Trevor Dykas
Junior
National Security
"Testing the relationship between country instability and the number of assassinations"
Dr. Jeffrey Treistman; National Security Department

Section 1:

My research originally sought to uncover the relationship between terrorist ideologies and the number, or success, of assassinations. As me and my advisor were looking into running correlations of terrorist groups and assassinations, we kept running into more and more data constraints, and the research had to transition to something else. We decided to try to understand the causes of subnational assassinations. Subnational assassinations are those that are not including just presidents and prime ministers (or people of that nature), but also referring to mayors, businessmen, lawyers, police officers, etc. This project turned into an exploratory analytical study of the relationship between political instability and the tactics of terrorism.

This research is important because researchers and national security practitioners have only looked at national assassinations, or those dealing with presidents and prime ministers, leaving out subnational assassinations, which are typically more common and are understudied.

The hypothesis for this project was that internal conflicts will increase the number of assassinations. This study employed a time-series analysis using a negative binomial regression with fixed effects. The reason for using a negative binomial was because we had count data (meaning counting the number of assassinations in a given year). The fixed effects have been put in place because it recognizes that there are idiosyncrasies in the countries (meaning that Canada is somehow different from Guatemala, which is also different from India) and allows us to compare them across this model. The variables that were used in the analysis are as follows: intrastate/internationalized conflict, regime type, human rights, ethnic/religious fractionalization, Cold War (dummy variable), GDP, employment rate, and country power. All of these variables have been hypothesized to have an impact on political violence and subnational attacks. The variables were further categorized into 3 separate variables: internal conflict, political variables, and economic variables.

Section 2:

From an initial look at the regime type variable using a simple plotted chart, we could see that there was some correlation between a higher number of assassinations and a more democratic regime. On a polity2 scale, a -10 means a fully autocratic regime, while a 10 means a fully democratic regime, and countries are rated and placed along this scale. There is a spike around 6 and 7 meaning that more assassinations occur in a more democratic regime. A time-series analysis compared years and the number of assassinations, and within the past decade we have seen a dramatic spike in subnational assassinations. The negative binomial regression yielded some expected, and interesting findings. Using Stata, a data analysis tool, we ran this regression which showed a strong relationship with internal conflicts and the number of assassinations. The statistically significant variables that increased the likelihood of an assassination taking place was if the country was involved in an internal conflict, the regime type was closer to a democracy, and the gross domestic product was higher in the country. The variables that supposedly reduce the likelihood of an attack occurring were a higher level of human rights, and a higher level of ethnic fractionalization.

Me and my mentor, Dr. Jeffrey Treistman plan on creating a joint academic publication with the results that we have found and include a case study on countries that surprised us throughout the project. For example, we were surprised to see that India had so many assassinations in recent years. We will also be completing a Weibull analysis that will uncover if conflicts with higher numbers of assassinations will affect the duration of the internal conflict, as well as completing a simultaneous regression equation that will further confirm our results. It will provide that internal conflicts lead to an increased number of assassinations, instead of the inverse. Me and my advisor are also looking into attending the MPSA conference and we are submitting an abstract soon which will hopefully be accepted, and I will be able to present my research to national security and political science researchers specializing in terrorism.

Citations

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