

# Regime Transitions, Democracy, and Terrorism in the Muslim World

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*In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Muslim world is continuously growing, in which Muslim's make up approximately 24% of the world's population. Additionally, the Muslim-majority countries, of which 50% or more of the population identify as Muslim, have lagged behind historically in democratizing. In many of these Muslim-majority countries, terrorism has an active presence and often times a destabilizing effect. In this study, I utilize the Global Terrorism Database, and other various data sources, to provide an empirical assessment of the political institutions of Muslim-majority countries, and their correlations to terrorism. I find that Muslim-majority countries in a state of failure are very likely to experience terrorist attacks. I also find that Muslim-majority democracies have no statistically significant correlation to experiencing terrorist attacks. Lastly, the findings on Muslim-majority anocracies in this study can help provide further information for future studies on the correlation between anocracy and terrorism.*

## **Introduction**

The Muslim world is comprised of countries who have historically lagged behind in the democratization process. A majority of these countries were a target of then-United States President George W. Bush's various democracy speeches following 9/11. Bush's speech outlined the need for more freedom in the Middle East with a stress on the need for democracy because "democracies do not support terrorists or threaten the world with weapons of mass murder" (Bush 2004, Hamid & Brooke 2010, 47, Haass 2003).

The Muslim world has been characterized by drastic regime changes and deadly episodes of terrorism, primarily Islamic terrorism. Regime change can be a good thing or a bad thing for a Muslim country. In the case of Sudan in 2021, the country witnessed a drastic regime change from an anocracy to an autocracy, which coincided with an event on February 3, 2022 when a prominent Al-Qaeda leader of the Guardians of Religion Organization (GRO) in Syria, announced that a new campaign of terrorism should begin in Sudan. Back on October 25, 2021, Sudan experienced a drastic halt in its democratization process when Sudan's military general, Abdel-Fattah Al-Burhan, removed Sudan's Prime Minister, Abdallah Hamdok, from power. Al-Burhan assumed the position as the country's only leader with no future plans to allow for a new civilian-led coalition to take power again.

The GRO leader, Abu Hudhaifa Al-Sudani, called on all his supporters to begin establishing terrorist cells and logistical points outside of Sudan's capital, Khartoum, to begin forming a solid military base to support their operations. Al-Sudani explained the current fragility and security instability Sudan is experiencing is the best time to carry out terrorist attacks. Al-Sudani explained supporters must attack Sudan's intelligence service, anti-terrorism department, and many economic institutions that support Al-Burhan's military (Alsudani 2022).

This leaves the question – how does the level of Polity affect levels of terrorism in Muslim-majority countries?

The recent event in Sudan is one of many examples that have occurred throughout history as Muslim-majority states experience drastic regime changes via coup d'états and other violent political events. States who see these drastic shifts in their governments, as seen in the Arab Spring, are often times expected to see large occurrences of popular unrest to protest or support such changes. Democracy, autocracy, and other forms of governance have existed for centuries. In recent times, the correlations between terrorism and these different regime types have become frequently studied by scholars, especially following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States of America. Scholars have published countless studies analyzing specific countries or large groupings of countries throughout the world during different periods of time. However, there is a seeming lack of studies focusing on the Muslim-majority world, the regimes in these countries, and the correlations to terrorism.

Within this study, anocracies, often referred to as hybrid regimes, stand out as being the most attractive regime type for terrorism to occur in these countries. Muslim-majority democracies and autocracies have no correlations to terrorism activity in these countries, which goes against some of the most popular literature regarding these correlations. Lastly, state failure in the Muslim-majority world has the strongest positive correlations to experiencing terrorist attacks in a given country year.

## **Literature Review**

Below, I will highlight literature surrounding terrorism and regime change and types. First, I will discuss literature that centers around regime and Polity change and its relationship to terrorism. Second, I will cover studies on state failure and terrorism that will help set up a

discussion of the literature on democracy, autocracy, and anocracy regimes. Throughout this review, examples of Muslim-majority countries are provided to help provide better context for the literature and points mentioned.

The Arab Spring is one of the most well-known regime change events to have occurred in the Middle East and North Africa in the twenty-first century. But before discussing this event, a study conducted by Park and Bali (2017), utilizing leadership survival between 1968 and 2004, found that transnational terrorism within an autocratic state is likely to cause an autocratic leader to lose power. On the other hand though, terrorism does not have a significant effect on democratic leaders leaving or entering their political positions. (Park & Bali 2017, 1362). Overall, these scholars conclude that the level of civil liberties and political rights a population has helps mitigate the effects terrorism has on the leadership of that country (Park & Bali 2017, 1362). Another study conducted by Kim and Sandler (2020) assessed the Arab Spring. These scholars concluded that regime change in these countries saw domestic and transnational terrorism increased by 2358.2% and 138.9% respectively (Kim & Sandler 2020).

Extending off the Arab Spring, a study by Byman (2013) points out in his study on regime change in the Middle East and North Africa that such regimes may have experienced change in leadership, but their institutional structures still remained the same.<sup>1</sup> Thus, although leaders changed, the nature of their Polity scores may have shifted a point or two, or not at all. Many regimes in the Arab world during the Arab Spring were able to retain power by either cracking down on protests, or remaining stable during heavy protest periods.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note, that some regimes prior to the Arab Spring, such as Tunisia, had regimes who suppressed Islam, thus, following the Arab Spring, Islamists saw a revival into the political scene (Byman

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Egypt, Libya, and Yemen (Byman 2013, 27-28).

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Algeria, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates (Byman 2013, 28).

2013, 28-30). In the case of Morocco, the regime remained in power, but it underwent major reforms to give more rights to its population (Byman 2013, 29). Regime changes can often leave a country's institutions in a state of disarray while new regimes attempt to establish a new base. This can often times put a country in a fragile and vulnerable position for some time, especially if their institutions are already not well established and developed.

Following the events that unfolded on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, a national security document was released from the United States regarding failed states. The documents discussed how failed states have become safe havens for terrorism around the world (National Security Council 2006, 15). Then Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice further supported this document by highlighting that weak and failing states are more dangerous than that of strong and aggressive states (Rice 2006). In the post-9/11, global terrorism, whether domestic, international, or transnational, has seen a significant rise.

Failed or failing states often lack the ability to support their populations and control their territories. Many studies conducted on failed or failing states have identified these states lack administrative capacity. Administrative capacity of a government is the ability to provide basic services to a population, such as security, economic opportunities, and well-functioning bureaucratic and judicial institutions (Hehir 2007, Ghatak & Gold 2017). Furthermore, Robert Rotberg (2002) explains these states lack political goods which he explains as a government who engages in kleptocracy at the expense of their populations (Rotberg 2002). These characteristics of failed and failing states often have a breakdown of law enforcement bodies, allowing for

criminal and terrorist groups to form or thrive in. These areas are often called “stateless areas” (Takeyh & Gvosdev 2002).<sup>3</sup>

Many studies have analyzed the relationship between state failure and terrorism both quantitatively and qualitatively. A study conducted by James Piazza (2008) looked at 197 countries between 1973 and 2003. Piazza concluded that chronic state failure is much more likely to have terrorist attacks committed by transnational groups. Also, Piazza found that chronic failed states are more likely to have their own citizens take up transnational terrorism and become victims of such attacks. One of the main limitations to Piazza’s study is in his sample space, which covers only 30-years of global terrorism. During the 1970s and 1980s, many current day terrorism groups were still forming (Ranstorp 1996, 44), and the fight against the Soviet Union was taking place for 10-years as well. My study covers 48-years, which captures higher amounts of global terrorist attacks per year, as seen during the peak years of the Islamic State, and a changing state failure environment.

However, two scholars disagree with Piazza’s findings. Ken Menkhaus (2003) and von Hippel (2002) explain that failed states are undesirable environments for terrorist groups to base their operations for four reasons: a weaken of a state’s sovereignty, lack of foreigners, distractions from local politics, and lack of centralized governments. The weakening of a failed or failing state’s sovereignty often allows for foreign intervention to occur.<sup>4</sup> Second, the lack of foreigners from other countries makes it harder for international and transnational terrorists to blend in. Third, local issues within a state can often distract terrorist groups from their own agendas. Lastly, the lack of centralized governments leaves no clear targets for terrorist groups

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<sup>3</sup> See definition of stateless area in Piazza (2008, 471):  
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/29734247.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A235922e194bf61016c795455c4348333&ab\\_segments=&origin=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/29734247.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A235922e194bf61016c795455c4348333&ab_segments=&origin=&acceptTC=1)

<sup>4</sup> E.g. United States in Afghanistan following 9/11.

(Menkhaus 2003, von Hippel 2002, Piazza 2008, George 2018). A lack of a centralized government may pose a concern for terrorist groups to carry out their objectives, but certain regime types can often present these challenges as well.

Countless scholars have studied the relationship between democracy and terrorism for decades. Many scholars tend to come to two conclusion, either democracy deters the activity of terrorism, or democracy allows for greater terrorism activity to occur (Schmid 1992, Eubank & Weinberg 1998, 2001, 2007). Nilay Saiya (2015) concluded in here study that democracy is a “superior counter-terrorist” (Saiya 2015). She concludes in her study that populations who are able to vote for leaders who will represent them and have the freedom to pursue their political ambitions and express their grievances are unlikely to resort to terrorist activity to do so (Saiya 2015, Shahrouri 2010). Erica Chenoweth (2013) also concluded that democracies have commitments toward respecting the human and civil rights of their populations. Chenoweth points out further that advanced and established democracy have less rates of terrorism than partial democracy (also known as anocracies) (Chenoweth 2013).

Aksoy et. al. (2012) is another scholar who concluded in his study that democracy deters terrorism. He concludes that countries who can maintain proportional representation in their systems, with low electoral thresholds, are better capable of maintaining political order (Aksoy et. al. 2012, Eyerman 1998). Other scholas have supported Aksoy et. al’s (2012) findings, by finding that countries with unproportional representation and high electoral thresholds are likely to experience more terrorism (Brooks 2009, Li 2005). The inclusion of this element of democracies is important because many Muslim-majority countries are multi-ethnic and heavily tribalized and contain multiple clans.<sup>5</sup> Within some of these Muslim-majority countries, this

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<sup>5</sup> E.g. Afghanistan, Somalia, and Yemen.

multi-ethnic characteristic has often resulted in extreme violence to erupt over a lack of inclusion of specific groups in the state's central government (Kruger & Maleckova 2003).

However, some scholars have highlighted that democracies are often cheaper and easier for terrorists to operate in, due to the freedom to associate and express oneself. Also, democracies are often more restricted in their legal abilities to react to terrorism. Thus, democracies who overreact or underreact to terrorism, may experience an upset population (Abrahams 2007, Piazza & Walsh 2010). However, Chenoweth has expressed that although this is true linearly, nonlinearly, partial democracies, over advanced democracies, will still experience more terrorism (Chenoweth 2013, Donohue 2001, Epifanio 2011). Young & Dugan (2011) have further contributed that democracies are constructed with checks and balances that make it difficult to get legislation passed in a timely manner. Thus, this can often create frustration among minority groups who seek such legislation to better their way life, leading to a possible use of terrorism to express such grievances (Young & Dugan 2011, Li 2005). This scenario may deem true for democracies, but this can also occur in other regime types too.

The regime types of autocracy and anocracy should not go unnoticed. Autocratic regimes are often characterized by restricting freedoms for their populations. Anocracy regimes are often characterized by sharing elements of democracy and autocracy. Autocratic regimes often have strong control over their judiciary institutions. Populations rely heavily on such institutions to resolve their issues. However, with a lack of independence of these judiciaries, many civilians may seek terrorism as an alternative way to resolve their issues (Davenport 1996, Findley & Young & Dugan 2011, 264). Another component to autocracies and terrorism centers around the restricted nature and control over the media. In autocracies, the regime is able to restrict what information gets out and can often not report terrorist attacks (Sandler 1995, Drakos & Gofas

2006, Nemeth & Mauslein 2019). Furthermore, terrorists often resort to deadly measures to ensure they are seen and heard in autocratic states who restrict media (Y. Yang et. al. 2022, 8). Lastly, Although the Muslim world has its fair share of autocratic regimes, some of these regimes are often viewed as benevolent.<sup>6</sup> Some of the autocratic regimes are able to mitigate terrorism by providing services to all groups, whether majority or minority (Wright 2008, Katzman 2001, 3, Alexander & Gueraiche 2022, 5).

However, it is important to note that a study by Conrad et. al. (2014) explains that some autocratic regimes experience more terrorism than other autocratic regimes. These scholars explain there are variations in autocratic regimes, with this variation often dictating the levels of terrorism they may experience (Conrad et. al 2014, 547). Saiya's (2015) study took the terrorism and regime type analysis a step further by isolating religious terrorism from the "general" terrorism studies, which tend to group non-and-religious types of terrorism together, skewing results often times. She concluded that autocracies are often times more likely to produce religious terrorism, due to the lack of religious freedom (Saiya 2015). Furthermore, she found that 74% of religious attacks took place in autocratic countries, while 23% and 3% of religious attacks took place in anocracies and democracies respectfully (Saiya 2015).

Research on anocracies and the relationship to terrorism is continuing to grow. Anocracies can be classified as regimes 'struck' between developing into a full democracy or a full autocracy. These regime types are characterized by poorly developed institutions and governments who are often disorganized and lacking abilities to counter terrorism (Gaibullov & Sandler 2022, 19). Piazza (2013) also conducted a study focusing on regime age, which concluded that new democracies, especially those that transitioned from autocracies, are often

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<sup>6</sup> E.g. Oman, United Arab Emirates, and Jordan.

attractive ground for terrorism (Piazza 2013). New democracies are often still grasping the development of their institutions both politically and economically. Anocracies have also been found to have the highest rate and deadliest terrorist attacks out of the three regime types (Y. Yang et. al 2022, 10, Abadie 2006, Chenoweth 2013, Gaibullov, Piazza & Sandler 2017, LaFree & Dugan 2009, 70).

## **Theory**

The Muslim world has been historically characterized by significant periods of political instability and state failure. On top of this, the significant increase in religious terrorism, among non-religious terrorism, since the 1990s has also drawn great attention to this region of the world. Many scholars have hypothesized about democracy, autocracy, anocracy, state failure, and terrorism within specific Muslim countries, but have yet to utilize the Muslim-majority world as their sample space. I expect to discover that the level of terrorism within these countries will be greater among the factors I will hypothesize for. The radical political nature and agenda of a majority of the terrorist groups in this study further contributes to the development of the four hypotheses below.

Polity scores are important because they help establish a baseline for measuring regime authority within a country (Center for Systemic Peace). Thus, these scores help distinguish a specific country's regime type. There are three different regime types that Polity scores cover: democracies, autocracies, or anocracies (also referred to as hybrid regimes). Polity scores also focus specifically on political behaviors of countries, leaving out external factors such as economic matters when scoring a country (Marshall & Gurr 2020). This is important because many terrorist organizations are characterized with political agendas against political actors in a state, which in this case is a central governmental regime. Governments who experience minor

Polity change, by a point or two each year, are often due to increasing freedoms in areas such as the press and or free speech, or adding restrictions to freedoms of press or free speech, for example. Also, a Polity score shift can also occur due to regime change. Minor changes can often upset populations, but are not often going to cause popular unrest in any significant manner that could result in major internal conflict or civil war. However, a drastic shift in a country's Polity score could cause major upset among a population. In Muslim-majority countries, this could significantly threaten the value of religion to these populations, leaving terrorism as the only option to express these disagreements. Examples of this have been seen in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and Libya in the past (Akyol 2020). For these reasons, I hypothesize two things:

**Hypothesis 1:** *If a Muslim-majority country experiences a regime change, then it will result in a higher risk of terrorism.*

**Hypothesis 2:** *If there is any change in a Muslim-majority country's Polity score, then it will result in a higher risk of terrorism.*

As discussed above, many Muslim-majority countries have experienced or are experiencing some sort of state failure. In a state of failure, political, economic, and security structures often times breakdown, leaving populations highly vulnerable to things like starvation and violence. When a government is unable to provide for its people, humanitarian crises begin to develop, and grievances can begin to develop against such governments. The lack of strong and legitimate security institutions in failed or failing states can lead to easier occupation of territory areas by non-state actors for their operations. A lack of policing efforts by a centralized government leaves these areas highly susceptible to illegal activities, such as terrorism. Without interference from a central government, terrorist organizations are at lower risks of counterterrorism operations, leaving them ample amounts of time to recruit, plot, and carry out

more organized attacks against vulnerable populations and individuals involved in the government. Furthermore, in these stateless areas, as explained above, non-state actors are often able to provide basic human needs (food, security, economic opportunities, etc.). Arguably citizens aiming to survive may shift their loyalties towards these groups who are providing such services to support themselves and their families. For these reasons, I hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 3:** *If a Muslim-majority country is a failed state, then it will have a higher risk of terrorism.*

Citizens living in democratic societies are often afforded some of the freest human rights, especially in the realms of privacy, freedom of religion, and freedom to associate with whomever they please. As discussed in the literature review, these conditions have been argued to afford terrorists greater freedom to conduct attacks and recruit. However, what is often overlooked in literature is the strong dislike of the progressiveness democracies are characterized with. An example of this dislike can be seen in a 1998 Al-Qaeda fatwa called, *Advice to the Community to Reject the Fatwa of Sheikh Bin Baz Authorizing Parliamentary Representation*. This fatwa was written under the supervision of Ayman al-Zawahiri, the then-Al-Qaeda leader recently killed in Afghanistan. In this fatwa, Al-Qaeda criticizes the foundations and implementations of democracy around the world. The group claims democracy takes away God's rights and attributes by allowing people to be their own 'gods' because they can choose their legislation, rules, and principles. Additionally, Al-Qaeda views democracy as a "new religion," which is haram (*forbidden*) under Al-Qaeda to adhere to multiple religions. Lastly, Al-Qaeda believes any Western or Muslim leaders who apply democracy to their states are corrupt and unbelievers. Overall, Al-Qaeda's goal, along with many other religious terrorist groups, is to 'free' the world

of democracy, its principles, and other Western ideals (Kepel & Milelli 2008). This reasons lead me to hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 4:** *If a Muslim-majority country is a democracy, then it will have a higher risk of terrorism.*

## **Data and Measurements**

I utilized various datasets to test the four hypotheses outlined above. I utilized the Global Terrorism Database, out of the University of Maryland, to provide all information surrounding terrorist attacks from 1970 until 2018. The Global Terrorism Database has tracked over 200,000 worldwide terrorist attacks since its creation in 1970 (GTD). It tracks all countries, however for this study, I selected only Muslim-majority countries. The classification of a Muslim-majority state for this study comes out of the World Population Review. The Review identifies Muslim-majority states as “one in which more than 50% of the people are Muslim (World Population Review). The selection of Muslim-majority countries for this study centers around the United States, and other Western states, push post-9/11 for the democratization of the Muslim world. President George W. Bush expressed in a 2002 speech that freedom should be available to all populations, especially those in the Islamic world (Haass 2003). Although many studies have cited that Muslims may seek such freedoms, not all Muslims view democracy and such freedoms in the same light (Pew Research Center 2012; Haass 2003).

The United Nation’s compiles dozens of datasets every year looking at different economic, political, and other various aspects of countries. The United Nation’s population and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) datasets were the most useful for two of the control variables, which focused on population and GDP per capita. The GDP dataset was used in conjunction with the population dataset to calculate year-by-year GDP per capita within each of the 48 Muslim-

majority countries in this study. Although GDP per capita wasn't hypothesized for, the inclusion of it as a control variable was important as some prior studies on GDP per capita and terrorism have indicated economic development levels can have an impact on terrorism levels in a country (Korotayev, Vaskin & Tsirel 2021; Bloomberg et. al 2004; Testas 2004).

The last two datasets I utilized were the Uppsala Conflict Data Program and the Center for Systemic Peace's Polity5 Annual Time-Series dataset. A democracy was considered when Polity score is 6 and above, an anocracy was considered when Polity score is between 5 and -5, and an autocracy was considered when a Polity score is -6 and below (The Sustainable Competitiveness Observatory). The Uppsala Conflict Data Program provided information on whether a Muslim-majority country was in a civil war during a specific time frame between 1970 and 2018. The selection of a civil war variable comes from multiple studies which conclude that civil war, and other types of conflicts, are attractive grounds for increased terrorism activity (Kalyvas 2003; Findley & Young 2013; Stanton 2013). On top of this, the study accounts for state failure, which is indicated by a -66, -77, or -88 (Iqbal & Starr 2016), depending on the level of state failure one of these countries was in. The civil war and state failure variables were coded in a binary fashion; thus, the three different classifications of state failure were not individually accounted for and represented in this data. So, state failure was given a 1 if any level of state failure was present, and a 0 if no state failure was present. See **Table 1** for a summary of all variables relevant to this study.

Variable Summary*				
<i>Table 1</i>				
	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>
Polity Change	-15.000	13.000	0.092	0.000
Regime Change	0.000	1.000	0.048	0.000
Democracy	0.000	1.000	0.109	0.000
Dictatorship	0.000	1,000	0.414	0.000
Anocracy	0.000	1.000	0.259	0.000
Civil War	0.000	1.000	0.223	0.000
State Failure	0.000	1.000	0.633	0.000
Population	2.061	5.414	3.893	3.891
GDP Per Capita	2.519	5.194	3.658	3.656
Attacks	0.00	2525.00	23.02	0.00
<i>*All variables lagged by one year</i>				

## Analysis

The results in **Table 2** are calculated using an ordinary least-squares regression of the occurrence of terrorist attacks on various different variables related to Polity in each country-year from 1970 until 2018 (with no terrorist attacks utilized as the reference category). All variables utilized in the five figures below are lagged for one year because a prior year's events are often good indicators of what the following year is likely to experience (Institute of Business Forecasting and Planning 2022). Hypothesis 3 was supported, while hypotheses 1, 2, and 4 were not supported. However, testing hypothesis 4 had an unexpected outcome that will be discussed in more detail below. Terrorist attacks are not likely in Muslim-majority countries who experience regime changes, or changes in their Polity scores. Terrorist attacks are more likely to occur in Muslim-majority failed anocracies and democracies, but not failed autocracies.

However, terrorist attacks are not likely in Muslim-majority democracies who are not in a failed state.

The majority of the findings in this study were unexpected. However, this does not mean specific Muslim countries do not experience terrorism when a Polity change and or regime change occurs, for example. In some specific countries in this study, it was common during lengths of time between 1970 and 2018 where terrorism increased due to Polity change and or regime change. The Soviet Afghan War, the decolonization of Africa, the Afghan Civil War, and the Iraq War in 2003 all serve as examples of when Polity changes and/or regime change saw

Terrorist Attacks (1970 – 2018)

*Table 2*

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Polity Change	<b>-5.712 (5.105)</b>			
Regime Change		<b>-9.127* (5.058)</b>	-7.411 (5.195)	-7.154 (5.104)
Democracy		<b>-8.911*** (3.715)</b>	0.109 (0.688)	<b>-14.273*** (4.004)</b>
Anocracy		<b>4.497* (2.695)</b>	<b>9.465*** (2.853)</b>	
Dictatorship				<b>-8.185*** (2.932)</b>
Civil War	3.360 (3.123)	4.602 (2.962)	3.817 (3.193)	4.051 (3.114)
Failed State	3.282 (6.780)	<b>14.310*** (4.717)</b>	-1.201 (7.184)	-1.926 (6.929)
Population	2.418 (2.042)	3.285* (1.816)	2.454 (2.060)	2.808 (2.021)
GDP Per Capita	0.564 (2.506)	0.365 (2.313)	1.973 (2.559)	1.595 (2.519)
Attacks	0.935*** (0.009)	0.954*** (0.008)	0.931*** (0.009)	0.936*** (0.009)
Constant	-9.392 (12.228)	-13.306 (11.663)	-18.179 (12.750)	-8.876 (12.183)
Observations	1,796	2,138	1,749	1,796
<i>Note: p&lt;0.1*; p&lt;0.05**; p&lt;0.01***</i>				

increased levels of terrorism. The unexpected results uncovered in this analysis should not serve to invalidate this study, but instead provide opportunities for further analysis into the occurrences of terrorism, in relation to state failure and Polity change, in the Muslim-majority world.

**Table 2** does not support hypotheses 1 and 2, as Polity and regime change have no statistically significant correlation to terrorist attacks occurring in a Muslim-majority country. The other variables in the figure also present similar results. Civil war, state failure, population, and GDP per capita have no correlation to the occurrence of terrorist attacks in Muslim-majority

countries either. The inclusion of civil war in this figure correlates to popular literature on civil war and terrorism, which concludes civil wars often times are more attractive grounds for terrorist attacks to occur. Furthermore, civil wars can result in Polity and or regime changes in a country (Kalyvas 2003; Findley & Young 2013; Stanton 2013). Thus, it is unlikely that a Muslim-majority country that experiences a Polity and/or regime change will have a lower probability of experiencing terrorist attacks.

The results in **Table 2** support hypothesis 3. State failure in Muslim-majority countries has a statistically significant strong positive correlation to terrorist attacks. Countries like Somalia, Afghanistan, and Syria, for example, all support these findings. These states have been chronic examples of state failure and have seen significant amount of terrorist attacks occur each year. Furthermore, in the case of Afghanistan, the country was also characterized as an anocracy during a majority of the United States war in Afghanistan.

Although not hypothesized for, **Table 2** also portrays findings on Muslim-majority anocracies. Anocracies have been a growing area of study for multiple scholars, however its correlations to terrorism specifically are few. Anocracies present a mixture of characteristics of democracy and autocracy. The mixture of such characteristics often presents great difficulties for these regimes as they attempt to establish and organize their state institutions (Epstein et. al. 2006; Fearon and Laitin, 2003:81; Marshall & Gurr 2003). When tested without democracy and autocracy, Muslim-majority anocracies are shown to be very likely to experience an increase in terrorist attacks in a given country year.

Lastly, the results in **Table 2** results do not support hypothesis 4. Muslim-majority democracies are not likely to experience terrorist attacks. These findings go against some popular literature on democracies and terrorism. Multiple studies have cited democracies are often more

likely to experience greater rates of terrorism due to their free nature and constrained executive structures (Chenoweth 2013; Donohue 2001; Epifanio 2011; Eubank & Weinberg 2007). Within this study, 77 percent of Muslim-majority countries were non-democratic, with the other 23 percent being mostly democratic between 1970 and 2018. Autocracy was not hypothesized for, like anocracy, however the results support literature that look at the correlation between autocracy and terrorism, which finds negative correlations between the two (Piazza & Wilson 2013; Ramakrishna 2018).

## **Conclusion**

In this study, I have explored the relationship between governance and terrorism in the Muslim-majority world. I have identified various political institutions and state characteristics that have historically been prominent, such as autocracy and state failure, in the Muslim world. Based on these findings, I conclude three things. First, Muslim-majority states that experience Polity or regime change are unlikely to experience terrorist attacks. Second, Muslim-majority democracies are unlikely to experience terrorist attacks than Muslim-majority anocracies. Lastly, Muslim-majority countries in a state of failure, are highly likely to experience a high level of terrorist attacks.

Autocratic and anocratic states, which were not hypothesized for, provided profound results. First, Muslim-majority anocracies are very likely to experience an increase in terrorist attacks. These results could contribute to the growing research on anocratic states and their likelihoods of experiencing terrorist attacks. Second, when assessing autocratic states there appeared to be no correlations to terrorist attacks. These results do support other various studies that conclude autocratic states are often less likely to see great levels of terrorism, unlike democracies. It is important to note that the majority of the states in this study were non-

democracies throughout most of or the entire time frame from 1970 to 2018. Thus, the representation of democracy is little in this study. Overall, the levels of terrorism in a given Muslim-majority country do vary depending on the country's political institution.

The Muslim world will continue to remain a research area of focus for decades to come, and this study is only one of many. However, this study contributes an empirical analysis of the Muslim-majority world, which has yet to be done. Although this study covers a wide array of concepts that have been tested, there could be a few alternatives for future research. First, one could cut down the timeframe of the study by 20 years, starting in 1990, and looking through 2018. This would eliminate 20 years of relatively little terrorist activity in a majority of the countries in this study. 1990 is arguably the decade when Islamic terrorism began to grow significantly. Second, cutting down the sample space to a handful of countries is another option. Such countries that could be analyzed are African nations only, Middle Eastern nations only, or specific countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, etc. Lastly, one could center the study around Islamic terrorism only. I accounted for all types of terrorism, both Islamic and non-Islamic for this study. One could also look at a particular terrorist group such as Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or ISIS during specific periods of time. There are multiple avenues for this research to go in, however the results provided here can act as a base for future studies to build on.

The Muslim world will continue to experience great deals of terrorism for the foreseeable future. Although many Western countries, such as the United States, have lessened their presences in the region over the last few years, with Afghanistan being a notable example, Muslim dissent towards the West is still prevalent. The results in this study have found that anocracies are attractive grounds for terrorism to thrive. Autocratic Muslim countries, who aim to democratize, often times pass through this anocratic stage, as new institutions are developed,

old institutions modernized, and a new constitution undergoing the process of rewrite and vote by the new government. Foreign intervention to assist countries in this democratization process has had mixed results. As seen in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq, US intervention resulted in significant spikes of terrorism activities for the anocratic governments in these countries.

However, international organizations, such as the United Nations, have found minor successes in countries like Sierra Leone and Somalia, with significantly less terrorism being seen. Muslim-majority countries who seemingly get stuck in this anocratic stage should seek assistance from international organizations, such as the UN, to avoid creating further dissent among Muslims.

Although the UN is a Western created body, its mission of global inclusivity sees both Western and Eastern nations participating in missions throughout the globe under the UN moniker.

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