The Effectiveness of Terrorism Deterrence Methods

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Abstract

Deterrence is a commonly misunderstood theory that if properly understood can be used to decrease international terrorism. The purpose of this research is to determine which terrorism deterrence (TD) methods are effective and ineffective. Using a case-study method, this study analyzes the different terrorism deterrence methods implimented in countries with low levels of terrorism - Spain and Jordan - and high levels of terrorism - Afghanistan and Nigeria. Lethal response was found to be the most ineffective deterrence method, while strong border security is an effective method. This study proves and explains the differing level of effectiveness between deterrence methods. Further research is needed to prove these correlations quantitatively.

Introduction

Deterrence is a very difficult topic to discuss because it attempts to explain the absence of something. Because of difficulties, many do not fully understand deterrence and the impact it can have on decreasing crime rates

This study answers the question, what methods of deterrence are effective at deterring terrorism? Prior research on TD methods was incomplete and inaccurate because it failed to recognize that TD methods have differing levels of effectiveness. In fact, there are effective and ineffective TD methods that help explain the differing levels of terrorism in countries. This paper will expand on Kroenig's theory of TD methods, positing that there are five different types of TD methods, each with their own varying levels of effectiveness (Table 1).

By providing the guidelines on how to properly deter terrorism using effective TD methods you not only decrease terrorist attacks, but you also prevent the need for a loss of life or use of force in the first place. By implementing effective TD methods across the globe, the world as we know it would change.
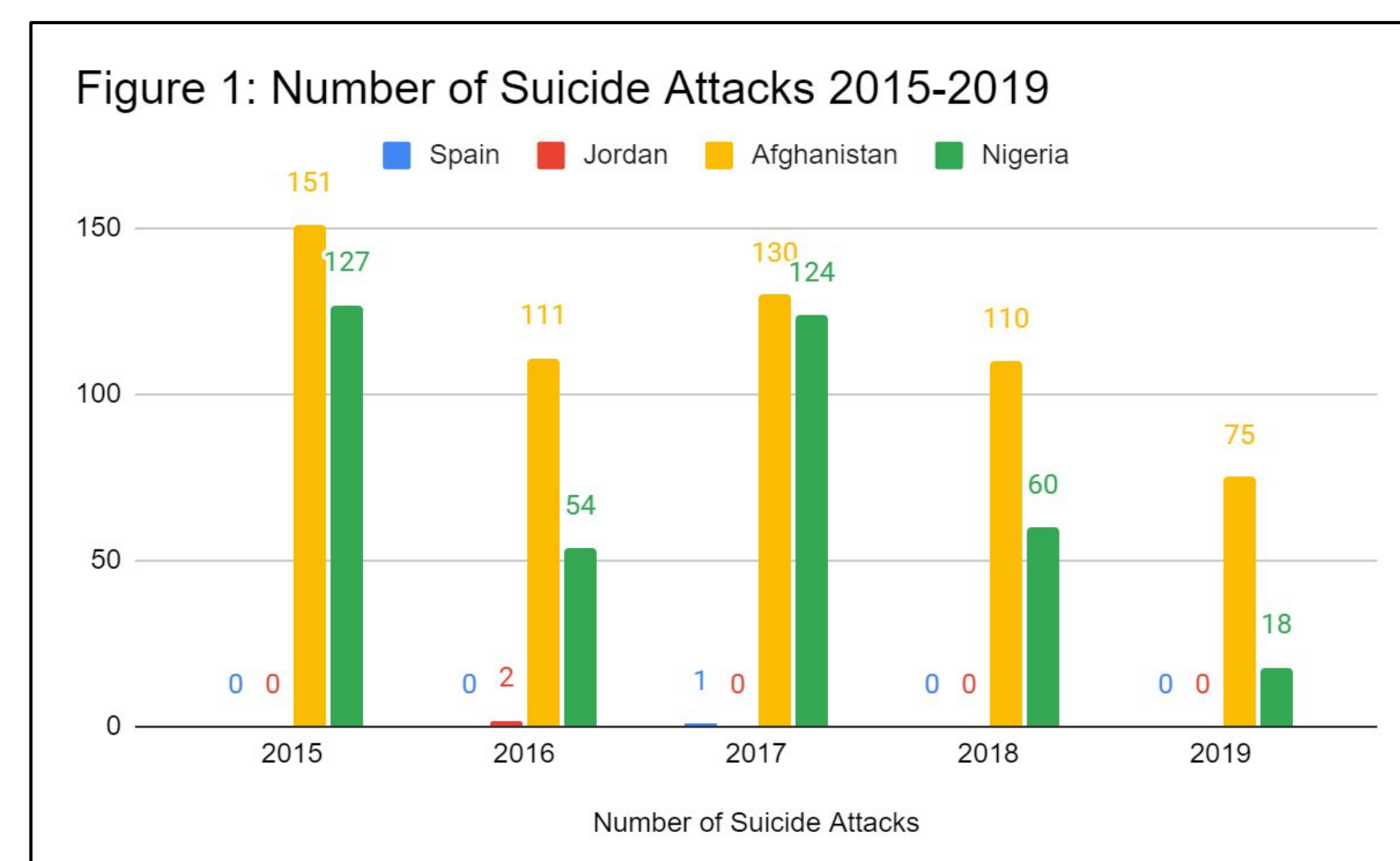
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Vision of Humanity (VoH). (2020). *Global Terrorism Index.* Retrieved from Vision of Humanity: https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/#/

Theory

There are effective and ineffective TD methods that help explain the differing levels of terrorism in countries.

This study expands on Kroenig's Deterrence Toolkit (2012), using a Modified Deterrence Toolkit (Table 1). The major differences between these two toolkits is that this study acknowledges and demonstrates the differing effectiveness of TD methods, and it also splits direct response into lethal and non-lethal responses.

Table 1: Modified Deterrence Toolkit (Kroenig, 2010)

		Impose Costs	Deny Benefits
Direct Approach		**Direct Lethal Response** Respond against violent extremists lethally. Ex.: Threaten to kill terrorists.	**Tactical Level Denial** Deny tactical success. Ex.: Strengthen homeland security and/or border security
		Direct Non-Lethal Response Respond against violent extremists non-lethally. Ex.: Threaten to imprison terrorists	
Indirect Approach		**Indirect Response** Respond against assets (family or supporters) valued by violent extremists. Ex.: Travel restrictions, sanctions, taxes, etc.	**Strategic Level Denial** Deny strategic success. Ex.: Communicate that demands will not be met even in the face of terrorist attacks
INEFFECTIVE		**POSSIBLY EFFECTIVE**	**EFFECTIVE**

Figure 1: Number of Suicide Attacks 2015-2019

Research Design

Case-Study Method
- Countries were selected based off their changes in GTI score and current GTI rank
- Countries chosen: Spain, Jordan, Afghanistan, Nigeria

Independent Variable: Terrorism Deterrence (TD) Methods
- Data from the US Department of Security (USDOS) and Counter Extremism Project (CEP) is used, in addition to data from country specific sources.

Dependent Variable: Level of Terrorism
- Measured by Global Terrorism Index (GTI) Score
  - Analyzes the impact from terrorism for 163 countries each year on a scale from one to ten; ten being the most impact from terrorism and zero being no impact from terrorism
  - Figure 2 shows the GTI scores of each case study country over time

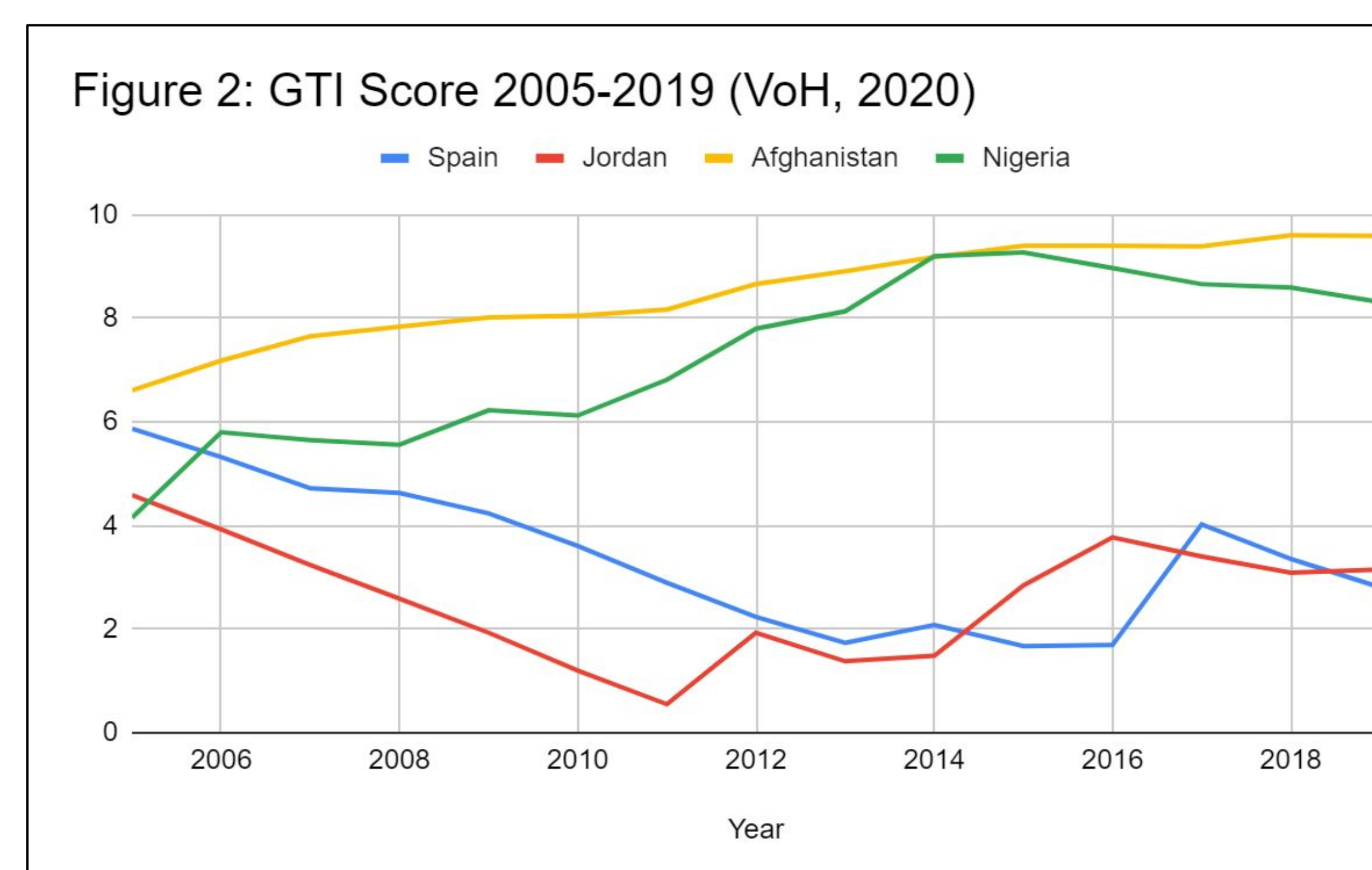Figure 2: GTI Score 2005-2019 (VoH, 2020)

Figure 2: Shows the GTI scores of each case study country from 2005-2019. Both Spain and Jordan experienced large decreases in GTI score over time. Spain experienced the fourth largest GTI score decrease in the world from 2005-2019; with a decrease of -3.059. Both Afghanistan and Nigeria experienced large increases in GTI score from 2005-2019. Afghanistan had the thirteenth largest increase and Nigeria had the sixth largest increase during this time.

Figure 1: Shows the number of suicide attacks in each case study country from 2015-2019. Countries with high numbers of suicide terrorist attacks, terrorists are willing to incur any cost - including death - whereas those in countries with low numbers are not. Since direct non-lethal response is only an effective TD method in countries where terrorists are not willing to incur any cost. This suggests that this would be an effective TD method in Spain and Jordan, while being ineffective in Afghanistan and Nigeria.

Analysis

Spain - focuses on effective direct non-lethal response, tactical denial, and strategic denial equally
Jordan - focus is on effective direct non-lethal response, as well as other effective TD methods
Afghanistan - focus is on direct lethal and non-lethal response
Nigeria - focuses almost entirely on direct lethal response

Table 2 visualizes the TD methods that each country uses and what their current GTI score is.

Table 2: TD Methods used in Case-Study Countries

	Spain	Jordan	Afghanistan	Nigeria
Direct Lethal Response			X	X
Direct Non-Lethal Response	X	X	X	
Indirect Response	X	X		
Deny Tactical Success	X	X		
Deny Strategic Success		X		
GTI Score 2019	2.81	3.149	9.592	8.314

Discussion

Deterrence is a very powerful tool against terrorism because it raises the cost and denies the benefits of terrorism. The trends seen among what TD methods are used by countries with low GTI scores - Spain and Jordan - and high GTI scores - Afghanistan and Nigeria - support the Modified Deterrence Toolkit (Table 1). Table 2 above shows which TD methods each country uses.

By recognizing that there are differing levels of effectiveness of TD methods, this study confirms that terrorism is deterrable and explains why some believed it was not. After understanding which TD methods are effective and ineffective, policy implications are clear. Countries should not use direct lethal response, and should only use direct non-lethal response if there is a low number of suicide attacks. Lastly, indirect response, tactical denial, and strategic denial should always be used. If applied properly, TD methods can help countries around the globe decrease their impact from terrorism.