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Faiz Ur Rehman, Paolo Vanin



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Terrorism Risk and Democratic Preferences in Pakistan

Faiz Ur Rehman^{*,†}

Paolo Vanin[‡]

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Abstract

Beyond direct damages, terrorism creates fear and insecurity, potentially reducing support for democratic institutions if these are deemed inadequate to tackle the threat. To investigate this possibility, we use data from Pakistan, a country that experienced an exponential rise in terrorism since 2001. Exploiting individual-level data on democratic attitudes and district-level information on terrorist attacks, we document that persistent exposure to terrorism (and more broadly to violence) is associated to a significantly lower support for democratic values. This correlation is robust to various alternative specifications (including an IV strategy), relevant in magnitude, and more pronounced for individuals who are male, poor, or less exposed to the media. Terrorism thus threatens not only individuals, but also democratic institutions.

Keywords: Terrorism, Institutions, Democracy

JEL Classification: D74, F59, K42, O17

^{*}Department of Economics, University of Bologna, Piazza Scaravilli 2, 40126, Bologna (BO), Italy. Contact: faiz.rehman@edle-phd.eu

[†]Present address: School of Economics, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 45320, Pakistan. Contact: faiz@qau.edu.pk

[‡]Department of Economics, University of Bologna, Piazza Scaravilli 2, 40126, Bologna (BO), Italy. Corresponding author. Contact: paolo.vanin@unibo.it

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