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At War's End: A Difference-in-Difference Model of Terrorism and the Transition Out of War

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At War's End: A Difference-in-Difference Model of Terrorism and the Transition Out of War

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Terrorism is one of the most devastating acts of political violence; yet social scientists are just beginning to understand terrorist groups in a systematic way. The focus of our research is the prevalence of terrorist acts during and after the conclusion of civil wars. In this project, we define terrorist groups as heterogeneous actors with heterogeneous goals. We explore the diverse ways that wars come to a close, and we analyze the impact of war resolution on terrorist activity. We employ a pooled, panel cross-section of data on more than 650 terrorist groups from 1970-2014. Using a difference-in-difference causal model, we explore the effects of war termination on the prevalence and lethality of terrorist attacks. Our research suggests that when conflicts end in a compromise or a rebel victory, terrorism among specific types of groups tends to increase. This finding is counter-intuitive in terms of what would be predicted solely in terms of terrorist group goals.