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## **The Varying Effects of Single-Event and Chronic Terrorism on Changes in Attitudes on Immigration**

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Alisdair Bousquet

BSc Thesis

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BSc Thesis

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## Introduction

In the aftermath of the biggest act of terror to happen in the 21st century, a wave of unprecedented research and public debate emerged. The magnitude of this event was felt in all parts of the world and its effects have absolutely not shadowed throughout the years. Indeed, Terrorism remains a very real and dangerous security threat, claiming an average of 25 000 deaths per year within the last decade (Herre, et al., 2023). Certain singular events are responsible for unfathomable amounts of damages. For example, the 9/11 attacks in the United States claimed around 3000 casualties, in addition to the destruction of entire neighborhoods. Similarly, we have recently seen attacks in the Israeli-Palestinian region which claim upwards of 6 000 combined casualties, and once again the destruction of infrastructure throughout (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023). Moreover, the Global Terrorism Index (2023) argues that attacks have become increasingly lethal, seen through a 26% increase in the last five years.

In addition to this physical violence, terrorism characterizes itself through its symbolic violence, which will be key for our research (Huff & Kertzer, 2018, p.55). Indeed, terrorist attacks differentiate themselves from other forms of violence through their motivations and aspirations. The following quote by a former FBI Director depicts this idea accurately: “terrorism is an act of violence to try to influence a public body or citizenry, so it’s more of a political act” (Hattem, 2015). Groups who perpetrate acts of terror are motivated by a range of social, political, economic or religious beliefs, which seem to go against the beliefs of an opposing group. Because of this the importance of group level identification is crucial in understanding what motivates such actions and how they are perceived by other groups. As the old adage goes; one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter. This analogy perfectly embodies the group level dynamics at play surrounding terror and how the perpetrator of particular violence is seen through a very subjective lens. This paper will not focus on understanding the underlying reasonings for terrorist attacks, but will instead discuss the effect these have on individuals.

This idea of group threat has been very relevant in the last few years, most notably in the context of immigration, which can be understood as the movement of groups beyond their own borders (International Organization for Migration, 2020). Within the last fifty years, global immigration has experienced a swift and substantial increase in activity, reaching unprecedented levels. In fact, as of 2020 it is estimated that 281 million people are living in a country that is not their own, which is approximately 3 times the amount in 1970 (World Migration Report, 2022). Countries are having a greater difficulty at managing the rising influx of migrants, often leading to heightened social tensions and political conflicts. The salience of this issue has also been felt within academia, particularly regarding the study of public opinion.

It has been well established within the seminal literature that public opinion is influenceable and subject to change in the face of threat (Hetherington and Suhay, 2009). Countless research has therefore been conducted to understand how different economic, political and cultural threats affect public opinion and overall attitude changes. In our case it seems that the impact of terrorism, as a physical and symbolic threat, has extensively been studied with regards to public opinion. In fact, most academic research seems to corroborate the idea that in the light of threat, individuals are likely to become increasingly anxious and fearful, leading to shifts in preexisting beliefs. Such feelings then translate to more intolerant and resentful behavior at the expense of outside groups (Huddy et al, 2005). However, due to this in-group and out-group dynamic that will be explored further below, attacks orchestrated by terror groups in the name of a particular ethnicity or cultural group, are likely to foster intolerance vis-a-vis the overall immigrant population (Legewie, 2013). Many cases have observed the impact of terrorism on attitudes towards minority groups such as Muslims or Jews across Europe. These findings further accentuate the idea that immigrants are viewed as jeopardizing national identity, economic growth and the overall development of the country (Semyonov, Raijman, & Gorodzeisky 2006, p. 432). Finally, Woods and Damien (2014) suggest that foreigners tend to be seen as more dangerous in countries or societies where survival is less likely.

This topic appears to be well studied and well researched, however this paper relies on a gap with regards to case selection. Indeed, most of the literature surrounding the relationship between terrorism and immigration attitudes relies on terror cases predominantly in the Western

world, which can be understood as North America and Europe. However, in corroboration with the Global Terrorism Database, studies suggest that most attacks happen in South and West Asia, Africa and the Middle East (Herre, et al., 2023). Within these regions certain cases account for bigger shares of terrorism depending on the studied year. In 2020, Afghanistan was responsible for half of the terrorism related deaths worldwide, while Iraq accounted for 30% of yearly terror deaths in 2016. Through these figures one can understand the difference between events in the Western part of the world and the rest of the world, which lies in the size of the violence.

In reality, attacks in the Western part of the world can be understood as single event attacks, occurring in very short lapses of time and relying on symbolic threats rather than physical violence. In opposition to this and as argued above, terror events in Non-Western parts of the world produce higher death counts, more damage and span on longer time frames. One could therefore talk about single-event terrorism being more present in North America and Europe, whilst persistent or chronic terror seems to be more present in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. This is a key difference to be explored as different levels of terror may lead to different conclusions regarding public opinion. Indeed consensus around this differentiation seems to be quite ambivalent within the literature, where some argue that accentuated threat results in continuous intolerance, whilst others seem to think that reactions to this threat are susceptible to fade overtime. Hence, due to this timeline differentiation this motivates the following research question for this paper:

What is the effect of persistent terrorism on changes in attitudes towards immigration?

In order to answer this question I will employ a linear regression experiment in which I observe the difference in attitude changes between countries that experience single event terrorism and persistent terror. To do so, this paper will first present a short conceptual framework of the two main variables. Following that we introduce the literature and theory review surrounding this relationship. We particularly rely on threat perception theory and social identity theory so as to explain the underlying logic between both variables. We contend that threat perception is preliminary to changes in public opinion. Adding to this the salience of

terrorism and its symbolic impact across the world, we emphasize group level differentiations as an amplifier of attitude changes. Before concluding and summarizing the paper, we present the 7 research design, highlighting the method of data collection, the conceptualization of pertinent variables and the analysis of the results.

## Conceptual Framework

The swift growth of worldwide immigration has generated a significant body of literature exploring both push and pull factors regarding state policies and overall public opinion. Indeed, when thinking about immigration as the movement of foreigners to a particular region of the world for lengthy durations of time, it is of paramount relevance to consider the native inhabitant's attitudes and opinions with regards to these new comings. Such research finds its origins within two distinct theoretical frameworks: one rooted in political economy and the other in political psychology (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). Both theoretical foundations generate distinctive hypotheses about the influence of individual- and country-level factors in shaping public opinion (p.5). However both are grounded in the assumption that perceived threat, either economic or symbolic, is preliminary to changes in attitudes towards immigration (Brouard, Vasilopoulos & Foucault, 2018, p.178).

The political economy framework finds its origins amongst realist conflict theory in which a clash of material interests is understood as the primary instigation of intergroup conflict. Indeed, these conflicts emanate through a desire for increased material well-being in the shape of economic competition (Scheve & Slaughter, 2001). With regards to immigration, this dynamic elucidates how native populations perceive other groups as posing a threat to the stability of the host country's economy but also threats to individual level concerns such as job security or wage suppression.

Scheve & Slaughter's (2001) seminal article seeks to draw light upon this relationship by analyzing the determinants of individual preferences over immigration policy in the United States. For this, they rely on the 1992 National Election Studies survey so as to assess general trends of support or opposition for government policies regarding immigration (p.2). Within this framework, their findings suggest that natives tend to feel threatened by immigrants when competing for employment opportunities and wages. This predominantly affects low skilled workers rather than high skilled workers, as immigration is seen as a pathway for cheaper labor, reducing the demand for native workers (p.3). With regards to high skilled workers, debate remains due to the difference in employment availability and demand, which provokes less fear and anxiety within this subsection of the population. However, despite these shortcomings we can extract valuable insights regarding the effects of threat as a trigger for changes in attitudes towards immigration.

The second foundational framework investigating changes in attitudes towards immigration is grounded within political psychology. Within this model, group conflict manifests itself through symbolic and cultural differences as opposed to material resources. These differences revolve around intangible elements such as national identity, collective history and a common sense of belonging (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). This understanding prescribes an increased sense of group identification and therefore a rise in the perception of threat caused by immigrants whom do not adhere or share the same foundational values (p.4). Indeed, cultural and symbolic identifications are often deeply engrained within attitudes and beliefs and therefore provide stronger bonds between in-groups, further cementing separation with out-groups (Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012). This understanding differs from economic competition through its more personal perspective. Indeed, employment insecurity due to cheap labor does pose a direct threat to a certain group within a native population however this link revolves around macro-economic considerations. On the other hand, cultural and symbolic threats are dealt with at a more personal level (p.481).

So far, most foundational threats revolve around indirect fear and anxiety, primarily felt through sociotropic dynamics. However, symbolic frameworks also prescribe tangible and very



realistic threats to personal security. Indeed, the idea of physical threats seem to be overlooked within the literature as opposed to broader socio-economic concerns. Despite this, we remain consistent regarding the understanding that perceived threat is preliminary to changes in attitudes towards immigration, therefore priming the following security threat as strong and powerful exogenous threat capable of altering preconceived opinions.

Terrorism has been a contentious subject in the recent decades, in no small part due to the 2001 attacks in the United States. Its growth has been exponential and its reach has become global, yet amongst politicians and academics, consensus surrounding its conceptualization remains scarce (Huff & Kertzer, 2018, p.55). The United Nations for instance has failed to develop a comprehensive treaty against terrorist activity due to disagreements between member states on its definition (p.56).

While understanding that consensus around the definition of terrorism still elucidates the international community, this paper aims to establish a clear conceptualization of it. The Global Terrorism Database defines a terrorist attack as “the threat or use of violence to achieve a political economic, religious or social goal through intimidation or coercion by an actor that is not the state” (Herre, 2023). The research at hand follows the above conceptualization to be in accordance with the data observed, but also so as to enables a clear and common understanding of the key criteria.

Such attacks can also be described as a tool employed by non-state actors, with the intent of disrupting a particular status-quo (Ricolfi, 2005; Victoroff, 2005, p.14). This status quo can be anything ranging from social, economic, ethnic or even religious matters (p.16). However, the reasoning behind such actions is what distinguishes terrorism from regular armed conflict or destruction. Indeed, terrorism distinguishes itself from other types of rebellion through its physical manifestation, but more importantly its symbolic implications.

Groups who employ such tactics not only want, but need it to be seen. It is precisely the abruptness of an attack, accompanied by unparalleled violence which distinguishes it from the rest. Beyond physical violence, terror organizations strike at the heart of non-military personnel, along with non-military infrastructure. The methods have devastatingly strong psychological effects on civilians, whom are disconnected and innocent with regards to the broader implications of the relevant conflicts. Spilerman and Stelkov (2009) anchor this idea by explaining that the goal of terrorism is to provoke and shatter the perception of an indifferent or unknowing public (p.172). This results in the fostering of fear and anxiety amongst the affected population (Huddy, et al., 2005).

## Literature and Theory Review

In general, the impact of public opinion on shaping governmental policies and political decision making, particularly regarding salient issues, has been well established (Burstein, 2003, p.32). Consequently, the way immigration is perceived by the people within a state wields considerable influence over an immigrant's livelihood and more globally, immigration policy (Lawrence, 2011). Because of this, it is necessary to comprehend what motivates such changes in public opinion, and how these changes manifest themselves.

### Threat Perception Theory

The seminal literature surrounding this question seems to be guided by the assumption that perceived threat is preliminary to changes in immigration attitudes (Bloom, Arikan, & Lahav, 2015, p.1768). In the long term, attitudes may stem from stable, underlying beliefs and preferences. These foundations usually remain constant, however certain exogenous events, such as material, psychological or symbolic threats are the most important explanatory factors for changes in attitudes (Huddy et al. 2005). Modern psychological studies also stress that political decision making and behaviors are heavily influenced by emotions (Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000). Appraisal theory is a psychological concept which dictates that emotions result from individuals assessment of certain events (Ilyer, et al., 2014, p.514) This reasoning is equally present in every humans mind yet varies depending on the person. Because of this we can infer that in light of surprising or unfamiliar emotions, reactions tend to deviate from the habitual or the normal.

Similarly, Huddy, Feldman, Taber & Lahav's (2005) seminal paper explores the psychological outcomes civilians are prone to experience in the face of threat. The authors rely on 'threat perception theory' to explain the fostering of particular emotions as a natural response to terrorism. Through findings from a national telephone survey taken between October 2001 and March 2002, they conclude that anxiety and fear are the direct result of the material and psychological damages provoked by attacks (Huddy et al, 2005). This anxiety and fear stems from the characteristic features of terrorism, which seek to draw attention in violent and shocking ways (Herre, 2023). Individuals are also likely to worry about becoming victims of possible future attacks, further deepening feelings of anxiety (Mueller & Stewart, 2015). In a later study, Huddy (2009) proposes two key effects threats have on citizens' attitudes, which we will rely on so as to illustrate the relation between the threat of terror, and changes in attitudes towards immigration.

Firstly, anxiety and fear seem to birth some degree of 'cognitive shutdown' amongst affected individuals in light of an attack (Huddy, 2009, p.5). This shutdown transforms stable and underlying beliefs into sporadic emotional reactions (Brader et, al, 2008). Further characterizations emphasize restrictions on memory processing efficiency (Blaney, 1986),

heightened intolerance (Lodge & Taber, 2000) and the augmented use of stereotyping (Bodenhausen, Sheppard, & Kramer, 1994). However short lived they may be, such emotions carry a genuine sense of reality in the moment. The understanding of this cognitive shutdown caused by exogenous threats on the individual psyche, is vital in order to draw inferences on group-level attitude changes.

This brings us to the second factor in Huddy's argument regarding the impact of threat on attitudes, establishing a connection between individual and group level attitudes. Here, the contention is that threat accentuates the creation of group dynamics. Particularly, this second point underlines the deepening of bonds within the in-group as a natural reaction to threat (Brader et al, 2008). Group reliance serves as a comforting foundation when fear and anxiety develop. However, the consequence of grouping to mitigate threat, results in the creation of both in-groups and outgroups. Struch and Schwartz (1989) strengthen this idea through their research on intergroup aggression, in which they argue that real or perceived threat result in increased out-group intolerance and ethnocentrism (p.366). This in-group and out-group dynamic, depicted through intolerance and hate is a direct result of perceived or real threat. In order to bridge this understanding to the specific threat of terrorism, and the attitude changes with regards to immigration, reliance on Social Identity Theory and Intergroup Threat Theory will be utilized.

Per the previous conceptualization of Terrorism, we understand that the motivations and manifestations of this threat are a direct cause of in-group and out-group differences (Branscombe et al., 1999). Both the perpetrators and the victims believe that their group is at threat, whether that be physical, cultural or symbolic. This deepens resentment and feelings of insecurity towards the respective out-group. Interestingly, as emphasized by Hopkins and Hainmueller (2014) 'attitudes on immigration are about groups of people and about challenges to group boundaries' (p.242). Implying that both terrorism and attitudes towards immigration are intrinsically linked to group-level threats.

To highlight and understand the inner workings of this relationship this paper will rely on two closely related theories: Social Identity Theory and Intergroup Threat Theory.

## Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT), proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970's, is a socio-psychological framework which aims to explain group-level behavior and the formation of social identity. Within this framework, individuals are understood to categorize themselves into social groupings based on shared values, beliefs and senses of belonging. Such groups tend to revolve around nationality, ethnicity, culture and religion. In the context of terrorism on attitudes towards immigration, this theory allows us to gain valuable insight into the psychological processes at play.

Indeed, terrorist attacks increase individuals' awareness of social identity, further strengthening the connection to their in-group whilst perceiving out-group members as potential threats. Social identity theorists also argue that in-group and out-group disagreements are caused by the psychological benefits of being a part of a specific group (Stephan, Ybarra & Rios Morrison, 2015). The comfort found within shared beliefs and values between a certain community further deepen in-group feelings, consequently accentuating out-group sentiments. Some academics go as far as to associate this group level dynamic to fundamentally human concepts, engrained over centuries of history. They contend that humans have always possessed and acted around tribal instincts (Ward, 1959). Indeed, throughout human evolution, individuals have always been found to create social groups with different facets, such as traditions, languages or geographic considerations. Because of these strong feelings of association within certain groups, the importance of external threats is increasingly heightened (Ward, 1959).

This has important repercussions on how people view immigration, for the arrival of new people, understood as the out-group, may be perceived as posing threat to a pre-established order. Many academics have explored this issue by evaluating the changes in public opinion after terror attacks. For instance, research following the 9/11 attacks in the United States (US) concluded that a noticeable rise in islamophobia had been developed (Waxman, 2011). Likewise, following the 2005 bombing in Spain, a deep xenophobic and anti-Arab sentiment was 14

propagated (p.7) Indeed consistent research across Europe consistently observes intolerant behavior towards immigrants, due to the idea that their presence threatens economic growth, religion and their nationality (Semyonov, Raijman, & Gorodzeisky 2006, p. 432).

Davis and Silvers' (2008) study following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States finds that non-conservative partisans may be susceptible to developing more xenophobic beliefs when confronted with powerful threats. This idea rests on the previously seen psychological reactions that emanate from abrupt and violent events. They contend that right wing partisans already subscribe to inherently intolerant policies despite the presence of terror, which leaves more room for attitude switches amongst the other side of the divide (p.30). The results of their study do conclude that some non-conservative partisans are indeed susceptible to develop more intolerant views, generating more disdain for immigration.

In their research on the effect of terrorism on the sensitivity of public opinion, Berrebi and Klor (2008) take a different approach and pay close attention to the different reactions between civilians in localities where an attack has taken place and civilians within the neighboring localities. Indeed, the psychological effects of terrorism vary in intensity, depending on an individuals' proximity to an attack. They find that localities which experience attacks are more prone to increase support for right wing attitudes towards immigration than neighboring localities. However, we still observe a '1.35 percentage point increase for right wing support, among localities not directly affected by attacks' (Berrebi and Klor, 2008). This is key as it further deepens the causality between our two variables. This corrects a potential geographic bias within countries who experience a terror attack. Indeed, Huddy's (2005) previously mentioned threat perception theory seems to omit geographic considerations with regards to the psychological effects on civilians. Berrebi and Klor motivate their research by emphasizing the possible disconnect between experiencing and feeling. Individuals in close proximity to an attack, conceptualized within the confounds of a city or locality, experience deeper feelings of anxiety and fear than more distant viewers. The feelings distant observers develop are valuable and honest, yet cannot be equally compared to experiences within a concerned locality, in which strong feelings of anxiety are developed.

Then comparing such evidence through the theoretical mechanisms of Threat perception theory and Social Identity theory, we can assert with confidence that there is indeed a causal relationship between our two focal variables.

The above discussion develops the underpinnings of how terrorism affects immigration attitudes, highlighting the concept of threat as the main catalyst for these changes. While extensive research on terror attacks has been conducted over the past decades, its biggest limitation lies within case selection (Waxman, 2011). What we understand by case selection is that the majority of cases chosen for research purposes, particularly surrounding immigration and terrorism, only focus on a small fraction of the global pool of data. Most cases selected such as 9/11, the Madrid bombing in 2005, the 2015 Paris attacks, or even the 2016 attacks in Germany are frequently referenced throughout the seminal literature. However, all of these cases are testament of single-event terrorism, meaning that the duration or frequency of said terror is very short lived. This paper therefore wishes to investigate the effects of repeated attacks on a group or society.

In addition to the focus on single-event rather than persistent terrorism, the case selection of previous academia also seems to be restricted to a certain geographic scope. Indeed, the majority of terror cases selected for research predominantly occur in the Western World, understood as North-America and Europe. This recurrent selection of cases seems to inaccurately depict the worldwide state of terrorism. In fact, the majority of recorded terrorist attacks take place in the non-Western part of the world. According to the Global Terrorism Index for 2023, only three European or North-American countries occupy a spot within the first fifty most affected by terrorism (GTI, 2023). Moreover, none of these countries, which includes the US, France and Germany, are listed within the thirty most affected countries by terrorism. Due to such findings, this paper argues that research focused on terrorism as a main cause of shifts in immigration attitudes should focus on the regions of the world most affected by this.

Furthermore, immigration and therefore attitudes towards it are extremely relevant in the non-western world. For example, developing states accommodate for half of the global asylum

seekers, and nearly 80% of the world's refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2018). Furthermore, according to reports by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, migration between Southern countries appears to be comparable to migration levels from Southern to Northern countries (OECD, 2017). Following the established relationship between single-event terror and changes in immigration attitudes, this paper seeks to examine whether these assumptions are maintained in the light of different case selections, varying on the persistence of terror. The seminal literature collected on this subject leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Greater levels of terror are associated with increased opposition to immigration.

## Research Design

### Data Collection

In order to statistically examine the research at hand, this data relies on the merging of two distinct datasets, notably the World Values Survey (WVS) and the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). The WVS is a key international research program on the evolution of values and beliefs around the world (Haerpfer et. al., 2020). It draws from a vast variety of cases across



all continents and has been heavily referenced throughout the literature on public opinion. We rely on such a database to craft a cross-national large-N quantitative analysis between the years 2017 and 2022 (wave 7). Most of the surveys were conducted during the first part of this timeframe, with approximately 12 countries out of 54 completing this work since the COVID-19 virus (World Values Survey, 2022). Additionally, across the 2017 to 2022 timespan, countries were only surveyed once.

These surveys were conducted through face to face interviews, allowing for more personal and thoughtful answers to potentially sensitive matters such as religion, culture or ethnicity. The respondents' ages vary from 18 and above, and were selected according to random probability representative sampling (World Values Survey, 2020). This particular approach does differ from telephone or internet surveys with regards to efficiency, yet it ensures a more comforting environment for respondents to answer truthfully and accurately. Consequently, these high quality responses allow for strong internal validity. Moreover, the choice of wave 7 was primarily motivated through the attention paid to immigration, as some of the previous waves found their focus within other facets of public opinion. This particular wave of research also heavily emphasizes a broadened engagement with the entire international community. Which closely ties with the abovementioned gap found in the literature, by including a larger number of developing countries in the survey (WVS, 2022).

With that being said, the second Database used in the context of this research originates from the Global Terrorism Database. The GTD is an open-source database on terrorist activities across the globe, annually updated since 1970. This dataset is a foundational reference among terrorism academia due to its range of information, capturing domestic, transnational and international terror across more than 200,000 cases (GTD, 2022). Events are classified according to casualties, injuries and perpetrators, but also precise locations, types of attack and identifications of the target. Because of the reliability of this source and the wide range of data provided, this research extrapolated data from it and merged it with the World Values Survey.

## Conceptualization of the Dependent Variable

The previous theoretical discussion surrounding the relationship between terrorism and changes in attitudes towards immigration, has demonstrated that the perception of threat is precursor to alterations in public opinion (Huddy, 2005). This dynamic, as discussed in the previous theoretical discussion, finds its foundations within the economic and psychological frameworks of public opinion and attitude changes. In the case of terrorism these alterations often manifest themselves through the increased intolerance of out groups and consequently the deepening of in-group affiliations. Considering this intrinsic link between economic and symbolic threats this paper will rely on the assessment of support and opposition for immigration policies within the sampled countries. Our dependent variable measures the extent to which native populations' support government policies which facilitate immigration. The survey question is as follows: "How about people from other countries coming here to work. Which one of the following do you think the government should do?". The four available answers vary as follows: 1.- Let anyone come who wants to 2.- Let people come as long as there are jobs available 3.- Place strict limits on the number of foreigners who can come here 4.- Prohibit people coming here from other countries. Considering this coding from 1 to 4, our variable has been operationalized by aggregating the mean of all answers per country.

The idea to reduce this scaling from 1 to 4, to a range of 0 to 1 was taken into account during the data collection process however we contend that this operationalization allows for greater variation. Indeed, the mean attitudes towards immigration of all respondents are encoded, according to the country level analysis, so as to ease inter-state comparisons. This particular survey question is key for the research at hand. The phrasing of this question is clear and concise, highlighting the pertinent variables and offering simple choices as answers. This is particularly helpful considering the random selection of respondents, which could vary across different ages, education levels, or social backgrounds. Such simplicity enables all answers to be more accurate and precise. In light of translations, simple and effective wording is also key considering the variety of sampled countries and the potential dissonances between languages.

## Conceptualization of the Independent variable

For the conceptualization of terrorist attacks this paper relies on data collected from the Global Terrorism Database. The aim of this research is to gauge the different changes in attitudes towards immigration, by comparing countries with different levels of experienced terror. To do so, we rely on the variable “attacktype1”. This variable accounts for the general methods used to cause terror and the broad spectrum of tactics employed. It comprises the following nine distinct categories: 1. Assassination, 2. Hijacking, 3. Kidnapping, 4. Bombing/Explosion, 5. Armed Assault, 6. Unarmed Assault, 7. Barricade incident, 8. Facility/Infrastructure, 9. Attack Unknown (GTD, 2021). Considering the categorical nature of this variable, some recoding was needed. Within the Dataset each, each terror event is individually sorted by country and year, with over 200,000 cases. For the purposes of our paper, we disregard the attention to the type of attack, and only include it as part of the definition of an attack. Instead, we simply focus on the aggregate number of attacks per country within a given year. Where out of these 54 countries, we manually accounted for every single attack that occurred within the years 2017 and 2022 (wave 7).

Further trimming of data was necessary, once the sum of attacks were classified per year and country, however the sorting per year comes with an extra caveat. Indeed, when tracking the effect of terrorism on attitude changes, it is vital to set up a correct timeline in which the effects of a particular event can be captured once that event has passed. To depict this, not much information would be gathered surrounding this relationship if respondents were asked about the effects of terrorism before it even occurred. Conversely, research on the effects of terrorism would be void of meaning if individuals were surveyed many years after an attack. Certain sentiments and memories amongst affected individuals would be heavily watered down or even forgotten. In order to fix this timeline issue between the year of a survey and the year of an attack, this study relies on the computing of the ‘year’ variable, in the case of terror attacks. This entails that to merge datasets, values for both the ‘year’ and ‘country’ variables had to be identical. With that said, the final merged dataset is organized by country and year of each survey. For each country, the actual year of the survey is registered, yet each case matches the terror attacks of the preceding year (year-1). For instance, if we were to observe the average

mean of immigration attitudes in Brazil, the surveyed year would be 2018. In our data set, we would consequently find the number of terror attacks perpetrated in Brazil in 2018, which in this case is two attacks. Because of the recoding done prior to the merging of datasets, these two attacks registered for Brazil in 2018 actually occurred in 2017. This enables our dataset to work smoothly yet still account for the cause and effect timeline.

## Control variables

In order to test this hypothesis two models will be run. A first model will be run with the Dependent variable and the main Independent variable, and then a second model will be run including 3 control variables. It is important to include control variables so as to increase the internal validity of our study by avoiding confounding and research bias. The omittance of such variables decreases reliability due to alternative possible explanations for the causal relationship at hand (Bhandari, 2023). All of the pertinent variables have been extracted from the wave 7 dataset, published and gathered by the World Values Survey from external sources (WVS, 20203).

The first control variable, originally named ‘v2xpolyarchy’, has been sourced for the V-Dem database and measures the level of democracy for countries from 0 to 1. This variable is vital for the purposes of our research because depending on its variation, immigration attitudes could be restricted. Indeed, countries with a low democracy score may be under the regime of an autocrat or dictator, in which case public opinion as a whole would be heavily restricted, undermining the quality of our research. The second control variable originally named ‘HDI’ has been sourced from the United Nations Development Program data, and measures the key factors of human development. These could be summarized under the assumption of having a healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living. The final control variable ‘Education\_Level’ has also been sourced from the United Nations Development Program data, and measures the level of education per country from 0 to 1. These variables control important country level factors so as to further isolate the causal relationship between our two main variables.

## Analysis:

Our analysis rests upon the hypothesis that greater levels of terror are associated with increased opposition to immigration. In order to test this hypothesis we rely on a linear regression with the mean of attitudes towards immigration (dependent variable: `imm_preference_mean`) as the outcome variable. The main independent variable is the total number of terror attacks in a country and through a second model we include 3 control variables.

	Model 1	Model 2
(Constant)	2.545 (0.032)	2.336 (0.257)
Number of Attacks	0.000156 (0.000085)	0.000118 (0.000087)
Level of Democracy		-0.339* (0.163)
Human Development Index		1.217 (0.871)
Education Index		-0.741 (0.670)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.061	0.157
Adj.R <sup>2</sup>	0.043	0.086
N	54	54

*Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets.*

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

Table 1 offers results of two linear regression models. The first model regresses immigration attitudes on the number of attacks per year and per country. In this case, a positive coefficient for Number of attacks would be consistent with our hypothesis. We find a positive coefficient for the main independent variable, which indicates that for every 1 unit increase in terror attacks, mean immigration attitudes are expected to increase by 0.000156 scale points. This coefficient is particularly small considering the scaling of the independent variable, in which the number of attacks experienced by a country in a single year may vary from 0 to the maximum of 2457. Because of this particularity, using these coefficients to calculate predicted values for certain thresholds of attacks enables us to better comprehend the scaling of this relationship and its strength.

For instance we calculate the predicted score of certain attack values:

-Expected value of Y with 2 attacks:  $2.545 + 0.000156*2 = 2.545312$

-Expected value of Y with 50 attacks:  $2.545 + 0.000156*50 = 2.5528$

-Expected value of Y with 200 attacks:  $2.545 + 0.000156*200 = 2.5762$

-Expected value of Y with 2457 attacks:  $2.545 + 0.000156*2457 = 2.9283$

When looking at the results of these predictions it is clear to notice how little variation is found within this model. With regards to the standardized coefficient (Beta) we can observe that for each standard deviation increase in the number of terror attacks, our dependent variable is expected to increase by 0.247 standard deviations. Additionally, we find that the main independent variable in model 1 is not statistically significant using a 95% confidence interval, where our  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ . This is therefore not consistent with our hypothesis.

Model 2 consists of our Dependent variable, our main Independent variable and 3 additional control variables; Level of democracy, Human Development Index and Education Level. In this case, a positive coefficient for Number of attacks would be consistent with our hypothesis. The coefficient for the main independent variable is indeed positive yet remains particularly small, which could be interpreted as follows: for every 1 unit increase in terror attacks, immigration attitudes are expected to increase by 0.000118 scale points.

We also find that the variable 'Number of Attacks' is also not statistically insignificant using a 95% confidence interval, with our  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ . Looking at Table 1, we can conclude that both models are statistically insignificant and therefore the rejection of the null hypothesis is not possible. The unstandardized coefficients for all of the control variables are also statically insignificant using a 95% confidence interval, with our  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ .<sup>27</sup> In light of such results it is important to mention that insignificance does not contend that an effect cannot exist. Instead, it would infer that the data provided cannot prove an effect between increased terror and changes in immigration attitudes. Here, insignificance could either mean that our sample size is too small to be confident in, or that the random variation is too large to find a significant effect

## Conclusion:

To conclude this paper we review the motivations of this study, the logic underpinning the causal relationship at hand and the accompanying theories. We also extend these thoughts and discuss the possible limitations encountered with our paper and the broader implications we can draw from it. Terrorism has indeed been a salient subject within 21st century politics and academia, and its execution persists to this day on a global scale. In fact as this research is being conducted, massive terror events have been occurring within the Israeli-Palestinian region and have been plaguing an alarming number of African states (Herre et al, 2023). This type of violence has been increasingly associated with ethnic and religious groups who use said tactics in order to further some ideological beliefs. Because of this group level dynamic, and the violent nature of terrorism, intolerant and xenophobic sentiments begin to develop (Hetherington & Suhay, 2009). This links to the concept of immigration, which is by definition the movement of groups beyond their own borders (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

Indeed, global immigration has also heavily increased within the last decades and has been a priority on the agenda of most European states such as France, Italy, the United Kingdom 28 and the Netherlands. Interestingly, most of these agendas are not in the favor of increased immigration to their respective countries, and in some cases, these governments avidly oppose the idea of it. Following these conceptualizations we find that considerable evidence points to terrorism having an effect on changes in immigration attitudes. However, through reviewing the seminal research around this relationship, we seem to recurrently encounter a case selection bias. As previously discussed, the choice of cases is very restricted considering the abundance of terrorism in other parts of the world. The fear of terrorism may be heavy amongst citizens of Western countries, found predominantly in North America and Europe, however evidence does point to an underwhelming amount of danger in such regions, as opposed to areas like Africa or the Middle East. Due to this, we urge a less restricted case selection for future studies.

In light of this research gap, and following previously established theories, we examine whether persistent terror further increases intolerant attitudes towards immigration. We employ a linear regression with data collected from the Global Terrorism Database and the World Values Survey. Unfortunately, the results of our research seem inconclusive and lack statistical significance. Because of this we cannot reject the null hypothesis, and cannot make inferences about country level differences and the effects of potential control variables. With that said, our study is limited with regard to a time dimension. Indeed, per our conceptualization of the independent variable, terrorism is understood as potentially being persistent. If so, high quality research would require the examination of attitudes in multiple instances, following the multiple instances of terror. One singular survey within a 5 year period per country, out of a sample of 54, can only tell us so much. To remedy this, with the necessary resources, one could provide an increased amount of surveys within a shorter period of time. For 29 instance, surveys could be taken per trimester instead of annually. This could be done best through internet surveys however that would decrease the papers high internal validity.

Another limitation to this research is the lack of statistical significance found with regards to the main Independent variable and the control variables. When statistical significance is not achieved one of two things could be lacking. Either the sample size of the collected data is too small for a meaningful relationship. Or, one could attribute such results to a lack of a causal mechanism between our variables, however unlikely that may seem considering the reviewed literature. Although the research done so far has not managed to prove a causal mechanism between persistent terror and the increased intolerance of immigration, other academic papers seem to corroborate the proposed hypothesis. Because of this, and the group level dynamics highlighted within both terrorism and immigration attitudes, further research could be conducted towards uncovering how immigration attitudes vary across ethnicities. For instance, if one random group were to be responsible for a terror attack, and intolerance increased towards this group as a response, would this intolerance spillover onto other ethnic or religious groups. Finally, although the findings of this paper may not have been meaningful enough to draw interesting observations between our main independent variable and our dependent variable. This



paper does provide an complete overview of the main ideas surrounding this topic, including distinct theoretical perspectives and the presentation of the logic at stake.

## Appendix

Below, we can find the following syntax responsible for the linear regression and the presentation of the results.

### 1. Syntax

```
REGRESSION
  /descriptives Mean n
  /missing listwise
  /statistics coeff CI R ANOVA TOL CHANGE
  /dependent imm_preference_mean
  /method=enter number_of_attacks polyarchy_clean hdi_mean educationhdi_mean
  /partialplot number_of_attacks polyarchy_clean hdi_mean educationhdi_mean
  /scatterplot=(*ZRESID,*ZPRED)
  /residuals NORMPROB(zresid)
  /casewise PLOT(ZRESID) outlier(2)
  /save cooks DFBETA Zresid.
```

### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Immigration Means	54	2.08	2.91	2.5617	.23206
Number of attacks	54	0	2547	104.52	367.647
Level of Democracy	53	.17	.87	.5361	.24622
Human Development Index	54	.47	.94	.7589	.11506
Education index	54	.33	.95	.7025	.14393
Valid N (listwise)	53				

**Model Summary:**

Assumption Check for Durbin-Watson R<sup>2</sup> and Adj.R<sup>2</sup> for Table 1.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics		
						F Change	df1	df2
1	.396 <sup>a</sup>	.157	.086	.21989	.157	2.229	4	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Education index, Number of attacks , Level of Democracy, Human Development Index

b. Dependent Variable: Imm\_preference\_mean

**ANOVA:**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.431	4	.108	2.229	.080 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2.321	48	.048		
	Total	2.752	52			

a. Dependent Variable: Imm\_preference\_mean

b. Predictors: (Constant), Education index, Number of attacks , Level of Democracy, Human Development Index

**Coefficients:**

Assumption check for homoskedasticity with Tolerance < 1 and VIF.

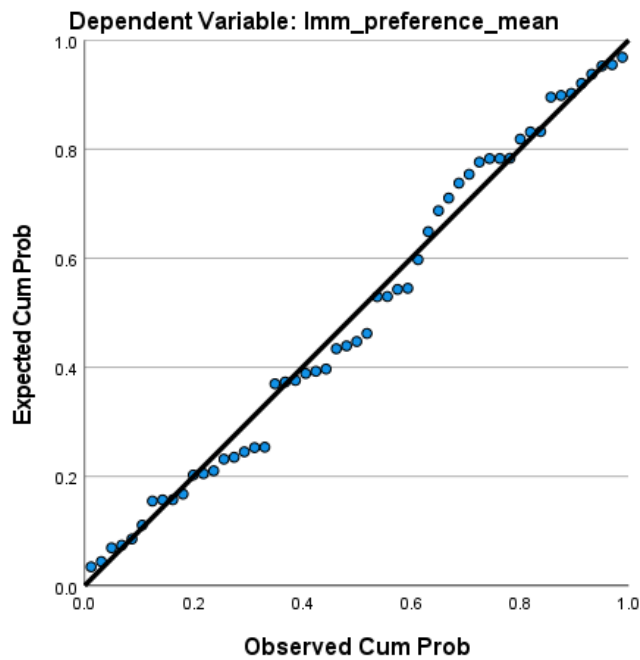
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.336	.257		9.078	.000	1.819	2.854		
	Number of attacks	.000	.000	.191	1.367	.178	.000	.000	.903	1.107
	Level of Democracy	-.339	.163	-.362	-2.083	.043	-.665	-.012	.581	1.722

Human Development Index	1.217	.871	.610	1.397	.169	-.534	2.968	.092	10.852
Education index	-.741	.670	-.468	-1.107	.274	-2.089	.606	.098	10.195

a. Dependent Variable: Imm\_preference\_mean

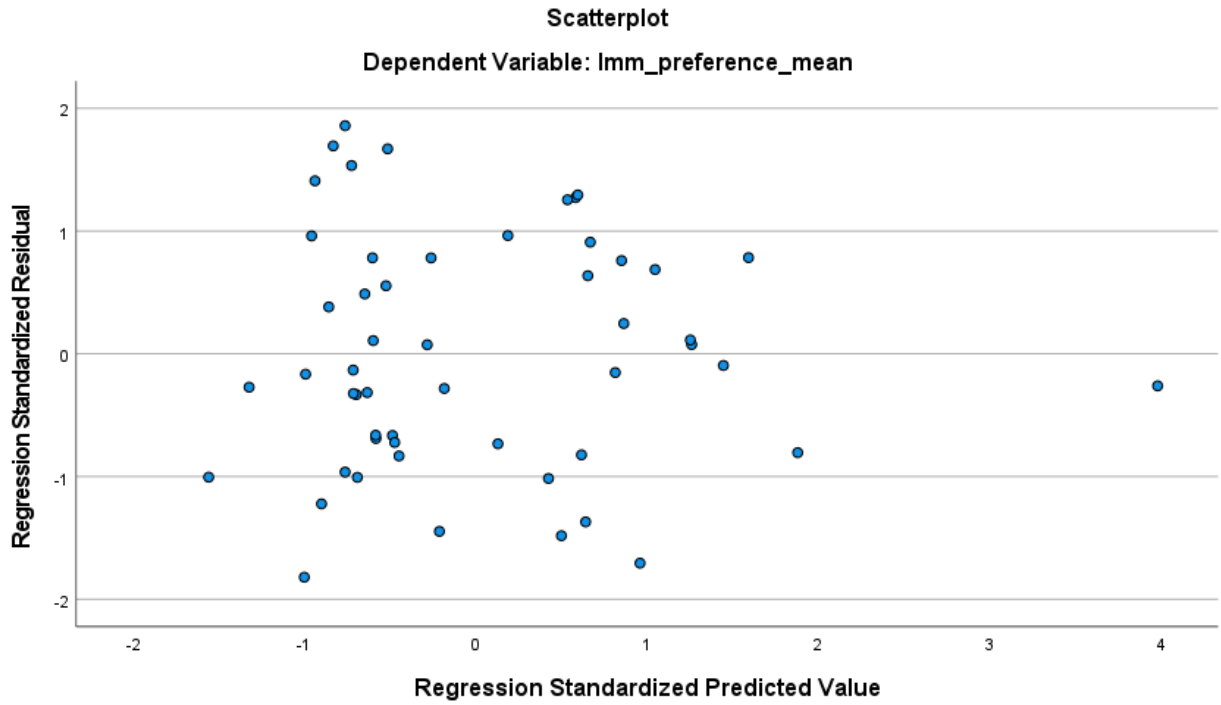
**Checking assumptions:**

**Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual**



For the normality of errors assumption, all cases should be accumulated along the tangent of a P-P

**Scatterplot:**



To check the assumption of Linearity and Homoskedasticity we should not observe a particular type of pattern within the data.

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