

# Military Alliances and Terrorism

Leo Tamamizu\*

## Abstract

This article examines whether and how military alliance commitments shape terrorism within member states. Moving beyond binary alliance membership, it disaggregates alliance obligations into defense, neutrality, nonaggression, and consultation pacts and theorizes why their effects should differ across domestic and transnational terrorism. Using a state-year dataset that merges ATOP (1970–2007) with the calibrated GTD-based measures that distinguish domestic from transnational incidents, I estimate negative binomial models and conduct causal mediation analyses with military personnel, military spending, and police militarization as potential channels. The results show little evidence that defense pacts affect transnational terrorism, directly or indirectly. By contrast, once mediators are accounted for, defense pacts are associated with a substantively meaningful reduction in domestic terrorism, driven primarily by direct (non-mediated) pathways. These results highlight the need to tailor alliance-based counterterrorism strategies to the type of terrorist threat.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The War on Terror is still ongoing. The 9/11 attacks triggered a surge of worldwide panic and xenophobia and prompted Washington and its allies to perceive threats as emanating not only from sovereign states but also from nonstate actors. On the one hand, this transformation in threat perceptions among the United States and its allies led to a shift in the role of long-standing alliances—such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and bilateral alliances in Asia—from instruments primarily designed for interstate deterrence toward broader functions oriented around counterterrorism and expeditionary operations. On the other hand, this expanded role generated concerns among citizens and policy elites in the United States and its allies that deeper alliance involvement in counterterrorism campaigns could increase their exposure to terrorist retaliation.<sup>2</sup> Against this backdrop, this article investigates whether membership of a military alliance causes terrorist attacks against allied states and if so, why.

Although the literature on terrorism expanded rapidly after the September 11, 2001 attacks, relatively fewer studies have examined the consequences of alliance formation/maintenance on

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\* Research Fellow, Japan Institute of International Affairs and Ph.D. candidate of Graduate Center, City University of New York.

<sup>1</sup> This article draws on a portion of my doctoral dissertation submitted to the Graduate Center, City University of New York. Please email [tamamizu@jia.or.jp](mailto:tamamizu@jia.or.jp) if you are interested in further analyses and the replication data.

<sup>2</sup> John E. Mueller, *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

terrorism.<sup>3</sup> Thomas Plümper and Eric Neumayer provide a pioneering empirical analysis of how military alliances shape transnational terrorism. Their analysis shows that when the host state of a terrorist organization enters an alliance with another state, the number of terrorist attacks against civilians of the allied state increases—especially when the alliance involves a significant power asymmetry.<sup>4</sup> David Cunningham also provides an empirical finding that US military bases and alliances tend to increase terrorist attacks in allied states hosting US bases.<sup>5</sup> These findings indicate that alliances can unintentionally generate negative security externalities among member states.

However, these studies have two drawbacks. First, although they suggest that alliance commitments may sometimes generate deterrent effects against terrorism—or, at minimum, that certain types of commitments should not increase terrorist violence—they do not systematically conceptualize or theorize the heterogeneous effects of *alliance obligations*. As a result, alliances are typically treated as undifferentiated institutional arrangements rather than as bundles of distinct commitments that may shape terrorist incentives in qualitatively different ways. Second, this theoretical under-specification carries over into empirical research designs. Most existing studies rely on a binary indicator of alliance membership, thereby obscuring potentially important variation across alliance types and obligation structures. Consequently, both theoretically and empirically, the literature has yet to capture the full diversity of ways in which military alliances may influence terrorism.

### The Effects of Military Alliances on Terrorism

Military alliances are considered a signaling device for a state to send to the source of threat its firm resolve to address military contingencies with allies (Walt 1987; Snyder 1997).<sup>6</sup> Forming and maintaining alliances is costly for the state because doing so forces the state to lose diplomatic and military flexibility, increase economic dependency on allies, and face alliance dilemma—entrapment and abandonment.<sup>7</sup> Because of these risks, however, alliances should not be formed lightly. Rather, states are expected to enter and sustain alliance commitments only when the anticipated security benefits outweigh the substantial political, military, and economic costs associated with alliance membership. Precisely because alliances entail credible costs and constrain future policy autonomy, they function as a powerful signaling device, conveying a state's

<sup>3</sup> Alberto Abadie, "Poverty, Political Freedom, and the Roots of Terrorism," *American Economic Review*, vol. 96, no. 2, 2006, pp. 50–56; Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Erica Chenoweth, "Democratic Competition and Terrorist Activity," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 72, no. 1, 2010, pp. 16–30; James A. Piazza, "Rooted in Poverty? Terrorism, Poor Economic Development, and Social Cleavages," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2006, pp. 159–177; James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, no. 1, 2003, pp. 75–90; Khusrav Gaibulloev, James A. Piazza, and Todd Sandler, "Regime Types and Terrorism," *International Organization*, vol. 71, no. 3, 2017, pp. 491–522; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 4th ed. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016); Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (New York: John Wiley, 1986); Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Plümper and Eric Neumayer, "The Friend of My Enemy Is My Enemy: International Alliances and International Terrorism," *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2010, pp. 75–96.

<sup>5</sup> David E. Cunningham, "Preventing Civil War: How the Potential for International Intervention Can Deter Conflict Onset," *World Politics*, vol. 68, no. 2, 2016, pp. 307–340.

<sup>6</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> James D. Morrow, "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 3, 2000, pp. 63–83.

resolve and commitment not only to adversaries but also to domestic and international audiences. In this sense, alliance formation represents a costly signal that is difficult to fake, enhancing the credibility of deterrence against military threats.

Military alliances, however, are not uniform institutions; rather, they differ systematically in the *types of obligations* they impose on member states. Existing alliance scholarship distinguishes among several major categories of alliance commitments, most notably defense pacts, nonaggression pacts, neutrality pacts, and consultation agreements.<sup>8</sup> Defense pacts commit allies to provide military assistance in the event of an external attack, representing the strongest and most costly form of alliance obligation. Nonaggression pacts bind members to refrain from the use of force against one another but do not entail commitments to fight on each other's behalf. Neutrality pacts require states to remain neutral if an ally becomes involved in a conflict with a third party, thereby limiting escalation while avoiding direct military involvement. Consultation pacts, the weakest form of alliance commitment, merely obligate members to consult or exchange information in response to security threats without mandating military action. These alliance types vary markedly in their credibility, costs, and strategic implications, suggesting that they are likely to generate distinct security effects rather than a uniform impact on state behavior or conflict outcomes.

Yet, regardless of these types, the signaling effect becomes ambiguous when it comes to terrorism. Terrorism is fundamentally a tactic aimed at achieving short-term objectives—most notably generating fear among civilians—rather than a strategy designed to replace or directly challenge the incumbent regime.<sup>9</sup> Although terrorist groups may pursue diverse long-term political goals, their use of violence typically targets soft civilian populations to influence a broader audience.<sup>10</sup> Terrorism does not aim to seize territory, gain control over the state, or directly alter the distribution of political power through war. Instead, terrorism is used as a low-cost, indirect means of imposing psychological and political pressure, and therefore the expected payoff from terrorism is relatively insensitive to shifts in the broader distribution of coercive power between the government and external allies. When a member state experiences terrorism alone, allies may view such incidents as falling below the threshold for meaningful joint action. In turn, terrorist groups therefore do not revise their expectations about the likely response of allied states, and their decision to employ terrorism remains largely unaffected by the presence of alliances.

**H1:** *Military Alliances have no effects on terrorist activities within member states.*

However, a certain type of military alliance may influence the risk of terrorism within member states through other channels. One important mechanism through which defense pacts can shape this risk is by enhancing a state's military capacity. As discussed, although defense pacts are not typically designed to address terrorism directly, they obligate member states to cooperate militarily in response to broader security contingencies. Such cooperation often involves the provision of

<sup>8</sup> Brett Ashley Leeds, Jeffrey M. Ritter, Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, and Andrew G. Long, "Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815–1944," *International Interactions*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2002, pp. 237–260; Jesse C. Johnson and Brett Ashley Leeds, "Defense Pacts: A Prescription for Peace?" *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2011, pp. 45–65.

<sup>9</sup> Jessica A. Stanton, "Terrorism in the Context of Civil War," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 75, no. 4, 2013, pp. 1009–1022; Virginia Page Fortna, "Do Terrorists Win? Rebels' Use of Terrorism and Civil War Outcomes," *International Organization*, vol. 69, no. 3, 2015, pp. 519–556.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2006, pp. 49–80.

economic assistance, weaponry, and advanced technologies,<sup>11</sup> which can significantly strengthen a state's overall military capabilities that can be utilized for counterterrorism activities. As Cullen Hendrix and Joseph Young point out, however, this process of military enhancement can have unintended and counterproductive consequences by reshaping the strategic options available to internal dissidents.<sup>12</sup> In a bargaining framework, the government's military enhancement—often facilitated through defense—raises the expected costs that dissidents would face in conventional or irregular warfare. When the state's military capability increases, the terrorism group's cost of engaging in confrontation becomes substantially higher, while their probability of prevailing in such confrontations declines. Faced with a deteriorating outside option in the conventional bargaining space, dissidents may strategically shift toward terrorism, a tactic that is less affected by the state's strengthened military posture.

Moreover, states that expand and modernize their military capabilities—particularly through alliance-driven cooperation—may simultaneously become less effective at countering terrorism. Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson claim that mechanized or technology-intensive militaries often rely heavily on mobility and firepower, while lacking the local, granular information necessary to identify and disrupt terrorist networks.<sup>13</sup> From a bargaining perspective, this reduces the government's ability to raise the expected costs of terrorism for dissidents. The government's enhanced capabilities thus do not translate into an increased probability of defeating terrorist threats, creating an incentive for dissidents to exploit this mismatch.

**H2a (Mediator effect through military reinforcement):** *Defense pacts increase terrorism activities in member states due to military capacities (defense budget and military personnel) enhanced by the cooperation with member states.*

Some scholars argue that counterterrorism primarily falls under the jurisdiction of the police and law enforcement agencies rather than the military.<sup>14</sup> While the military is typically tasked with responding to external threats and safeguarding national sovereignty, it is generally not the first responder to terrorism occurring within a state's borders. Compared to the military, police forces tend to possess more localized knowledge of the social and political environments in which terrorist groups operate and are better positioned to maintain communication with local communities.<sup>15</sup> From this perspective, terrorism is understood as an internal security problem best addressed through policing and judicial institutions. At the same time, military alliances—particularly defense and offense pacts—may indirectly shape counterterrorism outcomes by enhancing police capabilities through militarization, defined as the material, cultural,

<sup>11</sup> Paul F. Diehl, "Substitutes or Complements? The Effects of Alliances on Military Spending in Major Power Rivalries," *International Interactions*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1994, pp. 159–176; Michael C. Horowitz, Paul Poast, and Allan C. Stam, "Domestic Signaling of Commitment Credibility: Military Recruitment and Alliance Formation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 61, no. 8, 2017, pp. 1682–1710; T. Clifton Morgan and Glenn Palmer, "A Model of Foreign Policy Substitutability: Selecting the Right Tools for the Job(s)," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2000, pp. 11–32.

<sup>12</sup> Cullen S. Hendrix and Joseph K. Young, "State Capacity and Terrorism: A Two-Dimensional Approach," *Security Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2014, pp. 329–363.

<sup>13</sup> Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson III, "Rage against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars," *International Organization* vol. 63, no. 1, 2009, pp. 67–106.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1981, pp. 379–399.

<sup>15</sup> Walter C. Ladwig III, "Supporting Allies in Counterinsurgency: Britain and the Dhofar Rebellion," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2008 pp. 62–88.

organizational, and operational emulation of the military by the police.<sup>16</sup> Although police forces are fundamentally responsible for protecting public spaces and enforcing state authority through the legitimate use of violence,<sup>17</sup> alliance-driven military assistance and training may extend beyond the armed forces to national police organizations. As a result, police forces may adopt a more militarized structure characterized by command-and-control centers, elite squadrons, special operations units, barracked housing, and long-range deployment capabilities.<sup>18</sup>

However, similar to the effects of military expansion, this type of external support aimed at enhancing police capacity may generate unintended and counterproductive consequences. De Bruin identifies three major risks associated with police militarization.<sup>19</sup> First, militarized police forces often become less integrated with civilian communities and are more likely to be perceived as threatening or intimidating, reducing opportunities for trust-building and intelligence gathering—both of which are crucial for effective counterterrorism. Second, police units equipped with heavy weaponry and trained for specialized operations may be more prone to the excessive use of force, undermining public support and potentially pushing civilians toward actors employing terrorism. Unlike the military, which operates within established norms, discipline, and rules of engagement, rapidly militarized police forces may lack the professionalization necessary to manage coercive power responsibly, increasing the risk of abuse and eroding public trust. Third, militarized police forces may become overly focused on the prospect of armed confrontation while remaining ill-prepared for sustained combat, creating a mismatch between perceived and actual capabilities. This gap may signal weak resolve to terrorist actors and embolden further attacks. Taken together, these dynamics suggest that defense pacts—by facilitating arms transfers, training, and economic assistance—may inadvertently increase the risk of terrorism through the militarization of police forces, leading to the following hypothesis.

**H2b (Mediator effect by police reinforcement):** *Defense pacts increase terrorism activities in member states through the militarization of the police of the member states.*

The effects of defense pacts, when mediated through military enhancement, may differ sharply between domestic and transnational terrorism. Alliances often lead to the strengthening of a state's military and police forces, which can serve as a credible deterrent to domestic actors but a potential provocation for transnational groups. Transnational groups often pursue broader ideological or international objectives and are more likely to retaliate against militarization—particularly when it is visibly supported by foreign allies.<sup>20</sup> These actors can frame state security enhancements assisted by allies as evidence of foreign oppression, using it to justify escalatory attacks. Furthermore, their operational reach is supported by global networks, international

<sup>16</sup> Peter B. Kraska, "Militarization and Policing—Its Relevance to 21st Century Police," *Policing*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2007, pp. 501–513.

<sup>17</sup> Travis Curtice and Brandon Behlendorf, "Street-level Repression: Protest, Policing, and Dissent in Uganda," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 65, no.1, 2021, pp.166–194.

<sup>18</sup> Erica De Bruin, "Mapping Coercive Institutions: The State Security Forces Dataset, 1960–2010," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 58, no.2, 2021, pp.315–325.

<sup>19</sup> Erica De Bruin, "Police Insurgency: Are More Militarized Police More Effective?" *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol.33, no. 4-5, 2022, pp.742–766.

<sup>20</sup> Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, no. 3 (2003), pp.343–361; Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2006).

funding, and safe havens abroad.<sup>21</sup> For example, Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State leveraged extensive infrastructures, from safe havens in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq to networks of operatives and sympathizers across Europe, North Africa, and Southeast Asia, enabling attacks far beyond their home bases, including the 2001 attacks in the United States and the 2015 Paris attacks.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast, domestic groups typically aim to influence domestic policies rather than pursuing broader international or ideological goals. Because their aims are limited to national politics, they are less likely to be provoked by the presence of external allies. Rather, when the government is visibly backed by allies and its military and police are reinforced, the rising cost and declining likelihood of success perceived by domestic actors make them more likely to be deterred. Furthermore, domestic actors generally lack access to international resources. Groups like Aum Shinrikyo in Japan or lone actors such as Timothy McVeigh in the United States operated under severe logistical constraints and constant domestic law enforcement monitoring, leaving them vulnerable to disruption (Kaplan and Marshall 1996; Michel and Herbeck 2001; Hamm 1997). This asymmetry in objectives and capabilities implies that alliance-driven military and police enhancements are likely to deter domestic terrorism more effectively than transnational terrorism, which may instead escalate in response.<sup>23</sup>

### **H3 (Transnational vs Domestic Terrorism):** *Mediated effects of defense pacts on domestic terrorism are larger than the effects on transnational terrorism.*

This study does not consider offense pacts in its analysis of terrorism. Although alliances oriented toward joint offensive operations could, in theory, alter domestic security environments by reshaping military organization and strategic priorities, as reported, such agreements are entirely absent from the post-Cold War period. As a result, post-1990 data offer no empirical variation with which to identify the effect of offense pacts on terrorist activity. Even extending the analysis backward in time would provide little analytical traction, as offense pacts are exceedingly rare and clustered in earlier historical eras. A meaningful examination of how offense-oriented alliances relate to terrorism would therefore require a broader historical horizon and a separate theoretical treatment tailored to their distinct strategic logic—tasks that lie beyond the scope of this article and are reserved for future research.

## **Model Specification**

### *Dataset*

The analysis of this article employs a state-year dataset that mainly combines two different datasets. The first dataset is the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) dataset (ver

<sup>21</sup> Martha Crenshaw, “The Subjective Reality of the Terrorist,” in *Current Perspectives on International Terrorism*, ed. Robert O. Slater and Michael Stohl (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), pp. 12–46; Nazli Avdan and Clayton Webb, “The Big, the Bad, and the Dangerous: Explaining Terrorism Targeting Patterns,” *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2018), pp.3–25; Seung-Whan Choi, “Transnational Terrorist Attacks,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).

<sup>22</sup> Michael Jensen, Neil Ferguson, and Gary LaFree, “Choosing Where to Fight: Do Social Networks Distinguish American ISIS Foreign Fighters from ISIS-Inspired Terrorists?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 68, no. 1 (2023), online first; Shandon Harris-Hogan, Amarnath Amarasingam, and Lorne L. Dawson, “A Comparative Analysis of Australian and Canadian Foreign Fighters Traveling to Syria and Iraq,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 47, no. 10 (2022), pp. 1230–1260.

<sup>23</sup> David E. Kaplan and Andrew Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World: The Incredible Story of Aum* (London: Hutchinson, 1996); Mark S. Hamm, *Apocalypse in Oklahoma: Waco and Ruby Ridge Revenged* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997).

5.0), which covers all military alliances formed between 1815 and 2018.<sup>24</sup> The ATOP dataset is particularly well-suited, as it provides detailed information on the formal provisions of military alliances, including whether they entail defense commitments, consultation clauses, or neutrality agreements. This granularity allows for a more precise classification of alliance types and facilitates the disaggregation of their potential deterrent effects on the activities of terrorism.

For terrorism, this study relies on the dataset constructed by Walter Enders, Todd Sandler, and Khusrav Gaibulloev, which is based on the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) but explicitly distinguishes between domestic and transnational terrorism.<sup>25</sup> While the GTD offers the most comprehensive temporal and spatial coverage of terrorism incidents since 1970, it does not itself provide a clear separation between domestic and transnational attacks. To address this limitation, Enders, Sandler, and Gaibulloev apply a systematic, five-step filtering procedure to identify transnational incidents and calibrate the data to correct for temporal inconsistencies in GTD reporting. By employing their calibrated dataset covering between 1970 and 2007, this study leverages the extensive coverage of the GTD while ensuring a theoretically consistent and replicable classification of terrorism types. Thus, the main dataset combining the ATOP dataset and the GTD dataset ranges from 1970 to 2007.

#### *Independent Variables*

I use four separate variables to code alliance obligations: *Defense Pact*, *Neutrality Pact*, *Nonaggression Pact*, and *Consultation Pact*. Following the coding criteria provided by the ATOP dataset, for *Defense Pact*, I assign a value of 1 if a state is a member of a military alliance that obligates member states to defend other members from military contingencies in a given year, and 0 otherwise. For *Neutrality Pact*, I code the variable as 1 if a state is a member of a military alliance that requires member states not to support the enemies of other members in the event of military conflict, and 0 otherwise. For *Nonaggression Pact*, the variable equals 1 if a state is a member of an alliance in which members pledge not to use military force against one another, and 0 otherwise. For *Consultation Pact*, I assign a value of 1 if a state is a member of an alliance that obligates members to consult or exchange information in the event of security concerns or potential conflicts, without requiring military assistance, and 0 otherwise. To consider potential endogeneity, each pact variable is lagged by one year.

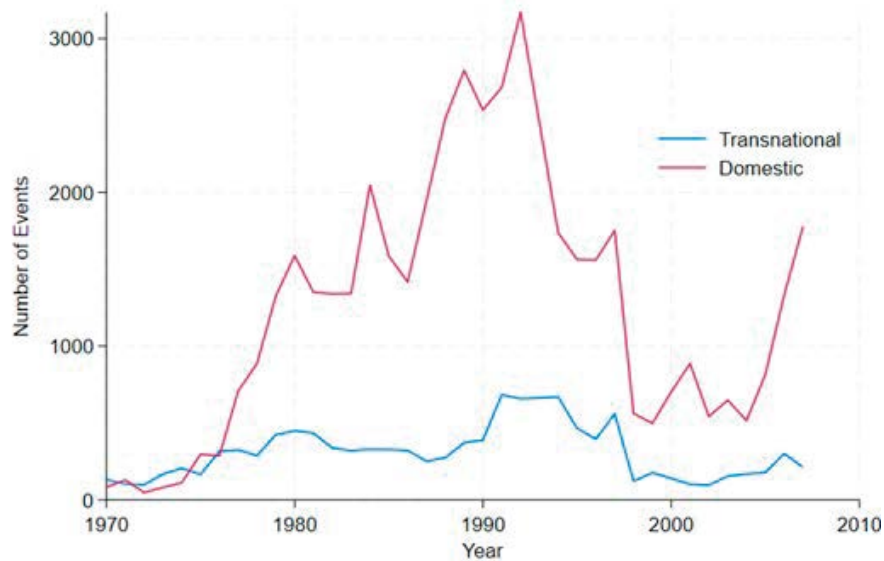
#### *Dependent Variables*

The GTD dataset is an event-based dataset, differing fundamentally from state-year datasets such as the ATOP. Because terrorism attacks occur far more frequently than civil wars or coups, analyzing them at the event-based level can obscure important variation. To address this, I convert the GTD dataset structure to count data. Furthermore, drawing on the dataset provided by Enders, Sandler, and Gaibulloev, I create two disaggregated count variables: *Domestic Terrorism*, which captures the number of incidents perpetrated by non-state actors who have no transnational support and links, and *Transnational Terrorism*, which counts incidents carried out by non-state actors who are supported by other overseas actors as identified by the authors. Figure I plots the temporal tendency of terrorism during 1970–2007. Domestic terrorism vastly exceeds transnational terrorism each year. Domestic incidents rise steeply from the mid-1970s, peak in the early 1990s, then drop sharply in the late 1990s before a modest mid-2000s rebound. Transnational incidents increase more gradually, reach a much lower crest in the early-mid 1990s, and decline to comparatively low levels thereafter with a small uptick in the mid-2000s. Figure

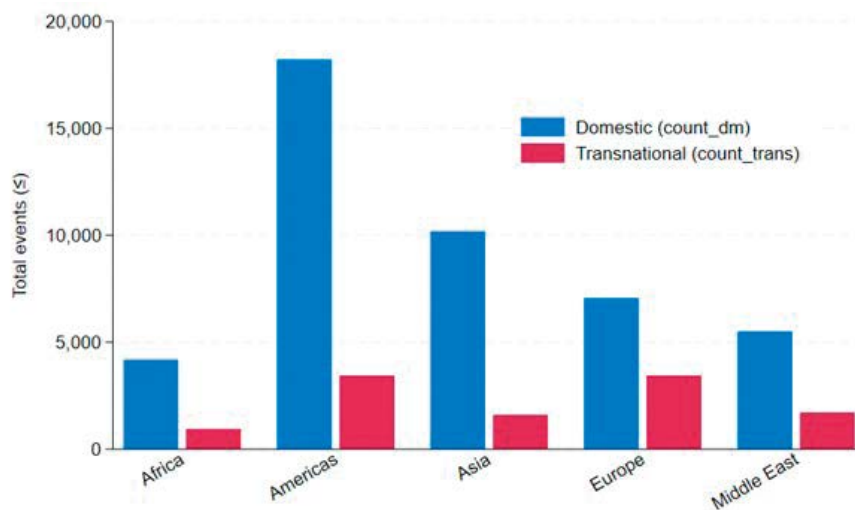
<sup>24</sup> Leeds, Ritter, Mitchell, and Long, op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> Enders, Walter, Todd Sandler, and Khusrav Gaibulloev, "Domestic versus Transnational Terrorism: Data, Decomposition, and Dynamics," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol.48, no.3, pp. 319–337.

**Figure I: Temporal Tendency of Terrorism during 1970 – 2007**



**Figure II: The Regional Tendency of Terrorism during 1970 – 2007**



II depicts the regional trends of terrorist attacks during the same period. The Americas record by far the largest volume of domestic incidents, followed by Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. For transnational incidents, totals are smaller across all regions, with the largest shares in Europe and the Americas and the fewest in Africa. Overall, domestic terrorism dominates both temporally and geographically, with the early 1990s marking the global high point.

#### *Mediating Variables*

The enhancement of a member state’s military and police capacities constitutes two key mechanisms through which alliances may influence the incidence of domestic terrorism. To capture military capacity, I include two variables. *Military Personnel* measures the size of a state’s armed forces, and *Military Expenditure/GDP* reflects total defense spending as a share of current (nominal) GDP. Both indicators are drawn from the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC),<sup>26</sup> and annual GDP of each country derives from Kristian Gleditsch’s work.<sup>27</sup> Both mediators are log-transformed to address skewness and facilitate interpretation in the statistical

models. These variables are also included as controls to isolate the direct effect of alliances on terrorism outcomes.

Again, police militarization refers to the material, cultural, organizational and operational emulation of the military by the police.<sup>28</sup> To assess the presence of militarized police, I draw on De Bruin's State Security Forces (SSF) dataset, which covers the period from 1960 to 2010.<sup>29</sup> According to the dataset's codebook, 1 is assigned if national police possess at least two of the following characteristics: command and control centers, elite squadrons modeled after the military, special operations units, barracked housing, or long-range deployment capability, and 0 otherwise. I name this variable, *Police Militarization*, and use it to operationalize police militarization. This operationalization is consistent with the conceptual definition of police militarization presented.

### *Control Variables*

My models include a set of control variables that are theoretically relevant to both alliance membership and the incidence of terrorism. First, total population is included to capture state size and capacity, as population constitutes a core component of national power.<sup>30</sup> More populous states are generally more attractive alliance partners, while simultaneously facing greater governance burdens and social heterogeneity that may increase the risk of terrorism.<sup>31</sup> Second, regime type is controlled for because it shapes both alliance behavior and vulnerability to terrorism. Democracies are more likely to form alliances based on shared norms and institutional compatibility,<sup>32</sup> yet may also face heightened exposure to terrorism due to political openness.<sup>33</sup> Regime type is measured using *Polyarchy*, derived from the V-Dem *v2x\_polyarchy* index (v12), which captures the institutionalization of electoral democracy.<sup>34</sup> Third, external threat is included, as states facing hostile neighbors or international disputes are more likely to form defense pacts for deterrence,<sup>35</sup> while elevated external threats may divert attention and resources away from internal security, potentially emboldening terrorist groups.<sup>36</sup> External threat is operationalized using the latent threat perception measure developed by Eugenia Artabe, Samantha Chapa, Leah

<sup>26</sup> Michael J. Greig and Andrew J. Enterline, *Correlates of War Project: National Material Capabilities (NMC) Data Documentation, Version 5.0* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> Kristian S. Gleditsch. Expanded Trade and GDP Data, <http://ksgleditsch.com/exptradegdp.html>. See the article regarding the first-version dataset. Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Expanded Trade and GDP Data," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.46, no. 5 (2002), pp. 712–724.

<sup>28</sup> Kraska, op.cit.

<sup>29</sup> De Bruin, op.cit.

<sup>30</sup> Greig and Enterline, op.cit.

<sup>31</sup> James A. Piazza, "Rooted in Poverty? Terrorism, Poor Economic Development, and Social Cleavages," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2006), pp. 159–177.

<sup>32</sup> Douglas M. Gibler and Scott Wolford, "Alliances, Then Democracy: An Examination of the Relationship between Regime Type and Alliance Formation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2006), pp. 129–153.

<sup>33</sup> Alberto Abadie, "Poverty, Political Freedom, and the Roots of Terrorism," *American Economic Review*, vol. 96, no. 2 (2006), pp. 50–56,

<sup>34</sup> Michael Coppedge et al., "V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v15," *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project* (2025), <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds25>.

<sup>35</sup> Morrow, op.cit.

<sup>36</sup> Seden Akçınaroğlu, and Yusuf Evirgen, "Ripe Moments for Terror Attacks: Opportunity Benefits–Reputation Tradeoff," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, online first.

**Table I: Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Domestic Terrorism	6229	7.242	33.33	0	673
Transnational Terrorism	6229	1.782	6.667	0	135
Defense Pact	8566	.591	.492	0	1
Neutrality Pact	8566	.117	.321	0	1
Nonaggression Pact	8566	.74	.439	0	1
Consultation Pact	8566	.58	.494	0	1
Polyarchy	7806	.446	.288	.009	.924
Total Population (Log)	6802	8.782	1.843	4.111	14.135
External Threat	7652	-.042	.812	-2.317	1.702
Civil War	8749	.127	.333	0	1
Post-Cold War	8749	.634	.482	0	1
Past Transnational Terrorism in three years	5860	1.819	5.871	0	86
Past Domestic Terrorism in three years	5860	7.395	30.493	0	484
Military Personnel (Log)	6205	3.583	1.803	0	8.466
Military Expenditure / GDP (Log)	6336	-4.908	2.592	-20.176	.14
Militarized Police	3979	.494	.5	0	1

**Table II: Variance Inflation Factor**

Variable	VIF	SQRT VIF	Tolerance	R-Squared
Defense Pact	1.79	1.34	0.5596	0.4404
Neutrality Pact	1.2	1.1	0.8318	0.1682
Nonaggression Pact	1.45	1.2	0.6909	0.3091
Consultation Pact	1.9	1.38	0.5254	0.4746
Polyarchy	1.39	1.18	0.7199	0.2801
Total Population (Log)	3.14	1.77	0.3187	0.6813
External Threat	1.54	1.24	0.6478	0.3522
Civil War	1.27	1.13	0.7876	0.2124
Cold War	1.21	1.1	0.8278	0.1722
Past Transnational Terrorism in three years	2.09	1.44	0.4808	0.5192
Past Domestic Terrorism in three years	2.1	1.45	0.477	0.523
Military Personnel (Log)	1.52	1.23	0.6586	0.3414
Military Expenditure /GDP(Log)	1.1	1.05	0.9116	0.0884
Militarized Police	1.09	1.04	0.9208	0.0792

Sparkman and Patrick Shea.<sup>37</sup> Fourth, ongoing civil war is controlled for because internal conflict can simultaneously increase incentives for alliance formation<sup>38</sup> and shape terrorism dynamics, as rebel organizations often employ terrorism as a tactic during civil wars.<sup>39</sup> Using the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, I code *Civil War* as 1 when a state is experiencing an active civil conflict. Fifth, to capture systemic temporal variation, I include a *Post-Cold War* indicator coded 1

<sup>37</sup> Eugenia Artabe, Samantha Chapa, Leah Sparkman, and Patrick E. Shea, "External Threats, Capacity, and Repression: How the Threat of War Affects Political Development and Physical Integrity Rights," *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 53, issue 4 (2023), pp. 1311–1327.

<sup>38</sup> Jessica Edry, Jesse C. Johnson, and Brett Ashley Leeds, "Threats at Home and Abroad: Interstate War, Civil War, and Alliance Formation," *International Organization*, vol.75, no. 3 (2021), pp. 837–857.

<sup>39</sup> Fortna, op.cit.; Stanton, op.cit.

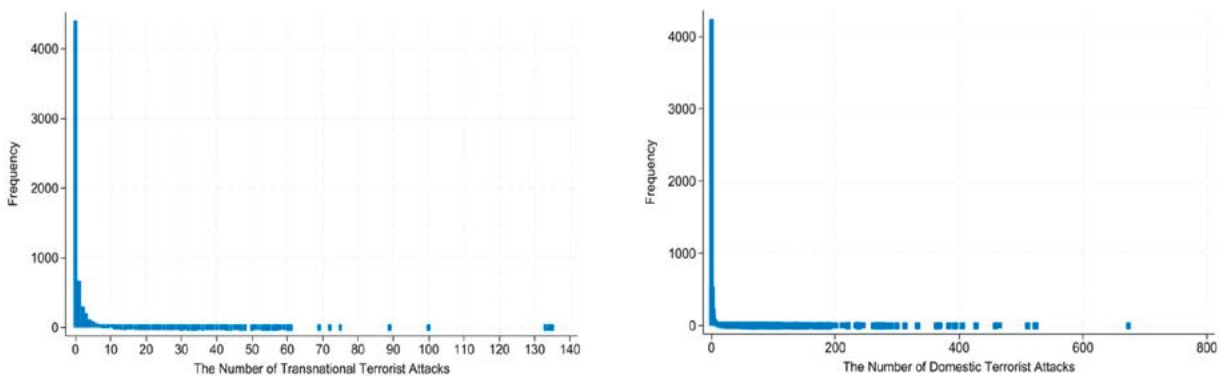
for observations after 1989, reflecting shifts in alliance strategies<sup>40</sup> and global terrorism patterns following the decline of state-sponsored terrorism.<sup>41</sup> Finally, to account for temporal dependence in terrorism, I control for *Past Terrorism*, measured as the average number of terrorist attacks in the preceding three years.

The summary statistics of these variables are shown in Table I. The collinearity check reported in Table II demonstrates no serious collinearity problem in the sample. Given the characteristics of the dependent variables, negative binomial regression is employed as the baseline model. The calculation of mean and variance for each dependent variable indicates each variable exhibits strong evidence of overdispersion. For *Transnational Terrorism*, the mean is 1.78 while the variance is 44.45, resulting in a variance-to-mean ratio of approximately 25. Similarly, *Domestic Terrorism* has a mean of 7.24 and a variance of 1,110.90, yielding a variance-to-mean ratio of about 153. This distributional pattern indicates that the variance of the dependent variable exceeds its mean (overdispersion), which means that while most countries experience no attacks, a small number of countries suffer from disproportionately high levels of terrorism. Figure III visualizes this tendency, reinforcing the sparsity of events in the data. This excessive variation violates the assumption of equal mean and variance required by the Poisson model. As a result, neither ordinary least squares (OLS) regression nor standard Poisson models are appropriate, thereby justifying the use of negative binomial regression. The specification of the baseline regression model is as follows.

$$\begin{aligned} \log(\mu_{it}) = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Defense Pact}_{it-1} + \beta_2 \text{Nonaggression Pact}_{it-1} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{Neutrality Pact}_{it-1} + \beta_4 \text{Consultation Pact}_{it-1} + \beta_5 \text{Polyarchy}_{it-1} \\ & + \beta_6 \text{Population}_{it-1} + \beta_7 \text{External Threat}_{it-1} + \beta_8 \text{Civil War}_{it-1} \\ & + \beta_9 \text{Post - Cold War}_{it} + \beta_{10} \text{Past Terrorism}_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \end{aligned}$$

Here,  $\mu_{it}$  is the expected number of terrorism attacks in country  $i$  at time  $t$ . I lag all explanatory variables by one year except for *Past Terrorism* because these variables must temporally precede the outcome in order to preserve causal direction and avoid simultaneity bias. The log of the expected count is modeled as a linear function of independent variables.  $\varepsilon$  denotes the error term. The variance is modeled as  $\text{Var}(Y_{it}) = \mu_{it} + a\mu_{it}^2$ , where  $a > 0$  indicates overdispersion.

**Figure III: Frequency of Terrorism Attacks**



<sup>40</sup> Brett Ashley Leeds and Michaela Mattes, “Alliance Politics during the Cold War: Aberration, New World Order, or Continuation of History?” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, vol.24, no.3 (2007), pp. 183–199.

<sup>41</sup> Walter Enders and Todd Sandler, “Patterns of Transnational Terrorism, 1970–1999: Alternative Time-Series Estimates,” *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.46, issue 2 (2002), pp. 145–165,

To examine whether the effect of defense pacts on terrorism operates through changes in state capacity, I apply the causal mediation analysis framework.<sup>42</sup> Specifically, I estimate natural indirect effects through military personnel, military expenditure, and police militarization, alongside the natural direct effect of alliance commitments. Mediator models and terrorism outcome models (negative binomial regressions) are estimated separately, and bootstrap confidence intervals are calculated. This design allows me to assess whether Hypotheses H2a and H2b are supported by evidence that defense pacts influence terrorism indirectly via military and police capacity, or whether the effect is primarily direct.

As discussed, however, the mediation analysis requires several stringent assumptions. The most critical is sequential ignorability, which I address by incorporating a comprehensive set of confounders that influence the independent variable, mediators, and dependent variables. I use the same confounders employed in the main regression models, as each is plausibly related to defense pact membership, military personnel size, military expenditure, and police militarization. Specifically, I include *Polyarchy* (lagged two years), *Total Population* (lagged two years), *External Threat* (lagged three years, to mitigate post-treatment bias), *Civil War*, *Post-Cold War*, and three-year averages of both transnational terrorism and domestic terrorism. Prior scholarship suggests that these covariates influence not only alliance formation and terrorism risk but also the mediators themselves.<sup>43</sup> Incorporating this battery of controls helps approximate the sequential ignorability assumption by reducing the risk of omitted variable bias across each stage of the mediation process.

Second, the mediation analysis rests on establishing an appropriate causal ordering between the treatment and the mediator. To ensure that changes in the independent variables alter the mediators rather than the reverse, I lag *Defense Pact* and other controls by two year relative to the mediators. Also, the mediators are lagged by one year to make them precedent to terrorism counts. This temporal structure ensures that causal ordering (defense pact presence → military capacity/police militarization → the number of terrorist attacks) and helps rule out simultaneity or reverse causation.

Third, the mediation analysis assumes no treatment–mediator interactions. The effect of defense pacts is moderated—not conditioned—by military personnel levels, military expenditure as a share of GDP, and police militarization. In other words, these variables shape the magnitude of the alliance’s overall effect rather than altering the functional form of the causal pathway between the treatment and the outcome. This distinction is crucial: while defense pacts may enhance state capacity in ways that influence terrorism dynamics, the mediators do not interact with the treatment in a way that would violate the assumption of additive decomposition required for mediation analysis.<sup>44</sup>

Fourth, all covariates other than the mediators are treated purely as controls rather than as potential mediating channels, thereby preventing post-treatment bias.<sup>45</sup>

## Results and Discussion

The results in Table III indicate that among alliance types nonaggression pacts and consultation

<sup>42</sup> Kosuke Imai, Luke Keele, and Dustin Tingley, “A General Approach to Causal Mediation Analysis,” *Psychological Methods*, vol.15, no.4 (2010), pp.309–334.

<sup>43</sup> De Bruin, op.cit.

<sup>44</sup> *Paramed* analyses further demonstrate that all interaction terms (*Defense Pact \* Military Personnel*, *Military Expenditure/GDP*, and *Police Militarization*) are not statistically significant.

<sup>45</sup> Kosuke Imai and Teppei Yamamoto, “Identification and Sensitivity Analysis for Multiple Causal Mechanisms: Revisiting Evidence from Framing Experiments,” *Political Analysis*, vol.21, issue 2, pp.141–171.

pacts are positively and significantly associated with transnational terrorism ( $p < 0.05$ ), whereas defense pacts and neutrality pacts exhibit no statistically significant effects. Among the control variables, democracy, population size, external threat, civil war, and lagged terrorism all show strong positive and significant relationships with transnational terrorism, while Post-Cold War dummy has no effect. Substantively, the results suggest that nonaggression pacts are linked to about a 65 percent increase in transnational terrorist incidents, and consultation pacts to a 46 percent increase. The effect of democracy is even more pronounced, with more democratic regimes experiencing nearly double the level of terrorism, while civil war more than doubles the risk compared to non-conflict contexts. Population and external threat each raise terrorism by roughly 25–45 percent, and past terrorism predicts an additional 17 percent increase in future attacks.

Turning to domestic terrorism, consultation pacts emerge as the only alliance type with a

**Table III: Negative Binomial Regressions**

Variable	Transnational Terrorism	Domestic Terrorism
Defense Pact	-0.016 (0.144)	-0.229 (0.185)
Neutrality Pact	-0.262 (0.189)	-0.299 (0.240)
Nonaggression Pact	0.499** (0.209)	0.310 (0.257)
Consultation Pact	0.376** (0.184)	0.743*** (0.207)
Polyarchy	0.614*** (0.230)	0.394 (0.280)
Total Population (Log)	0.220*** (0.049)	0.364*** (0.058)
External Threat (t-2)	0.362*** (0.093)	0.399*** (0.131)
Civil War	0.941*** (0.153)	1.194*** (0.197)
Post-Cold War	-0.089 (0.109)	0.063 (0.135)
Past TR Terrorism (three years)	0.157*** (0.024)	
Past Dm Terrorism (three years)		0.041*** (0.009)
Constant	-3.592*** (0.440)	-3.927*** (0.479)
alpha	2.794	4.466
Observation	5076	5076
Pseudo R-squared	0.132	0.107

Notes:

Robust standard errors clustered by country.

Significance levels: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ . Two-tailed tests.

All covariates are one-year lagged except Post-Cold War (post-1990 dummy) and Past Terrorism, while External Threat is two-year lagged.

statistically significant effect, being strongly and positively associated with terrorism ( $p < 0.01$ ). Defense pacts and neutrality pacts are negatively signed but insignificant, while nonaggression pacts show a positive but insignificant coefficient. Among the controls, population size, external threat, civil war, and lagged terrorism all exert significant positive effects. In substantive terms, consultation pacts more than double the level of domestic terrorism, while civil war is associated with more than a threefold increase. Population size and external threat each contribute to an increase of roughly 45–50 percent, and prior terrorism produces a modest but significant 4 percent increase in subsequent domestic terrorism. Taken together, H1 is partially supported in the sense that while the membership of defense pacts or neutrality pacts proves ineffective on terrorism while nonaggression pacts and consultation pacts are impactful.

Despite the lack of statistically significant results, defense pacts may still exert indirect effects on terrorism through the proposed mediators, as hypothesized in H2a and H2b. To evaluate these mechanisms, I conducted causal mediation analyses. Table IV reports the results of the

**Table IV: Mediation Analysis: Defense Pacts, Mediators, and Transnational Terrorism**

Variable	M1 Military Personnel (Mediator)	M2 Transnational Terrorism (DV, with Mediator)	M3 Military Expenditure/ GDP (Mediator)	M4 Transnational Terrorism (DV, with Mediator)	M5 Police Militarization (Mediator)	M6 Transnational Terrorism (DV, with Mediator)
Mediator	–	0.211*** (0.049)	–	0.031 (0.022)	–	-0.130 (0.130)
Defense Pact	-0.080** (0.037)	0.201 (0.200)	-0.275** (0.083)	0.346** (0.163)	-0.240** (0.105)	-0.121 (0.126)
Observation	4,795	4,642	4,755	4,599	3,289	3,184
R-squared	0.736	–	0.116	–	–	–

Notes:

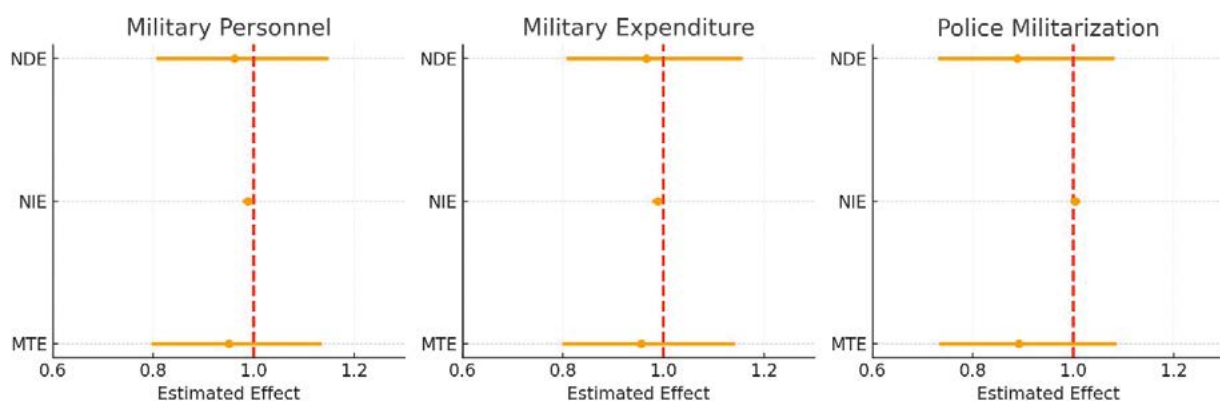
Robust standard errors clustered by country.

Significance levels: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ . Two-tailed tests.

Controls: Neutrality Pact, Nonaggression Pact, Consultation Pact, Polyarchy, Logged Population, External Threat, Conflict, Post-Cold War dummy, average transnational terrorism counts.

Lag structure: Mediator models use 2-year lagged Defense Pact and controls. Outcome models include 1-year lagged mediator, 2-year lagged Defense Pact and 2-year controls.

**Figure IV: Coefficient Plot of Natural Direct Effect (NDE), Natural Indirect Effect (NIE) and Marginal Total Effect (MTE) for Transnational Terrorism**



preliminary negative binomial regression focusing on transnational terrorism. Across the three models—military personnel, military expenditure, and police militarization—there is no evidence that defense pacts exert a meaningful indirect effect on transnational terrorism through any of these state-capacity channels. In each model, defense pacts significantly affect the mediators in some directions (reducing military personnel,  $p = 0.028$ ; increasing military expenditure,  $p = 0.003$ ; and reducing police militarization,  $p = 0.030$ ), but these changes do not propagate into transnational terrorism.

Furthermore, Figure IV demonstrates the causal mediation analysis. The military personnel model yields a marginally significant NIE ( $p = 0.055$ ), but the implied effect size is exceedingly small—only about a 1.2% reduction in transnational terrorism—rendering the mediated pathway substantively negligible. In the military expenditure model, neither the NDE nor the NIE provides any evidence of mediation, as both estimates are statistically indistinguishable from unity and imply no meaningful change in terrorism risk. Finally, the police militarization model shows no notable effects: the NDE, NIE, and MTE all cluster tightly around 1.0, indicating changes of less than  $\pm 10\%$ , none of which reach statistical significance. Taken together, despite

**Table V: Mediation Analysis: Defense Pacts, Mediators, and Domestic Terrorism**

Variable	M1 Military Personnel (Mediator)	M2 Domestic Terrorism (DV, with Mediator)	M3 Military Expenditure/ GDP (Mediator)	M4 Domestic Terrorism (DV, with Mediator)	M5 Police Militarization (Mediator)	M6 Domestic Terrorism (DV, with Mediator)
Mediator	–	0.166*** (0.055)	–	0.035 (0.022)	–	-0.068 (0.151)
Defense Pact	-0.072* (0.037)	-0.039 (0.215)	0.257** (0.063)	-0.614** (0.485)	-0.245** (0.105)	-0.457*** (0.152)
Observation	4,795	4,642	4,736	4,555	3,289	3,184
R-squared	0.735	–	0.112	–	–	–

Notes:

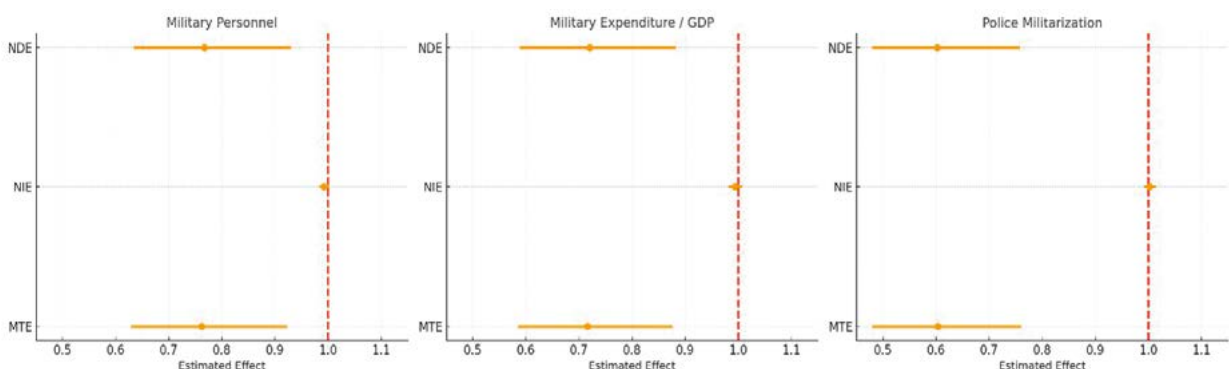
Robust standard errors clustered by country.

Significance levels: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ . Two-tailed tests.

Controls: Neutrality Pact, Nonaggression Pact, Consultation Pact, Polyarchy, Logged Population, External Threat, Conflict, Post-Cold War dummy, average transnational terrorism counts.

Lag structure: Mediator models use 2-year lagged Defense Pact and controls. Outcome models include 1-year lagged mediator, 2-year lagged Defense Pact and 2-year controls.

**Figure V: Coefficient Plot of Natural Direct Effect (NDE), Natural Indirect Effect (NIE) and Marginal Total Effect (MTE) for Domestic Terrorism**



isolated statistical hints, defense pacts appear to exert no credible or substantively meaningful influence on transnational terrorism, whether direct or indirect.

Table V reports the results of the preliminary negative binomial regressions. Across the three negative binomial specifications, the estimated effect of defense pacts on domestic terrorism exhibits notable heterogeneity depending on the mediator included in the model. When military personnel is incorporated, the coefficient on defense pacts is statistically insignificant ( $p = 0.854$ ), indicating no detectable relationship between alliance commitments and changes in domestic terrorism under this specification. By contrast, the military expenditure model shows a sizable and statistically significant negative coefficient ( $-0.614, p = 0.001$ ), suggesting that defense pacts are associated with substantially lower levels of domestic terrorism when accounting for defense spending. A similar pattern emerges in the police militarization model, where the coefficient is also negative and highly significant ( $-0.546, p < 0.001$ ). Taken together, these results indicate that defense pacts may reduce domestic terrorism, but the strength and detectability of this association depend on the institutional and security variables included in the model, particularly those related to state capacity and security-sector characteristics.

Figure V visualizes the results of the causal mediation analysis. The analyses reveal a consistent pattern across all three models: defense pacts exert their influence on domestic terrorism almost entirely through direct pathways. In each specification, the natural indirect effect (NIE) is extremely close to one and statistically insignificant ( $NIE \approx 1.00, p > 0.10$ ), demonstrating that changes in military personnel, military expenditure, or police militarization do not mediate the relationship between defense pacts and terrorism. By contrast, the natural direct effects (NDEs) are consistently below one and statistically significant—ranging from 0.60 to 0.77—indicating that defense pacts directly reduce terrorism risk by roughly 23% to 40%, depending on the model. The marginal total effects (MTEs) closely track the NDEs, confirming that the overall impact of defense pacts is almost entirely attributable to direct mechanisms rather than mediated pathways. By isolating the direct effect of and the indirect effect of a defense pact from the total effect, these analyses reject H2a and H2b, but tangibly demonstrate that *defense pacts appear to reduce domestic terrorism through mechanisms that operate independently of observable changes in military manpower, spending, or police militarization*.

One possible explanation for the effect of a defense pact on domestic terrorism is that defense pacts promote counterterrorism cooperation and enhance member states' non-military capacities to address low-intensity threats. Enhanced intelligence fusion, improved operational coordination, and the development of specialized rapid-response forces enable governments to detect plots earlier, neutralize leadership targets, and disrupt logistical networks, thereby lowering terrorists' expected probability of success. At the same time, more effective surveillance and faster response capabilities raise the anticipated costs of engaging in violent action, as the likelihood of arrest, interdiction, or organizational decapitation increases. These are not military. Rather, these mechanisms should operate primarily through policing, intelligence, and legal-institutional channels rather than through conventional military force.

A clear empirical illustration can be found in the US–Philippines alliance after 2001. Under Operation Enduring Freedom–Philippines, US special operations forces provided intelligence support, special-forces training, and operational advising to Philippine security forces without engaging in direct combat. According to a comprehensive RAND evaluation, enemy-initiated attacks in the core areas of Abu Sayyaf operations declined by more than 50 percent between 2000 and 2012, accompanied by a sharp reduction in militant strength and growing public support for government security forces. Notably, these outcomes were achieved primarily through improvements in intelligence fusion, special operations capability, and police–

military coordination rather than through simple increases in troop size or military spending.<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, it remains difficult to demonstrate this mechanism statistically because systematic cross-national data on international counterterrorism cooperation are largely unavailable. Thus, conducting a more detailed examination of this counterterrorism capacity-building channel must be left to future research using fine-grained qualitative evidence or newly developed datasets on intelligence and counterterrorism cooperation.

There are two additional findings. First, Table III shows that membership in a nonaggression pact is associated with an increase in transnational terrorism in the subsequent year. Second, membership in a consultation pact is associated with higher levels of both transnational and domestic terrorism. These results are unexpected, as I hypothesized that these pact types would have no systematic effect on terrorist behavior. Although these associations merit closer theoretical and empirical scrutiny, a detailed investigation of the underlying mechanisms is beyond the scope of this article, given space constraints.<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusion

This article conducts empirical tests of the hypotheses concerning the relationship between military alliances and terrorism incidents within member states. The analyses indicate that although defense pacts do not exert a statistically significant direct effect on terrorism overall, they demonstrate a clear and substantively meaningful deterrent effect on domestic terrorism once potential mediators are accounted for. This finding is preliminary and warrants further investigation, particularly with respect to the underlying mechanisms and the conditions under which such deterrent effects are most likely to emerge.

Still, the current finding can provide policy implications. First, although policy-oriented literature has paid little attention to the domestic implications of military alliances, this paper suggests that defense pacts may be useful to stabilize the internal security environments of allied states. Indeed, US allies such as the Philippines, Turkey, and Colombia have continued counterterrorism operations through US-led alliance frameworks. My finding provides evidence that such intra-allies cooperation is effective for deterring domestic terrorism in allied states.

Second, however, it should be noted that defense pacts do not alter transnational terrorism within allied states. Considering Plümper and Neumayer's finding that alliances increase attacks by terrorists in an allied state against citizens of other member states, having defense pacts will be counterproductive for combating transnational terrorism. This does not mean that states should abandon alliance commitments; rather, it suggests that defense pacts are ill-suited as instruments for addressing transnational terrorist threats and should be complemented by alternative forms of international cooperation specifically tailored to cross-border terrorism.

Finally, these findings caution policymakers against adopting a one-size-fits-all approach to counterterrorism through military alliances. Defense pacts appear to be effective for addressing domestically rooted terrorist threats by strengthening allied states' internal security environments, but they do not mitigate—and may even exacerbate—risks associated with transnational terrorism. Policymakers should therefore differentiate between domestic and transnational terrorist threats when leveraging alliance frameworks, relying on defense pacts primarily to enhance internal stability while pursuing broader multilateral, intelligence-driven, and law-enforcement-based cooperation to combat transnational terrorist networks.

<sup>46</sup> Linda Robinson, Patrick B. Johnston, and Gillian S. Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014* (RAND Corporation, 2016).

<sup>47</sup> Chapter 3 in my dissertation conducts further empirical analyses and robustness checks on the results indicated in this paper.