THE IMPACT OF CRIMINOLOGICAL STRAINS ON TERRORISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

by

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ABSTRACT

RILEY BELL. The impact of criminological strains on terrorism in southeast asia. (Under the direction of DR. SUNGIL HAN)

This study examines the relationship between Agnew's Macro-Level Strain theory and terrorism in Southeast Asia. Macro-Level Strain theory suggests that societal issues, such as poverty, political instability, and government oppression can lead to an increase in crime, including terrorism. This research analyzes data from the Global Terrorism Database as well as various global human development indicators to measure strains and average terrorism rates in 114 countries from 2010 to 2020. The study finds that higher levels of state-sanctioned violence are associated with increased terrorism rates globally. This study also finds higher levels of income inequality are associated with lower terrorism rates. The study also finds no significant difference in terrorism rates between Southeast Asian countries and the rest of the world. These findings suggest that Macro-Level Strain theory may partially explain global terrorism trends, but further research is needed to understand the complex relationship between strain and terrorism, particularly in the Southeast Asian region.

DEDICATION

I would like to thank my parents, Marcia and Robert Bell, as well as Kate and Sunflower Bell. You have supported me through all of my goals, and I aspire everyday to live a life of service just as you all have.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On September 11th, 2001, the terrorist organization known as Al-Qaeda carried out arguably the most notorious terrorist attack in US history. A group of hijackers took control of four American airliners and crashed the aircraft into the World Trade Centers and the Pentagon. The deadliest terrorist attack in history immediately shifted the attention of Western intelligence organizations to the evolving threat of global terrorist organizations. Since the 9/11 terrorism attack, terrorism has been one of the most prolific security issues facing the Western world in the 2000s, and the Middle East has been at the center of anti-terrorism activities (Martin, 2017).

Now that the Global War on Terror has spread from the Middle East, national security professionals are spending more time and money analyzing terrorist activity in other regions in the hopes of better understanding terrorism on a global scale (Manyin et al., 2003). This is contrary to their Middle Eastern-focused approach, which has been so prominent in American and other Western intelligence organizations over the past 20 years (Tow, 2016). One region that requires more attention is Southeast Asia.

Many researchers believe that the previous increase in terrorism in the region is due to the spread of radical Islamic terrorist organizations from the Middle East to other regions that have high concentrations of Muslim populations (Vaughn et al., 2005, p. 3). The spread is believed to be caused by the continued military and intelligence efforts in the Middle East pushing radical organizations from the region to new areas of operation, and Islam is the dominant religion in Southeast Asia, with about 240 million Muslims, which account for 42% of the Southeast population and 25% of global Muslims (CartoMission, 2015).

Southeast Asia is also home to numerous individual independence movements. Many countries in the region do not hold democratic or free elections, such as Cambodia, Brunei,

Laos, and Vietnam (CPI, 2022). Democratically elected and representative governments can be a strong deterrent to extremist behavior (Rubin & Morgan, 2021.) In addition, the limited educational and economic opportunities might increase the strain among residents due the competitive market system and a lack of fundamental resources for its citizens. Combining several oppressive governments with violent clashes among various religious and ethnic groups shows an increasing need for additional research into the volatility and violence, including terrorism activities, in the region.

Southeast Asia has seen a rise and fall in terrorist activity over the past 25 years (START, 2021). Even with terrorism decreasing in the region, the region is still very much worth additional research. Southeast Asia is a hotbed of social, political, and economic issues that have been aided and agitated by outside powers such as partner forces running joint operations with local military and law enforcement (Ciorciari, 2009; Stromseth, 2019). Studying a region with such a rapidly changing societal landscape provides better understanding of new terrorism trends and theoretical grounds for explaining terrorism activities. Even with terrorist activity decreasing, many intelligence community and national security experts believe that Southeast Asia could be an incredibly volatile region for ideological extremism.

Given the ecological, geographical, and political circumstances of the Southeast Asia region, where more terrorism activities are attracted, one of the criminological frameworks, Macro-Level Strain theory (a variant of general strain theory), that is rooted in the Anomie perspective, may better account for terrorism activities in the region. General Strain Theory (Agnew, 1992) argues that when individuals are strained by negative stimuli or the absence of positive stimuli in a specific circumstance, they tend to use deviant coping mechanisms. Macro-Level Strain theory expands on this by focusing on societal factors. Macro-Level Strain theory states that large-scale societal strains such as widespread poverty or political oppression are the underlying cause for deviance in a society (Broidy & Agnew, 1997). When it comes to terrorism, residents with a massive volume of economic, social, and political strain are more likely to take aggressive measures to spread their voice (Agnew, 2010). However,

only a few have utilized the strain perspective to explain terrorist activities.

Together, the goal of this research is to understand what motivates terrorist activity in Southeast Asia compared to the rest of the world. Given that Southeast Asia has struggled with a lack of terrorism research for years as Western powers focus on the Middle East and Africa, this research will focus on the region and the direct impacts that various strains have on the rates of terrorism. Specifically, various types of strains will be represented by global development indicators such as religious freedom, lack of education, and poverty. With multiple global indicators, this study analyzes trends in terrorist activity in Southeast Asia and compares these trends with those in other parts of the world. This study also assesses the association between strain-related indicators and terrorism activities across the globe. The relationship between these indicators and terrorist activity has the potential to provide valuable insight into concrete motivators of terrorist behaviors and even potentially serve as a predictor for terrorist activity moving forward.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Current State of Global Terrorism

While this study will focus on terrorist activity in Southeast Asia, the idea of terrorism is global. The Global Terrorism Database (GTD)defines terrorism as "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a nonstate actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation" (Start, 2021). In 2020 (the last year recorded by the GTD), there were over 8,000 terrorist attacks. This number is down from over 15,000 events in 2015 (Start, 2021). This is believed to be due to the decline/end of the Global War on Terror (Kattelman, 2020).

Modern Trends

The foundation for modern terrorism arose from the resistance of the Mujahideen against the Soviet Union, which was attempting to install the Afghan communist government (Ahmed, 2006). The effectiveness of the Mujahideen came from their decentralized structure and unconventional tactics against a numerically and technologically superior foe. Modern organizations continue with this structure as a way to "compete" with modern militaries and law enforcement. However, this technological imbalance has been changing in recent years.

The spread of the internet and smart devices from the first world has changed the dynamic of terror organizations across the globe (Celso, 2015). The training required to perform these horrific acts can now be found and shared online. Becoming a deadly terrorist has never been easier with the newfound accessibility of these terror organizations. (Stenersen, 2008). Recruitment has also been aided by technology. Now that essentially any radical individual is able to almost immediately make contact with these extremist organizations, it has allowed organizations that previously struggled to share their message without a platform to now have a global reach virtually. It has never been easier for these radical organizations

to recruit and promote their message and platform. Case in point: ISIS/ISIL allegedly now has a hacking division whose goal is to create a "cyber caliphate" (Digumurthi, 2015).

Terrorism Motivators

Understanding the common motivations for terrorism is important to better understand which metrics may be used to predict future activity. As stated above, The Global Terrorism Database defines terrorism as "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a nonstate actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation" (Start, 2021). This definition outlines some larger motives for global terrorism.

Among numerous driving forces, political and religious struggles are the most common motivations for modern terrorism (Cooper, 2005). The oppression (or perceived oppression) of political and religious ideologies can be found throughout the globe. However, these factors are exasperated when other struggles, such as economic or social problems, are present (Crenshaw, 1981). Weaker central governments and poorly trained military and law enforcement are also common in countries with higher levels of terrorism (Tikuisis, 2009).

Political Goals

Political goals are one of the most common objectives for global terror organizations. A political goal can have many different objectives, from changing a state's boundaries to overthrowing a government (Fromkin, 1975). Terror organizations utilize violence and fear among the populace in an attempt to create political change. Regime changes or radical representation in government are common goals for political terror organizations. Many of these groups view their government as illegitimate and unnecessarily restrictive (Elshtain, 2007). Many groups feel that their belief system should be more represented in government as it would better suit the population and the goals of the extremist organization.

Another common political goal (especially in Southeast Asia) is the desire to change, add, or remove existing state boundaries and territories. The most common goal regarding the changing of boundaries is fragmenting a state. There are many organizations that desire

to break away from existing government systems and self-govern. For instance, the region of Kashmir in India has been subject to terrorist activity for almost half a century because local populations in India and Pakistan have disagreements over where the border for that region should be (Murphy, 2021). Oftentimes, this is due to a religious or political difference between a population and the smaller, more extreme subset of that population.

Some organizations may be more focused on specific policy changes rather than overthrowing the government or complete defiance of the rule of law. The Barisan Revolusi Nasional Coordinate in Thailand has the ultimate goal of total sovereignty. However, it currently advocates for specific policy changes regarding religious freedom and economic practices (Chen & Chen, 2021). Some groups have used terrorist activity to simply draw attention from both the government and the civilian population to their chosen cause.

Economic Goals.

Economic goals are much easier to conceptualize. Many terror organizations have an interest in economic objectives. However, they can vary wildly, and how these terrorist organizations go about achieving this goal can be done in many different ways. Maybe the most prominent strategy that terror organizations will pursue an economic objective is through economic disruption. Organizations know how powerful interfering with the economy can be to garner the support or notoriety of the public (Lenain et. al, 2002). Attacks on infrastructure vital to the economic system are one of the many ways this is done.

Other organizations may have an economic goal of building more wealth for the organization. The Taliban was notorious for focusing on building mining infrastructure. They forcefully took gold mines in rural parts of Afghanistan and all across Africa to increase the capability of their organization (Paz & Terdman, 2006). At the time, the Taliban was fighting the Afghan National Army and needed resources. These gold mines provided much-needed aid to their movement, which ended up being successful.

While some organizations strive to acquire wealth to strengthen the organization, some are motivated by individual wealth. Many terror organizations in Southeast Asia are com-

pared more with criminal gangs than the standard definition of terrorism. Because of the fragmented, decentralized nature of many of these organizations, financial motivations are often more focused on individual wealth attainment rather than advancing the goals of the organization (O'Brien, 2012). Unlike the Taliban, many organizations in Southeast Asia are known for for kidnapping and ransoming Western foreigners (O'Brien, 2012). While this does have the potential to provide greater motivation for individual cells to commit acts of "terror" when the actors involved have a significant financial incentive, it has the potential to further decentralize the organization and lose sight of the common goal (O'Brien, 2012). Overall, terror organizations can have several different financial motivators.

Religious Goals

Religious extremism is the most common form of terrorism in the modern era due to many radical organizations in the Middle East. Religious terrorism often exists with the goal of creating a separate theocratic state or modifying the existing government to be more in line with specific religious values. Organizations that have religious goals often persecute those of different faiths and want a more strictly enforced form of governance that aligns more with their religion's doctrine. For many groups, a religious goal can be the primary objective while having other motivations tied in that aid the overall "religious mission" (Gillooly, 2006).

Many radical extremist organizations have the ultimate goal of spreading their ideology worldwide. Radical Muslim extremist groups are the most commonly known example. The term "Global Caliphate" refers to the desire to have the entire world under one Islamic system (Tziarras, 2017). This also often involves strict adherence to Sharia law or some other religious governing code. To accomplish this, many radical Islamic organizations have begun spreading their message online, and setting up new cells in areas that previously have not had a large Islamic extremist presence (Stenersen, 2008).

Radical religious organizations aren't always targeting the government. There are countless terrorist organizations based on extremist religious values and beliefs that are more focused on other social goals. Often, these goals involve the persecution of those who follow

a different faith or strict adherence to an extremist set of religious and ideological views (Hoffman, 1995).

Social Goals

Social goals are somewhat of an all-encompassing term for what a terror organization wants to accomplish. Almost all objectives can fall under a social goal. However, the most commonly recognized involve challenging a societal norm or advocating for some semblance of perceived social justice (Dingley, 2016). It is important to note that despite the legitimacy and possible public support for some of these causes, they are still viewed as terrorist organizations, because violence is the ultimate tool to achieving their aspirations.

Some organizations exist to "advocate" for a specific social or geographical group. Often, these are ethnic or national groups that hope to assert their identity and place in society into the forefront to promote their legitimacy. The Lashkar-e-Omar and their battle for control of the Kashmir valley in India outlines this perfectly (Murphy, 2021)

Organizations rooted in social justice and other goals are a subset of terrorism that are not covered as widely as others. One example is organizations involved in environmental terrorism, or "eco-terrorism." Eco-terrorism is terrorist activity motivated by a desire to protect the planet and its natural resources (Buell, 2009). While not nearly as prominent as other types of terrorism, it does follow the same definition of terrorism that this study uses. However, it is often not viewed in the same light as other forms of terrorism due to the potential for having much higher levels of public support.

Social justice is not always the social root of a terrorist organization's motivation. There are other groups who disagree with the direction of a society or culture and feel the need to push back. Extremist organizations that fight against abortion access, LGBT rights, and other civil rights can be classified as terrorist organizations if they attempt to achieve their goals through violence and fear (Bader & Baird-Windle, 2015).

2.2. Strain and Terrorism

General Strain Theory is a prominent criminological theory suggesting that people be-

come involved in deviant behavior in an effort to acquire what societal norms and peers would view as a desirable life or goal (Agnew, 1985). The most common examples of stressors in the context of criminal justice are poverty, political instability, religious persecution, and a lack of basic human needs and rights (Crenshaw, 1981). Even the perceived lack of these characteristics can be enough of a strain to cause deviance (even if these characteristics are actually present or are absent due to the actions of the deviant individual).

While strain theory is more often viewed as a concept to understand individual delinquency and deviance, it can also be applied to terrorism, as the underlying principles regarding terrorism involve a motivation to commit deviant acts to rectify perceived shortcomings in an individual's life (Agnew, 2016). When one breaks down what terrorism really is, it is often a collection of individuals who are essentially committing crimes to try to change their circumstances or the circumstances of others. When terrorism is viewed through this lens, it makes perfect sense why strain theory is applicable to terrorist activity (Agnew, 2010). These societal struggles that terror organizations experience cause continued radical extremism.

The definition of terrorism provided by the GTD indirectly outlines various strains that theoretically would have an impact on terrorism rates. The GTD outlines that terrorism is showing or using force to attain set goals. (Start, 2021). This concept becomes much clearer if terrorism is viewed from a criminological standpoint. Sources of strain such as poverty, political oppression, and a lack of religious freedom can be applied to terrorism the same way they can be applied to crime. When simplified, the root of terrorism comes from a lack of positive stimulus or the presence of a negative stimulus. While the comparison between the motivations of crime and terrorist activity offers slight differences, their overall root causes can be the same (Fisher & Kearns, 2024). The stimuli being discussed essentially is an example of strain that extremists are experiencing.

In addition, Agnew (2010) also highlighted the importance of collective strain in explaining terrorism from a strain perspective. Specifically, when civilians are significantly

affected by powerful others, such as governments or complicit civilian groups, strains will have impacts on society as a whole. Political strain can often be classified as collective strain since most government actions have considerable impacts of high magnitude and are carried out by powerful entities. Government activity is theorized to be a leading cause for terrorist activity (Mohammed, 2022).

Macro-Level Strain theory

Similarly, Macro-Level Strain theory (MLST) focuses on more widespread issues faced by a group or society that are rooted in structural inequality or hardship (Sexton, 2011). While structural inequality often involves government, MLST is not exclusive to government. Widespread discrimination or persecution at a societal level would be considered a macro-level strain, even if the government did not condone the activity. MLST is similar to collective strains in that their reach is often spread across an entire society or a subset of society. For instance, Freilich et al. (2015) examined the number of far-right extremist and related-homicide rates in the USA and found that one of the strain-related variables, 'percentage of people in a county divorced', is a significant predictor of far-right homicide.

The macro strains found in MLST can be a hotbed for radicalized behavior. The individuals who experience these societal strains are often the ones targeted for recruitment by terror organizations (Lafree, 2021). The perceived outcasts of the society may also feel motivated by these macro strains to seek out these radical organizations. The social, economic, and other societal strains can weaken the social bonds that an individual may feel with their community which increases their likelihood of radicalization.

One of the main points of MLST is that these strains are often interconnected and reinforce each other. For instance, racial inequality and discrimination can be a social strain. However, when that strain of racism begins to impact the financial and political well-being of families, The Strain has spread to the macro-level and now all of the individual strains are exacerbated.

MLST also requires a relative failure of wants and needs not being met. An individual

may feel that there is an imbalance between what one has and what one feels they deserve (Agnew, 2010). This can be manifested in many different ways but this is primarily tied to materialistic feelings or something more abstract such as a desire for power or control.

Agnew's 3 Tenets

Agnew (2010) argues that the collective strains relevant to terrorism can be categorized as "(a) high in magnitude, with civilians affected; (b) unjust; and (c) inflicted by significantly more powerful others, including 'complicit' civilians, with whom members of the strained collectivity have weak ties" (p. 148).

"High in magnitude, with civilians affected" (Agnew, 2010) is broken down to events or situations of a great severity where individuals not involved with the criminological behavior (in this case, terrorism) are influenced. While Agnew (2010) clarifies throughout his research that magnitude can be subjective based on who is experiencing the strain, this research will focus on collective strains that are widespread and severe enough to where they are measurable by global indicators.

"Perceived as unjust" refers to the perceived or actual inequalities experienced by the population of a country. This injustice can come from all walks of life but mainly focuses on unfair treatment from the government or society (Agnew, 2010). This is the most clear tie to collective strains as this can represent the dismay of a populace from unequal circumstances or treatment. The perception of injustice can fuel marginalized groups to unite through their frustration. This is made apparent when looking at the rise of Abu Sayyaf Group, One of the prominent terror organizations in the Philippines. Their rise to power was in part fueled by the discrimination experienced by the Muslim Moro minority (Turner, 2003).

Finally, "Inflicted by substantially more powerful others, including 'complicit' civilians, with whom members of the strained group have weak ties" (Agnew, 2010) is by far the most complex of the categories provided to us. This best represents the idea of weak or absent ties between the oppressed individual and the oppressor. This type of strain is often more severe than other forms of inequality due to the imbalance of power with the inequality generally

benefiting those in a position of power (Agnew, 2010).

2.3. Terrorism in Southeast Asia

As of 2020, terrorism activities in Southeast Asia accounted for roughly five percent of total terrorism activities across the globe. This number is down roughly two percent from 2015 (Start, 2020). While the proportion of terrorist events occurring in this region is decreasing, terrorism in Southeast Asia is still in need of research as the focus of most counterterrorism efforts focused on the Middle East (Rassler, 2021). While major players have remained relatively consistent, the landscape of terrorism in Southeast Asia is constantly changing. Most adopt a style similar to guerrilla warfare, where they most effectively operate hidden in dense urban areas or remote jungles. Many intelligence experts and academics believe that Southeast Asia has the potential to be a hotbed for terrorism if action is not taken (Lim, 2019).

The goal of radical organizations such as Jemaah Islamiyah and the Abu Sayyaf Group was to increase civilian casualties and to strike fear into the local population through attacks, kidnapping, and thefts. The organizations gained name recognition from orchestrating these attacks, and reducing the perceived legitimacy of the governments they fought against in the eyes of citizens. They wanted to make these governments appear weak and powerless to save the citizens from violence and terror (Polo, 2020). These characteristics are common in Southeast Asian terrorism. However, they are not unique to the region as they were popularized by several different groups during the Global War on Terror in the Middle East.

Civilian targets were also seen as a more opportune target, as most organizations simply don't have the ability to successfully perform attacks on government installations (Polo, 2020). Whether it be due to a lack of personnel, training, finances, or equipment, it simply is not feasible for the majority of these radical organizations to focus on government targets when they can often get a similar effect of panic and fear by focusing on "soft" civilian targets.

These organizations have to constantly adapt their tactics and strategies to remain ahead of the advancements of counterterrorism units and the technology these units utilize

to track and prevent the activities of radical organizations (Hamilton-Hart, 2005). These organizations quickly realized that targeting government installations (specifically military and police units) would not be successful for their cause (Sluka, 2008). Many organizations have transitioned to focusing on civilian targets, which have higher traffic in areas with large population densities. Places like restaurants, religious buildings, stores, and other areas with large concentrations of civilian traffic all became more common targets (Polo, 2020).

New technology is not the only change in the past to more effectively accomplish these radical organizations' goals. The decentralized nature of these extremists has previously been mentioned as a weakness but should also be viewed as a source of strength. The decentralized nature of most Southeast Asian terrorist organizations creates a level of resilience that helps them survive through ongoing efforts from military and police counterterrorism units. This is due to the ability of each individual cell to operate autonomously and survive on its own. They do not have an over-reliance on each other to the point where one cell's operations couldn't exist if another cell's operations were impeded by government intervention or a lack of resources. This also means that gathering actionable intelligence on the organizations as a whole can be difficult due to the isolated nature of the individual cells (Banlaoi, 2009) and the willingness to succeed and survive if necessary.

The strength of these organizations' decentralized nature also comes from their ability to cater their operations and activities to the local populace (Eckert, 2005). Understanding societies and complex cultures at play. Being able to adapt your mission and goals to better fit the society you are trying to change is a necessary skill when engaging in any political activism, regardless of how radical that activism may be. In that sense, each individual terrorist cell will have crucial knowledge of the specifics of where they operate that a more centralized structure could never understand and cater to effectively.

Jemaah Islamiyah

Jemaah Islamiyah is one of the two largest and most influential terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia (NCTC, 2013). In Arabic, Jemaah Islamiyah translates to "Islamic

Community." The organization's roots trace back to the Middle East, where its founders were involved in the Mujahideen's fight against the Soviet Union and their occupation of Afghanistan (NCTC, 2022). While Southeast Asia does have a high Muslim population, none of the countries in the region practice Sharia law at the federal level (Hefner, 2017). The ideology that Jemaah Islamiyah has created for its followers dictates that the organization is obligated to implement Sharia law, and anything less keeps Muslims from freely practicing their faith (Jones, 2005). The organization believes that this objective is so important that violence can and should be used to accomplish it. Jemaah Islamiyah does not have a formal hierarchy but rather a decentralized chain of command (Jones, 2005). Jemaah Islamiyah is set up throughout Southeast Asia and runs different "operations" in each country. Each local faction operates semi-autonomously so that it can provide a more targeted effort based on the unique circumstances of each city and country. While the method of achieving their vision may be different across different factions, the mission of establishing a strong caliphate across Southeast Asia remains at the forefront of all terrorist activity that Jemaah Islamiyah claims responsibility for.

Abu Sayyaf Group

The Abu Sayyaf Group is another large radical Muslim terror organization in Southeast Asia. While the group does operate on radical Muslim ideals, it is different from the Jemaah Islamiyah in that their original mission is to fight for independence for the Moro in the Philippines and to create a sovereign Islamic state in the region (Fellman, 2011). The Moro is a group of Muslim Filipinos in the southern Philippines who are seeking independence from the Filipino government (Badu, 2011). However, the Abu Sayyaf group is separate from the organized Moro movement, as its formation was caused when radical members of the Moro National Liberation Front left the organization to found the Abu Sayyaf group (Fellman, 2011).

While the original mission of the Abu Sayyaf Group may have been to advocate for the independence of the Moro in the southern Philippines, the ideology evolved and was

warped from the independence movement into a decentralized organization that still wanted a sovereign Islamic state but also attempted to push radical Islamic ideology and violent criminal behavior (Ugarte & Turner, 2011).

The Abu Sayyaf Group has much stronger financial motivations than other organizations in the region. The activity the group is most known for involves kidnapping wealthy citizens or tourists and holding them for ransom (O'Brien, 2012). This sort of activity targets high-profile individuals, which tends to catch the attention of Western nations, and, in turn, leads to an increase in funding, training, and other sorts of military and law enforcement support from the west. However, their tactics stem further from just kidnapping and ransom. They are also known for their execution of those they deem political prisoners.

Terrorism in Southeast Asia has many different causes. Some radical organizations believe that the oppression that comes from being Muslim in Southeast Asia creates a situation where they cannot freely and openly practice their faith. There's also a historical component, as some Muslim communities have been historically marginalized by the government and citizens of the region (Missbach & Stange, 2021). Other organizations take a more extreme approach in that they believe the oppression of Muslims in Southeast Asia comes from a lack of Sharia law and control over the federal government.

Another factor in potential terrorism is a lack of resources available to certain communities. Income inequality and poverty are very serious issues in Southeast Asia (Jomo, 2001). Aside from this, Muslim communities have historically faced discrimination and persecution from the government (Stewart, 2010). This specifically ties into criminological strain theory, as the perceived needs of some Muslim communities in the region are not being met, which could explain the terrorist activity. This disparity is not limited to financial inequality. Access to safe healthcare and quality educational opportunities are also issues that are persistent in Southeast Asia (Chongvilaivan, 2014).

Aside from all the internal motivations that may help explain the rise in terrorist activity, the external motivation of the spread of radical Islamic terrorism in the Middle East due to

the Global War on Terror must be considered.

Government Responses to Terrorism in Southeast Asia

In response to the new terrorist threats that were forming in Southeast Asia, many of the region's governments have taken new counterterrorism measures with the goal of preventing further loss of life and disrupting organizations (Banlaoi, 2009). These new measures come with various levels of success that are still being determined as these modern conflicts continue to wage on.

The most basic change is in regards to the overall increase in security in the region. Many governments have implemented stronger border and immigration policies along with more surveillance measures in an effort to hinder the movement of individuals involved in radical extremist organizations (Emmers, 2009). The most concrete example of the changes made to combat these terrorist organizations involves the creation of military and law enforcement counterterrorism units with influence from Western powers such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Banlaoi, 2009). Each of these nations has dedicated counterterrorism units that are capable of operating domestically and internationally. The creation of these Tier 1 units has had great influence on Southeast Asia and the terror organizations within the region (Vaughn et al., 2005).

To ensure that these units have the resources necessary to combat the region's radical organizations, they receive extra money, training, and equipment from their respective governments (Tan, 2018). They also train with other counterterrorism teams from the International Community so that they can learn the lessons learned by other units during combat, specifically the Global War on Terror and conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa and South America (Komasz, 2018).

Many Southeast Asian countries have recognized the evolving threat and are now collaborating together to try to combat these new threats. Many of the organizations spread across borders and threaten the legitimacy of all nations in the region. Therefore, some countries have opted to create joint task forces and alliances and shared intelligence operations (U.S.

Navy Naval History and Heritage Command, n.d.) in an attempt to crack down on these threats. They also train together so they can have a stronger, more unified response against these radical organizations.

While these efforts have foiled several attacks, they do create a potential ethical concern. With increases in surveillance and more proactive law enforcement activities comes a potential overreach of power by the government that could be seen as a breach of civil liberties. Inequality of all kinds is prevalent across Southeast Asia. The use of mass surveillance and profiling can create tension between the federal governments of the region and counterterrorism units and those that need their protection.

These increased surveillance programs and more proactive counterterrorism tactics need to be handled delicately. It is important that these programs are handled ethically, as a misuse of this power could be viewed as motivation by radical organizations that recognize legitimate government overreach. Providing these radical extremists with more motivation to increase their activity would be detrimental. A misuse of these programs may even win these extremist organizations public support as they could then sympathize with the motivations and ideologies established by these groups (Bueno de Mesquita & Dickson, 2007).

These programs even have the ability to potentially radicalize the individuals they are trying to protect due to overreach on the part of the government. It is also important that these programs be monitored to ensure they are being ethically conducted. The focus should be placed on finding a safe middle ground between protecting public safety and protecting the individual's right to privacy and personal liberties.

2.4. Current Study

The aim of this study will be to determine how some strains impact terrorism rates in the region. This study seeks to answer three questions regarding terrorism in the Southeast Asia region. There is existing research on this topic. The vast majority claim that there is a strong relationship between strains and terrorism (Agnew, 2010; Breen, 2019; Nivette et al., 2017). However, most existing literature on this topic has been focused primarily on

Western society. The study aims to understand the analytical relationship between strain and terrorism and to determine if strain does indeed increase the rates of terrorism in Southeast Asia. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Do countries in the Southeast Asia region struggle with higher terrorism rates than other parts of the world?
2. Do the strains explain the terrorism rates in Southeast Asia?
3. Which strains had the strongest impact on terrorism rates in Southeast Asia?

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3.1. Data

For the study, numerous global indexes and country-level indicators are drawn from various sources. First, to collect information of terrorism, the number of terrorism incidents per country is featured by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). The GTD is an open-source data set that has been collecting data since 1970. The GTD was founded and is currently curated by the University of Maryland with the goal of creating the largest and most detailed publicly accessible terrorism database in the world. For data collection, the GTD utilizes a combination of government reporting as well as open-source analysis of local newspapers, TV networks, and social media activity (Start, 2022). According to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), there are ten member countries in this region, including "Philippines," "Cambodia," "Brunei," "Thailand," "Myanmar," "Malaysia," "Singapore," "Indonesia," "Laos," and "Vietnam." However, the common criteria that is widely used in the global community tends to include "East Timor" as well (e.g., UN environment program). GTD also defines these 11 countries as being located in the Southeast Asian region (START, 2022).

To ensure that there was consistent and reliable data from the GTD as well as other variables, this study will focus on the years of 2010 to 2020. From 2010 to 2020, there were 149 countries that experienced a terror event according to the Global Terrorism Database. Of the Southeast Asian countries outlined earlier in this research, Brunei, Singapore, and East Timor are not represented in the data as there were no recorded terror attacks within the timeframe. It is important to note that the absence of a country within the time frame does not necessarily mean that there were no terror events in the time frame being analyzed. The Global Terrorism Database acknowledges that some countries do not have reported

incidents due to a lack of reliable data collection.

In addition, there were 35 countries that did not have consistent data for the previously outlined variables. This can occur for a variety of reasons but the most common were excessive gaps in data and inconsistent country lists. While this study focused on selecting variables with a strong reputation for accuracy and validity, many of the global indicators are not able to record a score for every country, every year.In an effort to maintain data integrity, these countries were removed from the data set. Among these countries was Cambodia, a country from the Southeast Asian region. After these removals, there are 114 countries remaining in the sample and seven of these countries are in the Southeast Asian region (Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos).

3.2. Measures

This study aims to examine the relationship between strain-related factors and terrorism activities, especially focusing on the Southeast Asia region. Therefore, terrorism will be the main measure for this research. Specifically, the measure of terrorism will be determined by the terrorism rate per 100,000 people. The Global Terrorism Database features the population of each country and produces terrorism rates per 100,000 people. To capture the most recent and general trends of terrorism activities, this research will use terrorism rates from 2010 to 2020. The terrorist activity as well as all other variables were averaged to provide a singular average terrorism rate representing the 11-years of terrorism rates. This average terrorism rate will be the dependent variable. In addition, the GTD covers domestic, transnational, and international terrorism incidents that have occurred in a country. This study will not differentiate what type of terrorism it is. The only location information being analyzed will be where the terror event occurred. As a result, a higher value indicates higher terrorism rates that include domestic, transnation, and international activities between 2010 and 2020.

The study will focus on the Southeast Asian region as a major independent variable. As

previously mentioned, ASEAN classifies these 10 countries in the Southeast Asian Region including "Philippines," "Cambodia," "Brunei," "Thailand," "Myanmar," "Malaysia," "Singapore," "Indonesia," "Laos," and "Vietnam." The global community often includes "East Timor". The GTD also defines these 11 countries as being located in the Southeast Asian region (START, 2022). However, after data cleanings, only 7 countries remain. Therefore, these 7 countries in Southeast Asia are marked as "Southeast Asian," and a dichotomous variable is created (Southeast Asia = 1).

In this study, numerous strain-related indicators are utilized, and they are categorized into three groups. Agnew (2010) argues that the collective strains relevant to terrorism can be categorized as "(a) high in magnitude, with civilians affected; (b) unjust; and (c) inflicted by significantly more powerful others, including 'complicit' civilians, with whom members of the strained collectivity have weak ties"(p. 148). This study will be utilizing various global indicators for each category of collective strain.

First, "High in magnitude, with civilians affected". To measure these themes, this research will analyze the Fragile State Index, the Global Freedom Score, and the GDP per capita. The Fragile States Index measures the fragility of a country through measuring the security and social cohesion of a country. This metric was created by the Fund for Peace and grades each country on a scale of 0-120 where lower scores indicate higher levels of stability. This index will be analyzed to determine what the impact of the overall well-being of society has on terrorist activity. The Global Freedom Score is an annual assessment done by Freedom House. The score grades countries On a scale of 1-7 based on their political rights and civil liberties to determine the overall level of freedom that an individual living in a graded country may experience. This metric has the potential to be a strong overall representation of political strain, and lack of rights and liberties that would considerably influence civilians would definitely be considered a strain under this research's definition. Lastly, economic prosperity will be measured by the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. This metric is measured by the total value of goods and services produced by a

country divided by the number of citizens. The World Bank's World Development Indicators calculates this data. Since GDP per capita indicates the economic status of the country, lower scores should indicate higher strain, which has the potential to lead to higher levels of terrorism. And because this measure is taken at the per capita level, it encompasses the "with civilians affected" nature.

The second tenet is "Perceived as unjust". This will be represented by the GINI Index, The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project protest data, and the Corruption Perceptions Index. The GINI index Is a global metric created by the World Bank to measure the severity of income inequality in a country. it is scored on a scale of 0-100 where zero represents perfect income equality and 100 indicates the most severe level of income inequality. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) provides data surrounding the number of recognized protests in a country By tracking recorded protest and demonstrations within a country. This could be a strong indicator of a dissatisfied society that is probably unjust and can provide a quantifiable reference for citizens voicing displeasure for a political establishment. Finally, the Corruption Perceptions Index is an index that measures the corruption level of a country and the measures that they take to fight corruption. This is recorded on a 0-100 scale where 100 is a perfect score and indicates a complete lack of corruption. Injustice is evident in an index measuring corruption. The lack of ethical responsibility from government officials who are supposed to represent their citizens creates a perfect example of injustice.

Lastly, "Inflicted by substantially more powerful others, including 'complicit' civilians, with whom members of the strained group have weak ties". One of the indicators used to measure political strain will be the Political Terror Scale (PTS). This indicator essentially ranks violent government interactions with civilian citizens On a five-point scale with a five indicating the highest level of government violence. The relationship between this type of political strain and terrorism is very clear, as an oppressive and abusive government can be an incredibly strong strain for a terrorist organization. The Clean Elections Index is an

index that essentially grades countries on their ability and willingness to hold free and fair democratic elections. This index scores countries on a scale from 0-1 where higher scores indicate higher levels of democratic elections. Unfair election practices by those in power would clearly cause displeasure and frustration in a populace. Finally, the unemployment rate is a metric measured by the World Bank. This metric calculates the percentage of individuals in the labor force who are unemployed but are actively seeking employment.This metric can be useful in determining the overall well-being of a country as well as demonstrating the potential inequality between classes.

3.3. Analytic Approach

To examine the complex relationship between strains represented by global indicators and terrorism, this study used several different statistical methods. First, the study utilized descriptive statistics for all variables. This was done to understand the central tendencies, distributions, and trends of all the data. This includes calculating means, standard deviations, minimums, and maximums for all data. This information helps us to understand the characteristics of the sample of the study

Next, a mean comparison t-test was performed to compare the average terrorism rates between countries located in the Southeast Asian region and those located outside of the region. This test was performed to determine if there was a preliminary statistically significant difference between the two terrorism rates.

After the t-test, a bivariate correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between the strain indicator variables and the terrorism rates. This was done to identify potential concerns with multicollinearity, which may affect the validity of upcoming regression analyses. The Strain variables that had highest levels of correlation with other variables were removed from further analysis in an attempt to prevent multicollinearity issues from occurring during the regression.

Finally, this study will utilize ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis to examine the impact of strain indicators on terrorism rates. This study will utilize two models.

The first model focused solely on the impact that strain indicators have on the average global terrorism rates. The second model focused on the impact that strain indicators may have on the average global terrorism rates and the impact of strains on the Southeast Asian average terrorism rates. This is done using interaction terms with a binary Southeast Asian variable. The results of these two models were used to recognize any strain indicators that had a statistically significant relationship with average terrorism rates globally or in the average terrorism rates for the Southeast Asian region

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The sample of this study consists of 114 different countries found in the GTD and seven independent variables after data cleaning and preliminary analysis. As shown in Table 1, these countries have an average terrorism rate of 0.14, with a range from 0 to 4.74 over the 11-year average. The mean of the Fragile State Index Is 69.59, which indicates a moderate-high level of State fragility. The average Global Freedom Score is 3.38, which suggests Limited civil rights and liberties. The average GDP per Capita is $13,047.28 with extreme variation around the globe. The average GINI Index is 37.48, indicating a moderate level of income inequality. The mean ACLED Protest data is 750.1, indicating a moderate level of protest activity. The average Corruption Perception Index 42.71, indicating moderate levels of corruption. The mean Political Terror Scale is 2.59, which is representative of Moderate levels of political violence. The mean unemployment rate is 7.77%, with significant variation across sampled countries. Finally, 6.14% of the countries sampled were in the predefined Southeast Asian region.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics (N=114)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Terrorism Rate	0.14	0.48	0	4.74
Fragile State Index	69.59	22.77	20.9	109.1
Global Freedom Score	3.38	1.72	1	6.82
GDP per Capita	13047.28	18295.55	240	85650
GINI Index	37.48	7.41	25.2	63.2
ACLED Protest Data	750.1	1593.32	0.64	12664
Corruption Perception Index	42.71	18.79	13	89.44
Political Terror Scale	2.59	1.08	1	4.91
Clean Elections Index	0.58	0.3	0	0.98
Unemployment Percentage	7.77	5.39	0.67	26.41
Southeast Asia Variable	0.06	0.24	0	1

4.2. Mean Comparison T-Test

A mean comparison t-test was run between the average global terrorism rate excluding Southeast Asia and the Southeast Asia binary variable. As shown in Table 2, the results of the T-Test indicate that the average terrorism rate for Southeast Asian countries is 0.1365 while countries outside of Southeast Asia have an average rate of 0.0614. The mean for Southeast Asian countries is over twice then observed average terrorism rate for countries not in Southeast Asia. A t-value of 1.4909 was recorded but this was not found to be statistically significant and thus we failed to reject the null hypothesis of no difference.

From a practical point of view, this test demonstrates that there is no significant difference between countries within or outside of Southeast Asia. However, it should be stated that this conclusion may require further analysis, potentially with a more comprehensive data set or analytical method.

Table 4.2: T-Test Results for Average Terrorism Rate and the Southeast Asia Variable

Variables	**Mean**	**t-value**
Average Terrorism Rate	0.1365	1.4909
Southeast Asia Variable	0.0614	
df	166.46	
p-value	0.1379	
95% Confidence Interval	[-0.0244, 0.1746]	
Alternative Hypothesis	True difference in means is not equal to 0	

4.3. Bivariate Correlation Tests

Bivariate correlation tests were performed to examine any potential relationships between terrorism and strain-related variables and the issue of multicollinearity between the global indicators.

There were four variables that showed a statistically significant association with the average terrorism rate (the dependent variable). The Fragile State Index ($r = 0.23$, $p < .05$), the Global Freedom Score ($r = -0.21$, $p < .05$), the Corruption Perception Index ($r = -0.19$, $p < .05$), and the Political Terror Scale ($r = 0.28$, $p < .01$). The FSI and the PTS both had positive correlations indicating that as their respective scores increased, so did the average terrorism rate. The GFS and the CPI both had negative correlations which would indicate that the relationship between the terrorism rate snd the global indicator is inversed.

The results of this test created some concerns that had to be addressed. To begin, the Fragile State Index was highly correlated with the Global Freedom Score, the GDP per Capita, the Corruption Perception Index, the Political Terror Scale, and the Clean Election Score. The Clean Election Score and the Corruption Perceptions Index also raised concerns with more than one other variable regarding multicollinearity. Because of this, the Fragile State Index, the Clean Election Score, and the Corruption Perceptions Index were removed.

Conveniently, only one indicator for each tenant of Agnew's (2010) theory regarding Macro-Level Strain theory and terrorism had to be removed. This leaves two global indicators for each tenant of Agnew's theory.

Table 4.3: Correlation Matrix (N=142)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Terrorism Rate	1										
Fragile State Index	0.23 *	1									
Global Freedom Score	0.21 *	0.83 ***	1								
GDP per Capita	-0.057	-0.82 ***	-0.63 ***	1							
GINI Index	-0.11	0.36 ***	0.13	-0.42 ***	1						
ACLED Protest Data	-0.0064	-0.16	-0.16	0.11	-0.053	1					
Corruption Perception Index	-0.19 *	-0.9 ***	-0.76 ***	0.85 ***	-0.37 ***	0.1	1				
Political Terror Scale	0.28 **	0.8 ***	0.76 ***	-0.63 ***	0.29 **	0.089	-0.75 ***	1			
Free And Fair Elections	-0.14	-0.81 ***	-0.91 ***	0.63 ***	-0.15	0.2 *	0.77 ***	-0.71 ***	1		
Unemployment Rate	0.088	-0.043	-0.044	-0.038	0.079	0.035	-0.01	-0.051	0.017	1	
Southeast Asia Variable	-0.0045	0.11	0.18	-0.13	0.041	-0.083	-0.11	0.16	-0.13	-0.26 **	1

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

4.4. Regression Analysis

After removing three global indicators due to issues regarding multicollinearity (Fragile State Index, Corruption Perception Index, and the Clean Election Index), this study ran two separate OLS regression analysis models between average terrorism rates and strain-related variables. One was the Southeast Asian binary variable, six were global development indicators (representing strain), and six were the global indicator's corresponding Interaction terms with the Southeast Asia binary variable.

Two regression models were created for this research. The first model focused on the impact of global strain indicators and the Southeast Asian region had on the average global terrorism rates. The second model added interaction terms to focus specifically on how these global indicators impacted terrorism rates in Southeast Asia. The first model had an adjusted R-squared value of 0.10, while the second model had an adjusted R-squared value of 0.06. This indicates that the first model explained 10% of the variance in terrorism rates, while the second model explained 6%. The addition of the interaction terms did not improve the model's fit. After the analysis, five of the variables were observed to have no statistically significant relationship with average terrorism rates. These variables were the Global Freedom Score, GDP per capita, ACLED Protest Data, Unemployment Rate, and the Southeast Asia variable. The insignificance of the Southeast Asia variable indicates that the Southeast Asia region does not successfully explain the variation in terrorism rates across countries.

Table 4.4: OLS Regression Results

Predictor	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)	0.00	0.33	0.01	0.9957
Global Freedom Score	-0.02	0.04	-0.37	0.7160
GDP per Capita	0.00	0.00	1.10	0.2749
GINI Index	-0.01	0.01	-1.98	**0.0500***
ACLED Protest Data	0.00	0.00	-0.96	0.3403
Political Terror Scale	0.22	0.07	3.16	**0.0021****
Unemployment Rate	0.01	0.01	1.39	0.1672
Southeast Asia Variable	-0.05	0.19	-0.24	0.8088
Residual standard error:		0.46 on 106 degrees of freedom		
Multiple R-squared:				0.16
Adjusted R-squared:				0.10
F-statistic:				2.80 on 7 and 106 DF
p-value:				0.01

The GINI Index

The GINI Index has a statistically significant (-0.05 in the first model, -0.04687 in the second model) negative relationship with average terrorism rates. A "0" on the GINI Index represents perfect income equality, So a negative correlation would suggest that higher levels of income inequality may indicate lower levels of terrorist activity.

This study hypothesized that the GINI Index would have a positive relationship with average terrorism rates both globally and in Southeast Asia.It is difficult to explain this finding as it is contradictory to this study's hypothesis, the theoretical framework that this study is built upon, and traditional criminological belief.

One possibility is that countries with higher income inequality would also have weaker governments. These weaker governments may allow for extreme groups to operate relatively unencumbered. This may ultimately lead to lower levels of terrorism. However, additional research should be conducted. On the same note, because the GTD bases data collection heavily on government reports, there might be a discrepancy regarding countries with higher levels of income inequality underreporting terrorist activity (Drakos, 2007).

The Political Terror Scale

The Political Terror Scale (PTS) is the second indicator that had a statistically signif-

Table 4.5: OLS Regression Results

Variable	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)	0.01	0.34	0.04	0.97076
Global Freedom Score	-0.02	0.05	-0.40	0.68988
GDP per Capita	0.00	0.00	1.08	0.28334
GINI Index	-0.01	0.01	-2.01	0.04687*
ACLED Protest Data	0.00	0.00	-0.96	0.33853
Political Terror Scale	0.23	0.08	2.98	0.00364**
Unemployment Rate	0.01	0.01	1.36	0.17730
Southeast Asia Variable	-3.22	11.30	-0.28	0.77670
Southeast Asia Global Freedom Score	0.07	0.75	0.10	0.92206
Southeast Asia GDP per Capita	0.00	0.00	-0.21	0.83325
Southeast Asia GINI Index	0.11	0.21	0.54	0.58795
Southeast Asia ACLED Protest Data	0.00	0.00	0.38	0.70395
Southeast Asia Political Terror Scale	-0.31	0.44	-0.71	0.47840
Southeast Asia Unemployment Rate	-0.27	0.40	-0.68	0.49980
Residual standard error: 0.47 on 100 degrees of freedom				
Multiple R-squared: 0.16, Adjusted R-squared: 0.06				
F-statistic: 1.52 on 13 and 100 DF, p-value: 0.12				

icant relationship (0.0021 in the first model, 0.00364 in the second model). The PTS has a positive relationship with average terrorism rates. This would indicate that higher levels of state-sanctioned violence would indicate higher levels of terrorism. The PTS ranges from one to five, with one being the lowest level of political Terror and five being the highest level.

The significant positive relationship between the Political Terror Scale and the average terrorism rate suggests that state-sanctioned violence has a relationship with average terrorism rates. This would align with a theoretical framework laid out in Macro-Level Strain theory which asserts that oppressive governments can be one of the causes for radicalization and terrorism.

Interaction Terms

This study used interaction terms to measure the impact of criminal strains on terrorism rates in Southeast Asia. The interaction terms did not have a statistically significant relationship with either model's average terrorism rates. There was no statistically significant relationship with any of the variables represented by the interaction terms. This is

contradictory to the hypothesis and theoretical framework of this thesis.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Findings

The primary aim of this research was to attempt to understand the possible relationship between Macro-Level Strain theory and terrorism rates in Southeast Asia, and the globe. It was especially important that this study focus on Southeast Asia due to the underrepresentation in previous terrorism research. This study had three outlined research questions:

1. Do countries in the Southeast Asia region struggle with higher terrorism rates than other parts of the world?

The study found that in the specified time frame, Southeast Asia experienced higher rates of terrorism than the rest of the world. However, these findings were not found to be significant. However, further analysis is recommended in future studies as There is likely more value in analyzing the difference in terrorism rates over time rather than the average for a set number of years. This is especially true when you consider that the GTD has also demonstrated a drop in terror events in Southeast Asia and the globe over the past 10 years (Start, 2021).

2. Do the strains explain the terrorism rates in Southeast Asia?

Ultimately, this study did not find any statistically significant relationship between Macro-Level Strain theory and Southeast Asia. However, there were statistically significant relationships observed globally. The first statistically significant relationship observed was the Political Terror Scale. The Political Terror Scale is a global indicator used to measure state-sanctioned violent activity. This Global indicator was shown to have a statistically significant positive relationship with average terrorism rates around the globe. This finding indicates that as the government becomes more violent, terrorism rates will increase. This would align with Agnew's (2010) theory regarding macro-level strains and terrorist activity.

This is clearly explained by Agnew under the third tenant of his Theoretical framework when he wrote "Inflicted by substantially more powerful others, including 'complicit' civilians, with whom members of the strained group have weak ties" (2010).

The connection between the two is clear. Many global terrorist organizations are fueled by the misguidance or wrongdoings of the governments that are supposed to represent them. with higher levels of observed political, state-sanctioned violence, illogical conclusion is that terrorist organizations will push back against this mistreatment.

The second statistically significant relationship observed in this study did not align with the previous theoretical framework. The GINI Index Is a global indicator used to measure income inequality. For this indicator, a score of "0" Represents perfect equality and a score of "1" Represents complete inequality. Agnew's Theoretical framework would support the idea that more income inequality would be a strong predictor of more terrorism due to increased strain. However, the opposite was found to be true.

This means that according to the models previously mentioned in this research, higher levels of income inequality is an indicator of lower rates of terrorist activity. Due to the unexpected nature of this finding regarding the GINI Index, it is recommended that more research be conducted regarding the relationship between income inequality and terrorism. Other Global indicators that should also represent income inequality should be analyzed to ensure that the findings of this study are not due to data collection issues Or issues regarding the metric's validity.

3. Which strains had the strongest impact on terrorism rates in Southeast Asia?

There were no indicators that had a statistically significant relationship with the average Southeast Asian terrorism rates. This was not expected in the research as It was believed that at the very least, The same strains that had a significant correlation at the global level would also have a significant correlation within Southeast Asia.This will be discussed later in the limitations section, but the small sample size may be responsible for the lack of any significant findings. Additional research is recommended to capture the full scope of the

complex relationship between global strain indicators and terrorism rates.

Limitations

While this study does offer valuable insight into global terrorism activity, there are some limitations that should be discussed. The most obvious limitation is the model used during analysis. A more advanced way to conduct this research would be to use a form of analysis that is able to analyze change over time such as longitudinal studies or time-series analysis. Doing this would greatly increase the sample size both in the number of years that are able to be analyzed and the number of countries as less would need to be removed to provide complete data.

Another possible limitation is the source of this study's terrorism data. The Global Terrorism Database is a large, open-source database of terrorist activity. While this is helpful for researchers wanting to analyze terrorism data, the open-source nature of the data collection does create some bias in the process. One of the primary sources of data collection for the GTD is analyzing local news coverage of the events. Logically, missing or inaccurate reports Will be more common in less developed regions which is harmful to the Integrity of the data. Also, some governments do not report terrorism data to the GTD or allow for open coverage of it in local media outlets. The GTD does not differentiate between countries that have policies that would encourage accurate data collection and those that do not. It is also unclear in the data set if countries that do not have a recorded Terror event in a certain time frame do not have an event because of poor reporting or a genuine lack of terrorist activity.

MLST has the potential to offer insight into the core components of terrorism in South-east Asia. Specifically, it provides the framework for the various strains that may cause an individual to be involved with terrorist activity. However, MLST is shown to not be sufficient in fully explaining this relationship.

One of the major limitations of applying MLST in this manner is the oversimplification of strains. While macro-level strains can play a role in the radicalization of individuals and larger groups in society, no single strain or indicator will fully encapsulate the relationship

between MLST and terrorism. Issues such as territorial disputes, religious tension, and ethnic violence are all deeply ingrained in Southeast Asia. However, they are hard to quantify and thus it is difficult to understand the complex relationship between MLST and terrorism. These strains often have a relationship with each other that also creates a collective struggle that many organizations rally behind.

Another potential cause for concern is strain origin. This study measured the different indicators at the country level. However, it is possible that strains existing in different countries can still Be a source of strain for individuals living in Southeast Asia. Strains such as religious persecution and radicalization do not observe borders, especially in the modern internet era.

A final limitation would be the vague conceptualization and operationalization of country-level strain. Many of the global indicators utilized for the study did not have clear operationalization. To add to this, there was not a clear and apparent conceptualization of three pillars of MLST. For this reason, it was difficult to link various strains to the concept. Another reason that this research focused on larger global indicators was the hope in validity and reliability in the indicators. However, it is possible that with how subjective some of these variables have the potential to be, it may be wise to utilize different variables that are more objective.

Policy Implications and Future Research

There are several different policy implications that this study holds. To begin, Even with the previously discussed limitations of the study, a statistically significant relationship was found with the political Terror scale. This study found that there was a direct correlation between levels of state-sanctioned violence and terrorism rates. This finding should reinforce the need for world leaders to continue to Advocate against state-sanctioned violence and continuing practice of upholding human rights and freedoms. prioritizing democratic values seems to have a direct tie to decreasing terrorist activity.

The unexpected finding regarding the GINI Index Furthers the need for additional re-

search regarding terrorism. While it is possible that income inequality and average terrorism rates genuinely have an inverse relationship, additional research is necessary to understand the complexity of this relationship. Other metrics regarding income inequality should also be analyzed to Make sure that the findings are representative of income inequality, rather than a potential validity issue of the GINI coefficient.

Future research should continue to explore the complex relationships between Macro-Level Strain theory and terrorism. It is possible that the unique circumstances surrounding the Global War on Terror are not representative of General terrorism trends over time. research analyzing modern terrorism in the future will have the increased sample size of Terror events that occurred after the Global War on Terror.

There should be more analysis performed on the Southeast Asian region as well. Due to gaps in reliable data, Southeast Asian sample size was limited. While the GTD is a great resource for preliminary measures, additional databases should be referred to in cross referenced to gain a greater understanding of terrorism in Southeast Asia, and the world.

Furthermore, future research would likely benefit from a larger set of global indicators and observing the changes in both terrorism rate and global indicator scores over time to provide a more complete picture of the relationship between various strain indicators and terrorism rates.

Future research should also focus on different strains and strain indicators. Concepts such as environment quality, free speech, and quality of political discourse would all be interesting topics to examine further. Picking indicators that are more narrow in what they measure would also create lower levels of multicollinearity as and provide more actionable results.

Finally, choosing a Model that would be able to analyze change over time would also be beneficial. This research has the potential to provide a foundational precursory view. However, there will be much more utility in a study that analyzes how strain variables and terrorism rates potentially interact with each other over an extended period of time. A study

that analyzes data year by year rather than average data will provide much-needed insight into the relationship between strains and terrorism. As previously outlined, it is the belief of this research that heightened levels of strain cause an increase in Terrorist activity. However, an analysis that uses the raw data over a long period of time will ensure that this is the case, rather than terrorism rates having an impact on strains. A study like this will provide significantly more insightful policy recommendations and would provide crucial information to understanding the validity of the relationship between Macro-Level Strain theory and terrorism.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of this research was to understand if terrorism rates in Southeast Asia were different from the rest of the world, and to understand what impact criminalogical strains outlined in Macro-Level Strain theory have on terrorist activity. Ultimately, this study found that lower levels of income inequality increased terrorist activity and higher levels of state-sanctioned violence increased terrorist activity. However, these relationships were only observed at the global level and no statistically significant relationships were found between any of this study's strain variables and terrorist activity. No difference was found in levels of terrorist activity between Global terrorism rates and Southeast Asian terrorism rates. Future research should analyze these relationships over time and study new strains that may have different impacts on terrorist activity.

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APPENDIX A: Variable Operationalization

Table A.1: Variable Operationalization

Variable	**Operationalization**	**Source**
Terrorism Rate	Average number of terrorism incidents per 100,000 people	Global Terrorism Database (GTD)
Southeast Asia Variable	Binary variable (1 = Southeast Asia, 0 = Other)	GTD
Fragile State Index	Measures state fragility through security and social cohesion. Higher scores indicate higher fragility	Fund for Peace
Global Freedom Score	Assesses political rights and civil liberties. Higher scores indicate less "freedom". Scored on a scale of 1-7.	Freedom House
GDP per Capita	Total value of goods and services produced divided by population	World Bank
GINI Index	Measures income inequality. Scored 1-5 and 5 indicates most severe income inequality	World Bank
ACLED Protest Data	Number of recognized protests	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)
Corruption Perception Index	Measures perceived levels of public sector corruption. Lower scores indicate higher levels of corruption	Transparency International
Political Terror Scale	Ranks state-sanctioned violence. Higher scores indicate higher levels of state sanctioned violence	Political Terror Scale
Clean Elections Index	Grades countries on free and fair elections. Higher scores indicate more democratic elections	Electoral Integrity Project
Unemployment Rate	Percentage of the labor force unemployed	World Bank