure, PSIs may disrupt the provision of services upon which residents rely. This adversely impacts their quality of life, and subsequently may leave those affected more likely to tolerate or support extremist violence (see Ross 1993) and may increase the pool of individuals for which opportunity costs of engaging in criminal activities like terrorism are reduced (see Becker 1968). Though there is little empirical evidence that poverty itself prompts individuals to join or support terrorist movements (see Krueger and Maleckova 2003) some studies indicate that government provision of social welfare benefits reduces domestic and transnational terrorism in countries (see Burgoon 2006) by dampening grievances that fuel support for violent extremism. Second, PSIs may also increase the numbers of internally displaced persons and transnational refugees. Both internal displacement (Choi and Piazza 2016) and transnational refugee flows (Choi and Salehyan 2013) have been empirically linked to higher rates of terrorist activity by increasing recruitment pools and by creating difficult to police spaces that facilitate terrorist operations. Third, PSIs may damage the rule of law in the target country, a phenomenon also empirically linked to increased terrorism (see Choi 2010) by damaging government legitimacy and opening a political space for fringe, violent actors like terrorist movements. Fourth, belligerent military interventions frequently worsen the human rights environment of the target country and prompt local government repression (Kisangani and Pickering 2017). PSIs often press the targeted regime to crack down on domestic dissidents and opposition movements, a phenomenon observed by other scholars as well (see Davenport 2007; Lebovic and Thompson 2006; Peksen

2012). Poe, Tate, and Keith (1999) furthermore assert that PSIs may prompt target governments to move quickly to repress domestic minority ethnic groups as a means to secure national unity and security in a time of emergency. All of these regime behaviors – human rights abuses, repression, discrimination against minorities – have been found to be significant predictors of terrorist activity in countries (see Piazza 2017; Walsh and Piazza 2010) as they reduce the willingness of affected communities to cooperate with counterterrorism officials while increasing sympathy for fringe, anti-system violent extremists. Finally, hostile international military interventions may so seriously weaken the target government, increasing the chance of regime collapse. Given that failed and failing states are more likely to produce domestic and transnational terrorism (see Piazza 2008), this further links PSIs to terrorism.

We expect that unlike politico-strategic military interventions, socio-economic interventions are unlikely to produce the kinds of adverse consequences that may lead to subsequent terrorist activity. Foreign military interventions launched to safeguard access to humanitarian aid, to stem or manage refugee flows or the movement of internally displaced people, to end repressive state behavior to protect vulnerable and persecuted populations and to prevent state collapse are unlikely to bring about an increase of terrorist activity. In particular, interventions identified by Kisangani and Pickering (2007) with humanitarian or social protective motivations may even reduce terrorist backlash if they ameliorate human rights violations, repression, persecution of minorities and refugee and internally displaced populations in the target country, given that as mentioned previously these conditions are strong predictors of terrorism (see Choi and Salehyan 2013; Choi and Piazza 2016; Piazza 2017; Piazza 2011; Walsh and Piazza 2010). Research by Berrebi and Ostwald (2011) demonstrates that high-casualty natural disasters fuel increased subsequent terrorism and casualties due to terrorism.

Humanitarian and social protective interventions launched to stabilize, secure and assist countries in the wake of natural disasters may also reduce terrorism. Economic interventions, the third leg in Kisangani and Pickering's (2007) operationalization of SEIs, differ from the other two (humanitarian and social protective) in that they could in theory yield deleterious impacts on the population of the targeted country. For example, a country may engage in an economic intervention to secure access to natural resources abroad which, in the process, generates economic grievances among the local population in the target country. However, we do not expect this to yield more subsequent terrorism given that much of the empirical literature does not find direct economic deprivation to be predictive of terrorism or support for terrorism (see Gassebner and Luechinger 2011 for a comprehensive analysis).⁴

The above discussion leads us to formulate three hypotheses as follows:

- H₁: Countries launching international military interventions are likely to experience increased subsequent transnational terrorist attacks.
- H₂: Countries launching politico-strategic international military interventions are likely to experience increased subsequent transnational terrorist attacks.

⁴ As a check, we conducted additional tests where economic interventions are removed from the SEI category. These tests produce the same core findings as the main models and are presented and discussed in Appendix Table 1. Checking further, we also removed pursuit of rebels and protection of military and diplomatic personnel from the PSI category. These two specific PSI components are identified by Kisangani and Pickering (2007) as having the potential to overlap with benign interventions. The results of these checks also produce the same core findings and are reported in Appendix Table 1a.

H₃: Countries launching socio-economic international military interventions are not more likely to experience increased subsequent transnational terrorist attacks.

Building a Statistical Model of Transnational Terrorist Backlash

To empirically test the above three hypotheses, we regress counts of transnational terrorist attacks suffered by states launching the intervention on measures of international military interventions launched by states during the period from 1970 to 2005.⁵ Our unit of analysis is the country-year and, depending on the model specification, our sample includes 125 to 182 countries.⁶

To crosscheck the robustness of our findings, we use two terrorism datasets for the dependent variable that were collected separately and independently across countries and years. The first measure is derived from the decomposed data produced by Enders, Sandler, and Gaibullov (2011). This indicator is a country-year annual count of all terrorist attacks launched by foreign nationals within the national territory of the attacked country. The second measure is garnered from the International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events (ITERATE) dataset, a proprietary database collected by Mickolus, Sandler, Murdoch and Flemming (2008). The

⁵ Our temporal range is limited to 1970 to 2005 due to data limitations for several of our variables.

⁶ The number of countries included in the analyses varies across the estimations, as reported in the main result tables. This is due to missing data for some covariates, which produces list-wise deletion of observations, and estimation features such as the use of fixed-effects, which drops time invariant observations. However, the core results are independent of the sample size across models.

ITERATE database collects data on transnational attacks both perpetrated by foreign nationals within the territory of the attacked country and against the citizens of the attacked country, located anywhere in the world. Using these two complementary but distinct dependent variables, we are able to execute a more comprehensive assessment of the impact of international military interventions on transnational terrorist backlash. Because our dependent variables are over-dispersed count measures, we rely on negative binomial regression as our estimation method.⁷ To ensure that the explanatory factors occurred before the outcome variable, we lagged all independent variables by one year.⁸

Our main independent variables include all international military interventions launched by the state observed; international military interventions motivated by “politico-strategic” objectives; and international military interventions motivated by “socio-economic” objectives. The all-military interventions measure is to test the overall impact of international military interventions, but the two separated measures are brought in to test the distinctive effect of each

⁷ As a further robustness check, we also conducted zero-inflated negative binomial estimations. The results of these tests are discussed in Appendix Table 2. Although Poisson regression is often used for modeling count data, we do not use it for our analysis due mainly to the failure of accounting for the over-dispersion of the terrorism data (for more detailed discussion on model choices, see Hilbe 2011).

⁸ In this study, our causal identification strategy is to find out a one-way causal direction from interventions to transnational terrorist attacks. However, to test the robustness of the causal effect, we also tested for reversed causality. The results of these tests are discussed in the next section.

category of the military interventions. Because some individual military interventions undertaken by a country may be sporadic or limited in scope and intensity, which we would expect would have a more limited effect on subsequent terrorism, all three of these variables are operationalized as count measures.⁹

The data for these variables are derived from the International Military Interventions (IMI) database (“Merged IMI Data 1947-2005”) collected by Pickering and Kisangani (2009) and Pearson and Baumann (1993).¹⁰ An international military intervention is defined as “the movement of regular [government] troops or forces (airborne, seaborne, shelling, etc.) of one country inside another, in the context of some political issue or dispute” (Pearson and Baumann 1993: 1). To be included in the original IMI data, furthermore, the troop incursions must be intentional and planned by government officials rather than inadvertent or unauthorized. We converted, by hand, the IMI database from an event format to a cross-national, time-series one. Each observation is a tally of current interventions engaged in by a country per year.¹¹ This tally

⁹ A count, rather than a simple dichotomous that truncates the intensity of intervention activity, measure of the occurrence of an intervention best captures the impact of the intervention behavior of a state. As a robustness check, however, we reran all models using a dichotomized measure of interventions. This measure is coded as ‘1’ for any observation in which a country engaged in one or more interventions. These tests reproduce the core results of the study and are presented in Appendix Table 3.

¹⁰ Data and codebook available online in <https://www.k-state.edu/polsci/intervention/>.

¹¹ We confine this tally to interventions that are linked to a particular state in the IMI database. This means that participation in interventions by multinational organizations or alliances are

includes interventions which started that year, interventions that started in a previous year but were still ongoing, and interventions that both started and terminated in the year. All interventions that terminated before 1968 or 1970, the temporal starting points for the terrorism data we use in the analysis, were excluded. However, interventions that began before this time but continued on to or past 1968 or 1970 were included. Finally, all unclear or “not ascertained” values for the specific types of interventions – coded in the original data as “9s” – were coded as zeros. This refinement yields our measure of the total intervention variable that ranges from zero IMIs per country-year—the modal observation—to a maximum of 22 IMIs per country-year, the amount launched by South Africa in 1982.

The total count measure is then divided into PSIs and SEIs, using, as stated previously, the convention established by Kisangani and Pickering (2007). The indicator for PSIs is produced by adding counts of six types of IMIs motivated by political and strategic goals including interventions undertaken to take sides in a domestic dispute within a country, to affect the domestic policy or political regime of a country, to protect the interveners military or diplomatic personnel, to counter hostile nonstate actors, to achieve strategic goals such as affecting regional power balances, and for territorial imperatives. The indicator for SEIs combines interventions to protect or assist mistreated or imperiled social and ethnic groups

excluded. We opt to exclude these because it is difficult to assign weight and responsibility to participating states in multinational intervention efforts. Our coding, however, does not exclude major interventions by coalitions, such as the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan or the 1991 and 2003 wars in or against Iraq. The IMI data does include individual country-intervener data for these sorts of interventions.

within a target country, humanitarian interventions, including famine relief, and interventions to protect economic resources important to the intervener, its allies and to other countries. The number of PSIs in the data ranges from zero to 20 times per country-year, while SEIs are between zero to 9 per observation. Like the aggregate measure of interventions, the modal value for both indicators is zero. Again, in our data South Africa in 1982 engaged in the most politico-strategic interventions in the sample, while the United States engaged in the highest level of socio-economic military interventions in 2004.

It is worth noting that because some military interventions were launched with multiple motivations and objectives, they do not neatly fit in our PSI and SEI dichotomization. For example, India's military intervention in Sri Lanka in 1987 can be considered to be a strategic intervention (PSI) as it hoped to bolster the Sri Lankan government, an ally with which it had signed a mutual security pact. It was an intervention to affect domestic politics (PSI) in that it aimed to bolster the Sri Lankan government's ability to project force internally. It was also a territorial intervention (PSI) because it attempted to drive the LTTE (Tamil Tigers) insurgency from its headquarters in Jaffna. It was also motivated by a desire on India's part to pursue Tamil insurgents and terrorists (PSI) who had engaged in violence and subversion in India. However, the intervention also aimed to provide humanitarian and social protective assistance (SEI) to both Tamil and Sinhalese civilians that were victimized by LTTE attacks. When we observed interventions like India's military actions though small, they are classified as both PSIs and SEIs. This coding decision made the two categories of PSIs and SEIs non-mutually exclusive. Consequently, our baseline statistical models will test each of the two categories, separately.

To avoid omitted variable bias, we include a set of control variables that have frequently appeared in various empirical studies of terrorism. These variables capture some basic features

of the intervening country. They include the intervening country's political regime type, which we measure using the 21-point Polity index, the intervener's level of economic development, indicated by its gross domestic product per capita in standardized billions of 1990 \$U.S., and the intervener's national population. We also include several confounding variables that we suspect might affect a country's security and strategic behavior on the international stage in ways that could affect terrorism. One of them is the degree to which the intervener is economically engaged with other countries through trade relationships, measured as a percentage of gross domestic product. While some scholars reason that close trade relationships should reduce a country's likelihood of experiencing terrorism (Li and Schaub 2004), we expect that more economically globalized countries might be exposed to higher risks of terrorism because their engagement in international trade might produce targeting opportunities for terrorists. We also include an ordinal measure of the intervener's current engagement in interstate wars, scaled for the intensity of the war. Countries engaged in interstate wars might stoke grievances abroad, making them a more likely target of transnational terrorism. We also consider that countries that are members of international security alliances and that have experienced international crises recently could be more frequently targeted by transnational terrorists. We therefore include dichotomous measures for both of these variables.

Exposure to transnational terrorism might be the product of "living in a bad neighborhood." If a country is bordered by other countries that are experiencing civil or interstate wars, it might be exposed to a higher chance of being a target of transnational terrorists, either deliberately or inadvertently. We therefore include a count of the severity of civil and interstate violent conflicts in countries bordering the intervener. Finally, by adding a

lagged term for the dependent variable on the right hand side of the equation, we account for temporal dependence of the behavior of transnational terrorists against the intervening country.

Descriptive statistics for all indicators used in the study are produced in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used in Study

Variable	Obs	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Transnational Terrorism (GTD)	7391	2.009	8.990	0	270
Transnational Terrorism (ITERATE)	7098	1.818	6.578	0	181
International Military Interventions (IMI)	7098	.640	2.033	0	22
Socio-Economic Military Interventions (IMI)	7098	.125	.508	0	9
Politico-Strategic Military Interventions (IMI)	7098	.515	1.710	0	20
Democracy (Polity Score)	6205	1.025	7.526	-10	10
Gross Domestic Product (\$U.S. billions 1990 dollars, Madison)	6418	1.954	8.309	.0006	132.25
Population (millions, UN data)	6425	32.383	119.216	.058	1324.35
Trade (x+m / GDP)	5772	77.150	47.504	.308	460.47
International War severity (MEPV)	6479	.110	.673	0	9
Alliance dummy (Gibler and Sarkees)	7520	.277	.447	0	1
Crisis in past 3 years dummy (CIDCM)	6720	.236	.424	0	1
Conflict in Border States (civil and int'l war severity, MEPV)	6069	3.591	5.356	0	34

Empirical Results

The results of our analysis are summarized in Tables 2 and 3. The results provide support for all three of our hypotheses. In brief, we find that countries engaging in international military interventions are subsequently more frequently targeted by transnational terrorists. We find that interventions motivated by politico-strategic objectives produce more subsequent transnational terrorism for the intervener. However, as hypothesized, we do not find engagement in so-called socio-economic interventions to produce more subsequent terrorism. In fact, in some estimations, engagement in socio-economic interventions significantly reduces the intervener's experience of transnational terrorism. We detail our findings below.

Table 2 summarizes our estimations regressing transnational terrorist attacks suffered by the intervening country on the total counts of all international military interventions.

Table 2. International Military Interventions and Transnational Terrorist Attacks Suffered by Intervening Country

	[1] Transnational Terrorism (GTD)	[2] Transnational Terrorism (ITERATE)	[3] Transnational Terrorism (GTD)	[4] Transnational Terrorism (ITERATE)	[5] Transnational Terrorism (GTD)	[6] Transnational Terrorism (ITERATE)	[7] Transnational Terrorism (GTD)	[8] Transnational Terrorism (ITERATE)
Int'l Military Interventions _{t-1}			0.098*** (0.020)	0.106*** (0.028)	0.055** (0.019)	0.074* (0.030)	0.010 (0.012)	0.023* (0.011)
Democracy (Polity) _{t-1}	0.035*** (0.010)	0.020 (0.011)			0.030** (0.010)	0.019 (0.011)	0.034*** (0.006)	0.010* (0.005)
GDP (\$ U.S. bns) _{t-1}	0.004 (0.005)	0.004 (0.004)			-0.001 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.008** (0.003)	-0.005 (0.003)
Population (millions) _{t-1}	0.001* (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)			0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.001** (0.000)
Trade as % of GDP _{t-1}	-0.006** (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)			-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.004** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)
International War _{t-1}	0.102 (0.074)	0.203 (0.119)			0.014 (0.090)	0.067 (0.130)	-0.054 (0.050)	-0.008 (0.040)
Alliance _{t-1}	0.792*** (0.201)	0.832*** (0.174)			0.938*** (0.191)	0.864*** (0.176)	0.182 (0.095)	0.096 (0.092)
Crisis past 3 years _{t-1}	0.453*** (0.111)	0.374*** (0.108)			0.406*** (0.102)	0.327** (0.112)	0.271*** (0.062)	0.155** (0.057)
Conflict in Border States _{t-1}	0.032** (0.012)	0.033** (0.011)			0.033** (0.012)	0.030* (0.012)	0.032*** (0.006)	0.033*** (0.005)
Terrorist Attacks _{t-1}	0.144*** (0.034)	0.151*** (0.022)	0.207*** (0.028)	0.218*** (0.026)	0.128*** (0.030)	0.143*** (0.022)	0.013*** (0.001)	0.024*** (0.002)
Constant	-0.606** (0.226)	-0.675** (0.209)	-0.645*** (0.121)	-0.540*** (0.118)	-0.631** (0.211)	-0.707*** (0.209)	-0.903*** (0.120)	-0.301** (0.116)
Obs.	4622	4483	6184	6738	4339	4341	3922	3835
Wald χ^2	276.43***	224.10***	96.16***	85.67***	351.19***	210.75***	306.40***	483.02***
Pseudo R ²	.114	.105	.094	.086	.126	.106		
Clusters (country)	150	151	178	182	150	151	133	125
Country Fixed Effects	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes

Notes:

All models negative binomial regression estimations, Standard errors in parentheses

*** p ≤ .000 ** p ≤ .01 * p ≤ .05

Models 1 and 2 summarize baseline estimations where only the control variables are included. In these estimations, we find that only four controls are consistent significant drivers of transnational terrorist attacks, regardless of how counts of transnational terrorism are measured. Countries engaged in international alliances, countries experiencing an international crisis in the past three years, countries bordering other countries experiencing inter- and intrastate conflicts, and countries that have previously experienced transnational terrorism are all more likely to experience transnational terrorist attacks. Models 3 and 4 regress transnational terrorism on the total counts of international military interventions, while controlling for the previous year's count of transnational terrorist attacks. In both models, countries engaging in IMIs are exposed to a higher risk of experiencing more subsequent transnational terrorism. When the remaining controls are added to the estimations in models 5 and 6, the same core findings are produced: IMIs positively predict transnational attacks. Finally, though we clustered our standard errors on the country in models 1 through 6, country-level idiosyncrasies might still be affecting the results. Therefore, we re-estimated the full models using country fixed-effects in models 7 and 8. These county fixed-effects models yield the results that are similar to the previous ones. International military interventions increase transnational terrorism as measured by ITERATE, as indicated in model 8. Yet, when we regress the GTD measure of transnational terrorism on IMIs in model 7, the coefficient on International Military Interventions turns out to be insignificant ($p = .395$) though its sign is still positive. These findings provide strong and mostly consistent support for our first hypothesis.

The results summarized in Table 3 produce support for next two hypotheses that PSIs produce more transnational terrorism but SEIs do not.

Table 3. Types of International Military Interventions and Transnational Terrorist Attacks Suffered by Intervening Country

	[9] Transnational Terrorism (GTD)	[10] Transnational Terrorism (ITERATE)	[11] Transnational Terrorism (GTD)	[12] Transnational Terrorism (ITERATE)	[13] Transnational Terrorism (GTD)	[14] Transnational Terrorism (ITERATE)	[15] Transnational Terrorism (GTD)	[16] Transnational Terrorism (ITERATE)
Politico-Strategic Interven. _{t-1}	0.070** (0.024)	0.093* (0.039)			0.078** (0.025)	0.097* (0.048)	0.041** (0.015)	0.038** (0.013)
Socio-Economic Interven. _{t-1}			0.108 (0.090)	0.127 (0.080)	-0.047 (0.075)	-0.021 (0.097)	-0.123** (0.045)	-0.039 (0.036)
Democracy (Polity) _{t-1}	0.030** (0.010)	0.019 (0.011)	0.031** (0.010)	0.021 (0.011)	0.031** (0.010)	0.019 (0.011)	0.033*** (0.006)	0.010* (0.005)
GDP (\$ U.S. bns) _{t-1}	-0.000 (0.005)	0.000 (0.004)	0.001 (0.006)	0.001 (0.004)	0.001 (0.005)	0.001 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)
Population (millions) _{t-1}	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.001** (0.000)
Trade as % of GDP _{t-1}	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.007*** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.003** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)
International War _{t-1}	0.009 (0.093)	0.079 (0.144)	0.069 (0.076)	0.149 (0.095)	0.010 (0.095)	0.085 (0.131)	-0.063 (0.051)	-0.016 (0.041)
Alliance _{t-1}	0.941*** (0.192)	0.868*** (0.176)	0.919*** (0.189)	0.839*** (0.174)	0.941*** (0.192)	0.868*** (0.176)	0.198* (0.095)	0.105 (0.092)
Crisis past 3 years _{t-1}	0.410*** (0.101)	0.328** (0.112)	0.417*** (0.103)	0.346** (0.111)	0.414*** (0.102)	0.329** (0.112)	0.277*** (0.061)	0.169** (0.057)
Conflict in Border States _{t-1}	0.033** (0.012)	0.029* (0.012)	0.035** (0.012)	0.032** (0.011)	0.033** (0.012)	0.029* (0.012)	0.033*** (0.006)	0.033*** (0.005)
Terrorist Attacks _{t-1}	0.127*** (0.030)	0.143*** (0.022)	0.129*** (0.030)	0.146*** (0.022)	0.127*** (0.030)	0.143*** (0.022)	0.014*** (0.001)	0.025*** (0.002)
Constant	-0.636** (0.211)	-0.712*** (0.210)	-0.606** (0.208)	-0.674** (0.207)	-0.639** (0.210)	-0.713*** (0.210)	-0.938*** (0.121)	-0.327** (0.117)
Obs.	4339	4341	4339	4341	4339	4341	3922	3835
Wald χ^2	349.34***	211.14***	370.95***	219.80***	359.19***	212.46***	319.86***	485.28***
Pseudo R ²	.126	.107	.125	.105	.126	.107		
Clusters (country)	150	151	150	151	150	151	133	125
Country Fixed Effects	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes

Notes:

All models negative binomial regression estimations, Standard errors in parentheses

Politico-Strategic Interventions = protection of military or diplomatic personnel, interference in domestic disputes, to affect policies, pursuit of rebels, strategic, and territorial interventions

Socio-Economic Interventions = humanitarian, social protection, and economic interventions (Kisangani and Pickering 2007)

*** $p \leq .000$ ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$

In Table 3, we regress our two indicators of transnational terrorist attacks on counts of politico-strategic and socio-economic interventions, both alone and together. We find across the models that politico-strategic interventions are likely to boost subsequent transnational attacks for the intervening country. However, socio-economic interventions emerge as either not significant predictors (see Models 11 through 14 and 16) or as a significant negative predictor of transnational attacks (see Model 15). These results suggest that, *ceteris parabis*, countries that engage in international military interventions abroad become more exposed to a higher risk of transnational terrorist attacks in the future. However, it is politico-strategic, rather than socio-economic, interventions that drive this relationship.¹²

Substantive Effects

To determine the substantive impact of international military interventions on transnational terrorism, in Figures 1 and 2 we plot the number of subsequent transnational attacks a country is predicted to experience as counts of interventions increase. We use marginal effects simulations to calculate these and hold all other predictors in the estimations constant at

¹² To further check that the results are not driven by outliers, we reran models excluding the 10 countries that engaged in the most international military interventions in the data: the United States, Soviet Union/Russia, France, the United Kingdom, Israel, China, India, South Africa, Libya, and Vietnam. These models reproduce the core results of the study. Results available from authors.

their mean values.¹³ When interpreting these results, it is critical to consider that transnational terrorist attacks are very rare events. In most years, most states do not experience a single transnational terrorist event – between 68.5 and 72.6 country-year observations in the data contain zero attacks – and of those that do experience terrorism, between 62.5 and 63.1 experience 3 or fewer attacks in a given year. At the same time, it is crucial to recall that although transnational terrorist attacks are rare, they often have an outsized significant impact on a country’s politics and policy.¹⁴

States that engage in interventions place themselves at a substantially higher risk of experiencing subsequent transnational attacks. Countries that refrain from engaging in any sort of intervention are predicted to experience less than one transnational attack in the typical year. Engaging in 11 interventions, the midpoint of the scale, boosts the expected number of subsequent attacks to between 1.5 (Figure 1) and 2 (Figure 2) attacks for the typical country in the typical year while engaging in the maximum number of interventions – 22 – boosts

¹³ We also calculated the impact of a one-unit increase of the independent variable on the dependent variable. These results are displayed, with confidence intervals, in Appendix Figure 1.

¹⁴ For example, in 2001 the United States experienced only 4 transnational terrorist attacks – the four hijackings perpetrated by Al Qaeda – which prompted U.S. President Bush to launch the Global War on Terror. In 2004, Spain experienced only 2 (coordinated) transnational terrorist bombings against the Madrid Cercanias commuter rail system, perpetrated by suspected members of Al Qaeda in Iraq. These deadly attacks resulted in the defeat of the ruling Spanish Conservative government and prompted the removal of Spanish troops from Iraq.

transnational terrorism to between 2.6 and 4.9 subsequent attacks per year, a 336.7 to 513.6 percent increase. The effects are even more dramatic for countries engaging in PSIs. Countries involved in 10 PSIs – the midpoint – are predicted to experience between 1.7 to 2.5 subsequent attacks per year while those engaging in the maximum of 20 PSIs are expected to experience 3.8 to 6.6 attacks, representing between a 479.7 and 692.6 percent increase. This would place such countries in the 91st to 94th percentile in the dataset in terms of yearly experience of transnational terrorism.

In contrast, countries engaging in socioeconomic interventions, generally see a slight, though not always significant, decrease in the amount of subsequent transnational terrorism they experience. In Figure 1, the amount of terrorism a country experiences per year almost halves – from .83 to .54 – as the number of SEIs engaged in increases. A more most decline is observed in Figure 2: countries that engage in SEIs see a reduction in terrorism from 1.0 to .83 attacks per year.

(insert Figures 1 and 2 about here)

Endogeneity

In this study, we have assumed a one-way causal direction from military interventions to terrorist backlash, and therefore introduced the use of a one-year lagged term for all explanatory variables to help establish the causal time order. But there is a possibility that states may be motivated to launch an intervention in response to terrorist attacks – witness the American military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 in response to Al Qaeda’s attacks on September 11th – thereby complicating the direction of the causal relationship. This conjecture points to a situation in which international military interventions and transnational terrorist attacks might be endogenous to one another.

To alleviate the concern of potential endogeneity bias, we have performed three sets of tests. First, we conducted sets of Heckman selection models. These tests help to clarify the direction of the causal relationship by selecting, in the first stage, only those countries that had a history of transnational terrorism, lagged one more year behind the regressors in the models. In the second stage, countries engaged in both all and politico-strategic interventions still experienced more subsequent transnational terrorism. These results are summarized in Appendix Table 4. These tests reveal that among countries that engage in interventions, specifically PSIs, as a result of previous experience of terrorism, transnational terrorist backlash is still more likely. Second, we ran a two-stage least squares (2SLS) model instrumenting for international military interventions using primary energy consumption (Sovey and Green 2011). We theorize that countries that consume large amounts of energy have a higher capacity to engage in overseas military interventions while also being more likely to do so in order to protect access to vital energy resources. However, we expect primary energy consumption to be exogenous to experience of transnational terrorist attacks. Our theoretical expectation on this point is empirically confirmed by Wu-Hausman tests. We find that when instrumenting for energy consumption in the first stage of the model, we reproduce the core findings of the analysis. IMIs and PSIs predict subsequent terrorism, but SEIs do not. The results of these tests are summarized in Appendix tables 5 and 6. Third, we conducted sets of generalized method of moments (GMM) models (Arellano and Bond 1991) which treats IMIs and terrorist attacks as endogenous, but all other regressors in the model as exogenous. These also reproduced the main findings of the study, and are summarized in Appendix Table 7.

Conclusion

Although the particulars of any individual international military intervention may vary, it can be argued that the most fundamental purpose of international military interventions is to foster greater security for the intervening country. Yet, our empirical analysis finds that certain types of military interventions – those that are oriented towards politico-military motivations and objectives – actually levy a security cost on intervening countries by prompting more transnational terrorist backlashes. There are several implications of this finding. On the most basic level, the findings demonstrate that the specific motives and objectives of military interventions matter. This core finding may be true in other areas of security affairs, including provision of foreign aid or interstate diplomacy, and should be investigated in future studies. The findings also shed light on another theoretical route through which interventions foment terrorist backlashes. The results of this study provide some concrete support for the heretofore theoretical argument that some types of interventions, particularly those motivated by high politics, stoke nationalist enmity against the intervening country, resulting in a transnational terrorist backlash with implications beyond attacks against foreign occupying troops. This latter point is important to consider for politicians contemplating politico-strategic interventions.

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