Assessing the costs of instability for touristbased economies: the case of the Mediterranean countries

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Abstract

This paper deals with the evaluation of the influence of an extreme form of instability –terrorism attacks– on the tourist demand. To this end this study investigates the relationship between terrorism, as extreme way of instability and tourism demand, in 21 Mediterranean countries. This region is a suitable case of study since it combines countries in different stages of development but with high interdependences which turn them in competitors. The hypotheses of this study are derived running regressions by using a panel data set of these countries during the period 2000-2015, gently provided by the UNWTO for this study. To assess the contribution instability and other factors make to the tourism industries in these countries we report estimates on the responsiveness of the tourism development to different indicators by using linear and non-linear panel data models.

The results conclude terrorist events, damages the country's tourist sectors, specially to the subset of low-income countries in the region. On the other hand, results seem to point out that the magnitude of the mass murder doesn't matter. Then conflicts, instability and terrorism are clearly associated to a deterioration of the tourism in countries like the Mediterranean ones in which this sector is a key for their national strategies of development.

JEL classification: L83, C23

Key words: tourism economics, panel data, instability, tourist arrivals, tourism industry, terrorism, public intervention, Mediterranean countries.

Resume

This work deals with the evaluation of the impact on tourism demand of an extreme form of instability: terrorist attacks. For this, the relationship between terrorism and tourism demand in 21 Mediterranean countries is analysed. This region is a desirable case study since it combines countries of different stages of development that compete in the tourism sector and which in turn are subject to different types of instability, so that there are many interdependencies among them. In order to contrast the hypotheses presented, the results obtained from the regressions of different linear and non-linear models are used based on a data panel from these countries in the period 2000-2015, provided by the UNWTO for this study.

The results suggest that terrorist attacks damage national tourism sectors, although with greater incidence in low income countries in the region. On the other hand, the data seem to indicate that the magnitude of the assassination does not matter. Therefore, conflicts, instability and terrorism cause deteriorations in the tourism sector that are especially relevant in developing economies where the development of this sector is one of the key leaders of their development strategies.

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1. Introduction

Political stability and safety are necessary conditions for tourism. Negative perceptions of a tourist destination can persist for decades and affect a whole country, and in certain conditions, instability in one country or group of countries can have positive effects on the tourism sector of competitors, in some cases neighbouring countries.

In the Mediterranean area some emerging countries – especially north African and in the Middle East have based their national strategies of economic development in the international tourism and in tourism receipts, competing with some consolidated European tourist destinations in the Mediterranean and South Atlantic coast.

Political instability, the civil unrest, kidnappings, terrorist attacks and violence in some countries have led to opposite effects for these two groups of Mediterranean countries. On the one hand, the impact of insecurity will cause a decline in the number of international tourists and in tourism receipts with a potential negative externality on destinations with complementarities –e.g. countries belonging or being part of a common itinerary–. By contrast, some regions in neighboring countries –competitors the same area– experience a boom, a positive externality, since are considered safer, by international tourists. Then, the impact of these events on the tourisms sector's evolution is twofold: first, a damage on the less safety countries in terms of receipts, foreign trade, foreign investments, that is a negative shock on the whole of the economy, and at the same time this loss of arrivals goes to other countries competitors.¹

To deal with such situations, after the negative impact the recovery is slow and maybe requires an action plan for combating the loss of image and international reputation. The discussion above raises a number of questions about the causes and consequences of the deep of economic downturn

 $^{^{1}}$ It is also very likely that domestic tourism declines. However, these effects are out of the aim and scope of our analysis.

created by these events and the positive externalities on the competitor destinations and on the persistence of these negative shocks on the figures in the tourist sector.

The cost of instability for emerging countries, especially for countries in which the tourist industry is a key pillar of the national strategy of economic development, is a hot policy issue. That is the case of the North African Mediterranean countries for which the damage of instability has become in a major issue. This paper aims to show that the damage done by one of the extreme forms of instability (violence and terrorism) can be empirically measured in order to capture not only negative effects but also positive externalities for some competitors.

To this end, we briefly review previous essays on how the impact of instability and terrorism on tourist industry has been measured and treated by previous literature. After that, we provide a framework for analyzing the impact of terrorism on tourism, expenditures and foreign arrivals to a specific country, by using different indicators of terrorism events.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2, provides a selective overview on the relationship between terrorism and tourism. Section 3 presents the econometric framework and data. Section 4 discusses the results while section 5 concludes and presents some avenues for further research.

2. Literature review²

Some studies (Neves and Macas, 2008) emphasise the relation existent between tourism and economic growth, reflecting that, by general rule, tourism has a positive effect in both, developed and underdeveloped countries. In some countries, the development of this sector has become a leader key of the national strategy of economic development. However, some essentials for tourism are not compatible with some characteristics of these countries. Political instability and violence are incompatible with the development of the tourism sector and benefiting directly to other (competitors) destinations which are more stable. In general, previous literature agrees in that tourism promotes economic growth and a positive correlation between economic growth and specialized tourism (see e.g. Antonakakis, Dragouni & Filis, 2015; Dritsakis 2004; Tugcu 2014, Aslan, 2014, Chou, 2013, Oh 2005)³.

Tourists have become a frequent target of terrorist activities in recent years. Examples are the Luxor massacre in 1997, in which members of an Egyptian Islamic group shot dead 58 foreign tourists visiting the temple of Queen Hatshepsut in the Valley of the Queens. As consequence of these attacks, the individuals planning their holidays are less probable to choose a destination with a higher risk of terrorist attacks. Host countries providing tourism services, which can be easily substituted are, therefore, negatively affected by terrorist attacks with an extensive range. The bombing, shooting and kidnapping of tourists becomes attractive strategies for terrorists who want to cause economic loss, when pursuing their political goals. There is a fast growing literature evaluating the effects of terrorism on tourism, focusing on the number of tourists and lost revenues in the industry.

² The terrorism's impact on various aspects of the economy includes at least arrivals, GDP and investment. The effect of terrorism on collective consumption and savings is important as it influences the investment level and, hence, economic growth. In that sense one could argue that political violence not only affects the level of investments but also the composition of investments. There is also a body of literature devoted to the evaluation of the macroeconomic impacts of the terrorism (See e.g. Abadie and Gardeazabal 2003, Blomberg et al. 2004a; Blomberg et al. 2004b and Eckstein and Tsiddon 2004). However, these relationships are out of the aim and scope of this paper.

³ See Pablo-Romero & Molina (2013) for a survey.

A primary, important paper, of Enders and Sandler (1991) study the relationship between international terrorism and tourism in Spain. They use monthly data on terrorist occurrences and linked it with the number of foreign visitors in Spain between 1970 and 1988, applying VAR methodology. It is estimated that a typical terrorist act in Spain scares over 140,000 tourists.

In 1988, 5.392 million foreigners visited Spain and 18 international terrorist incidents took place. Hence without these incidents, 1.5 times as many tourists would have visited Spain in the same year.

Fleischer and Buccola (2002) have made a study of the impact of terrorism in the touristic sector in Israel, shows that foreign demand and equilibrium prices are allowed to be influenced by a monthly index, capturing the severity of the terrorist movement in Israel. The annual revenue losses between 1992 and 1998 in the market with foreign visitors sum up to approximately \$50 million (1998 present value discounted at 5%) or 1.27% of total revenues in this period. Though these revenue losses are relatively modest, they increase with a deterioration of the situation. In 1996, a year of Middle East unrest, the revenue shortfall amounted to 2.55%. Estimated impacts of terrorism on tourism vary considerably, because the structure of the tourism industry and terrorism campaigns differ, not only across countries, but also over time.

This fact highlights the importance of differentiating between different types of attacks, the locations and the number of casualties (see e.g. Drakos and Kutan 2003).

A note of caution is in order with regard to the temporal patterns of the impact of terrorism on tourism. The temporal pattern depends on the type of attacks in a particular country, and the market structure as well as the type of time-series used by researchers. Time-series on the number of actual visits are likely to respond more quickly to a terrorist incident than time-series on tourism revenues.

To summarize, terrorism systematically influences tourist's choice of destination and can, substantially negatively affect a host country. Furthermore, the effect is long-lasting and has an influence on the demand for tourism in neighboring countries.

On the basis of the discussion above, one could hypothesise that international arrivals will be negatively affected by terrorist attacks causing important economic losses and leading a reallocation of this tourism services in safer areas. On the other hand, one could argue that the frequency of these events may have more negative effects that the size of the attack. To test these two hypotheses, we suggest the strategy presented in the next section.

3. Data, methodology and variables

Data and variables

The data we use for this study consist of a balanced panel of 336 observations from 21 Mediterranean countries and a set of economic and non-economic indicators from 2000 to 2015. The available information includes tourism and macroeconomic indicators, and statistics on terrorist attacks and injured and killed persons. Data for the study were extracted from the World Tourism Organization, Yearbook of Tourism Statistics and Compendium of Tourism Statistics and from the Global Terrorism Database.

Initially, the dataset includes a set of 21 countries European, Asian and African countries that border the Mediterranean Sea (Albania, Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey). However, and due to the lack of data, Syria, Monaco, Libya, Montenegro and Lebanon are excluded in some regressions.

International tourism expenditures (current US\$): International tourism expenditures are expenditures of international outbound visitors in other countries. Data are in current U.S. dollars.

International tourism, number of arrivals: International inbound tourists (overnight visitors) are the number of tourists who travel to a country other than that in which they have their usual residence, but outside their usual environment, for a period not exceeding 12 months and whose main purpose in visiting is other than an activity remunerated from within the country visited.

For the type of extreme instability and violence considered in our study and as it is usual, we use the *number of terrorist incidents*. Thus, measuring the number of incidents makes sense if the percentage of hostage, killed or injured, and the number of major attacks remains approximately constant. An important problem is that only those terrorist events reflected in official statistics and reported in the media are counted. The media only pick up on some terrorist events, mostly those occurring in the larger cities or the capital of the country. The problems associated with the limits of comparing different types of attacks and of unfair or partial reporting of attacks have been

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addressed in various ways in the literature. The analysis is usually limited to developed countries where the reporting bias is less of a problem. As well as, the consequences are often estimated for a small number of countries, or even a single country, where modes of attack are comparable across countries and over time. In the case of international terrorism, where foreign interests are involved, the reporting bias is likely to be less severe. Employing the GLOBAL Terrorist Database START National Consortium for The Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism covering the annual number of incidents of international terrorism and the number of fatalities for the countries covered in our study.

The Global Terrorism Database (GTD), maintained by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland.⁴ From this database we draw information about the following indicators:

Number of injuries Number of total attacks Number of victims killed in an attack

Methodology

The empirical strategy adopted combines two complementary approaches for panel data. First, we report estimates of different estimators for linear panel data models.

The baseline model is:

$$y_{it} = \mu_i + \beta' x_{it} + e_{it} (3.1)$$

with the well-known properties.

In this model, the indicator of the demand is determined by a set of factors including the number of attacks and the damages caused by them. In a certain extent, we consider that each country is

⁴ An exhaustive codebook can be download at: https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/downloads/Codebook.pdf

different, since the estimated relationships may vary across individuals. However, the fixed effect or random effect reflects only the 'heterogeneity in intercepts'. However, we also consider a 'varying slope' models. In particular, we run the Hansen's (1999) panel threshold model in order to check whether we can find a different effect of our main explanatory variable depending on the regime. These regimes are defined by a threshold variable, the GDP per capita, in our case.

The model is now:

$$y_{it} = \mu_i + \beta_1 x_{it} (q_{it} < th) + \beta_2 x_{it} (q_{it} \ge th) + e_{it} (3.2)$$

where q_{it} is the threshold variable and *th* the threshold parameter that divides the equation into two regimes with coefficients b'_1 , b'_2 . The parameter μ_i is the individual (fixed) effect, while $e_{it} \sim (0, \sigma^2)$ is the disturbance.

Variables

The dependent variable is the international tourism expenditures that is the expenditures of international visitors the *i*-th country. Each of these indicators treat to capture a different aspect or dimension –frequency, quantitative or qualitative magnitude– of these events.

Finally, in the analysis we include a control variable, region dummies in order to control the unobservable heterogeneity.

4. Results

The main aim of this work is to investigate whether the national demand in the tourism sector depends not only on the arrivals or business cycle phase, but also on the existence of adverse shocks caused by terrorism attacks. Model 3.1., presented in the previous section is the baseline model of our estimations.

Tables 1, 2 –in the appendix– reports the estimates of our balanced panel. Table 1 reports the fixed effects estimator or within while table 2 reports the results of the random effects model. Table 3, report the well-known Hausman's test (Hausman, 1978) is the standard test for discriminating between fixed versus random effects in panel data models.

Our results suggest that the number of attacks is negatively related to the expenditures. We also expected a positive relationship between our explanatory variable and the level *per capita income and the number of arrivals*. The coefficients associated to these two variables are statistically significant and with the expected sign.

Contrary to our expectations, the number of killed is not statistically significant. The number of injured is not significant either. The reason for this result may be related with the fact that the perception of instability depends on the frequency of the terrorist attacks instead of the type and magnitude of them.

On the other hand, note that values of the estimated coefficients are very similar among different models.

Finally, we provide evidence in favour of the existence of idiosyncratic factors in each country.

Table 4 presents the results for the non-linear specification (3.2), that is with regime intercepts. In the selected specification, the GDP per capita is used as threshold while the non-linearity is introduced for our key variable: the number of registered attacks The null hypothesis of no threshold can be rejected at the 5% significance level, while the presence of one threshold cannot be rejected. Results are very similar to the results of the linear case. We find strong statistical

evidence on the positive effect of arrivals, GDP and the number of attacks on the demand indicator. However, now, the model defines two regimes. On the one hand, when the GDP per capita is below the threshold –low income countries in the sample– the number of attacks have a significant negative effect on expenditures, while a positive impact is found when the GDP is above the threshold.

This last result, apparently contradictory, could be interpreted in terms of that even when the attack is located at one of the high-income countries, the instability is interpreted by tourist for the area as a whole, but even at this case, they consider that high income countries are safer than the low income countries. The results from the specification with a regime intercept are in line with those by previous literature.

From a policy perspective, choosing the correct specification and controlling the existence of different regimes has important implications in order to understand the interdependence. Keeping political stability seems to be then a prerequisite for an adequate development of the tourism sector.

5. Conclusions and avenues for future research

This article evaluated the frequency and magnitude of terrorism attacks on the tourist demand for a set of Mediterranean countries with two characteristics: they are competitors and they are in different stages of development. By using linear and non-linear models for panel data, our results confirm that terrorist events, damages the country's tourist sectors, especially in the subset of lowincome countries in the region. On the other hand, results seem to point out that the magnitude of the mass murder doesn't matter. Then conflicts, instability and terrorism are clearly associated to a deterioration of the tourism in countries like the Mediterranean ones in which this sector is a key for their national strategies of development. Our results suggest that the number of terrorist attacks is a good predictor of the international tourism demand.

An important and pending research question concerns the durability of these negative shocks that is whether the demand is trend (-or broken trend-) stationary in which case terroristic attacks will have only temporary effects. To explore whether terroristic events have different and potentially durable long-run effects is a key question for devising strategies for recovering the reputation of the damaged destinations.

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Appendix

Table 1. Fixed effects

Source	SS	df	MS		Number of obs =	= 256
Model		20 1.70)84e+21		F(20, 233) Prob > F	= 327.80 = 0.0000
Residual	1.2248e+21	235 5.21	118e+18		R-squared	= 0.9654
+	+				Adj R-squared	= 0.9624
Total	3.5393e+22	255 1.38	80e+20		Root MSE	= 2.3e+09
expenditure	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf.	Interval]
arrivals	168.1028	44.58816	3.77	0.000	80.25918	255.9463
gdppc	378375	34277.79	11.04	0.000	310844	445906
nattack	-1.18e+07	4946746	-2.38	0.018	-2.15e+07	-2041386
nkill	5160270	3191293	1.62	0.107	-1126928	1.14e+07
nwound	1054934	1053908	1.00	0.318	-1021380	3131249
_Iid_2	-8.24e+08	8.10e+08	-1.02	0.310	-2.42e+09	7.73e+08
_Iid_3	-8.45e+09	1.11e+09	-7.61	0.000	-1.06e+10	-6.26e+09
_Iid_4	-1.28e+09	9.26e+08	-1.39	0.166	-3.11e+09	5.39e+08
_Iid_5	7.08e+08	8.89e+08	0.80	0.426	-1.04e+09	2.46e+09
_Iid_6	-3.78e+09	2.39e+09	-1.58	0.115	-8.49e+09	9.22e+08
_Iid_7	1.62e+10	3.30e+09	4.91	0.000	9.69e+09	2.27e+10
	-6.87e+09	1.08e+09	-6.36	0.000	-9.00e+09	-4.74e+09
_Iid_9	-4.42e+09	8.73e+08	-5.06	0.000	-6.14e+09	-2.70e+09
_Iid_10	-5.64e+09	1.18e+09	-4.79	0.000	-7.96e+09	-3.32e+09
Iid 11	6.79e+09	1.92e+09	3.53	0.000	3.01e+09	1.06e+10
	-2.94e+08	8.48e+08	-0.35	0.729	-1.97e+09	1.38e+09
Iid13	-6.53e+09	9.67e+08	-6.75	0.000	-8.43e+09	-4.62e+09
	-6.33e+09	9.87e+08	-6.41	0.000	-8.28e+09	-4.39e+09
Iid 16	-1.49e+09	8.32e+08	-1.79	0.074	-3.13e+09	1.47e+08
_Iid_17	-3.04e+09	1.29e+09	-2.35	0.019	-5.59e+09	-4.97e+08
_cons	-4.15e+08	5.81e+08	-0.71	0.476	-1.56e+09	7.30e+08

. xtreg expenditure arrival gdppc nattack nkill nwound, fe

Fixed-effects Group variable	(within) regr e: id	Number o Number o	f obs f groups	=	256 16			
R-sq: within between overall	= 0.4481 n = 0.7999 = 0.7737	Obs per	group: m a m	in = vg = ax =	16 16.0 16			
corr(u_i, Xb)	= 0.4776			F(5,235) Prob > F		=	38.17 0.0000	
expenditure	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% C	onf.	Interval]	
arrivals gdppc nattack nkill nwound _cons	168.1028 378375 -1.18e+07 5160270 1054934 -1.99e+09	44.58816 34277.79 4946746 3191293 1053908 7.42e+08	3.77 11.04 -2.38 1.62 1.00 -2.69	0.000 0.000 0.018 0.107 0.318 0.008	80.259 3108 -2.15e+ -11269 -10213 -3.46e+	18 44 07 28 80 09	255.9463 445906 -2041386 1.14e+07 3131249 -5.33e+08	
sigma_u 6.052e+09 sigma_e 2.283e+09 rho .87544508 (fraction of variance due to u_i)								
F test that al	l u_i=0:	F(15, 235) =	= 47.8	5	Pro	b > 1	F = 0.0000	

Table 2. Random effects

Random-effects Group variable R-sq: within between overall corr(u_i, X)	GLS regress: : id = 0.4411 = 0.8498 = 0.8224 = 0 (assumed	ion d)		Number Number Obs per Wald ch Prob >	of obs = of groups = group: min = avg = max = i2(5) = chi2 =	= 256 = 16 = 16 = 16.0 = 16 = 268.90 = 0.0000
expenditure	Coef.	Std. Err.	Z	₽> z	[95% Conf.	[Interval]
arrivals	253.9752	34.87566	7.28	0.000	185.6201	322.3302
gdppc	357758.8	33411.52	10.71	0.000	292273.4	423244.2
nattack	-1.28e+07	4999118	-2.56	0.011	-2.26e+07	-2989042
nkill	5176341	3222932	1.61	0.108	-1140490	1.15e+07
nwound	1068623	1064791	1.00	0.316	-1018329	3155574
_cons	-3.06e+09	1.26e+09	-2.42	0.015	-5.54e+09	-5.87e+08
+	rho .7	sigma_u sigma_e 8328154 (1	1 4.34 2.28 Fraction	0e+09 3e+09 of variar	nce due to u_	i)

. xtreg expenditure arrival gdppc nattack nkill nwound, re

Table 3. Hausman test

		Coefficients				
		(b)	(B)	(b-B)	sqrt(diag(V_b-V_B))	
	I	fixed	random	n Differenc	e S.E.	
+						
arrivals		168.1028	253.9752	-85.87242	27.78114	
gdppc		378375	357758.8	20616.2	7657.486	
nattack		-1.18e+07	-1.28e+07	1000113		
nkill		5160270	5176341	-16070.91		
nwound		1054934	1068623	-13688.25	•	

b = consistent under Ho and Ha; obtained from xtreg B = inconsistent under Ha, efficient under Ho; obtained from xtreg

Test: Ho: difference in coefficients not systematic

chi2(4) = (b-B)'[(V_b-V_B)^(-1)](b-B) = -0.17

Table 4. Panel Threshold Model (Hansen)

. xthreg expenditure arrivals nkill nwound gdppc, rx(nattack) qx (gdppc) Estimating the threshold parameters: 1st \ldots . Done

	Threshold estimator (level = 95):						
		model	Threshold	Lo	wer	Upper	
		Th-1 40	0838.0234		·	·	
	Fixed-effects Group variable	(within) reg : id	ression		Number Number	of obs of groups	= 256 = 16
	R-sq: within between = (overall = (= 0.6071 0.8553 0.8296			Obs per	group: min avg = max =	= 16 16.0 16
	corr(u_i, Xb)	F(= 0.6161	6,234)	=	60.27 Prob >	F	= 0.0000
	expenditure	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf.	. Interval]
cat#c.nat	arrivals nkill nwound gdppc tack 0 1 	150.9036 4219463 909706.9 311163.1 -8706637 9.39e+08 -9.24e+08	37.74269 2700113 891251.5 29795.01 4194657 9.78e+07 6.37e+08	4.00 1.56 1.02 10.44 -2.08 9.60 -1.45	0.000 0.119 0.308 0.000 0.039 0.000 0.148	76.54465 -1100174 -846195.6 252462.4 -1.70e+07 7.47e+08 -2.18e+09	225.2625 9539100 2665609 369863.9 -442518.4 1.13e+09 3.30e+08
	r	ho .90289	sigma_u sigma_e 423 (fract	5.886e 1.930e ion of v	+09 +09 ariance c	due to u_i)	
	F test that al	l u i=0:	F(15, 234)	= 52.	73	Prob >	F = 0.0000

Table A1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable		Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Observ	vations
i	overall between within	11	6.064332 6.204837 0	1 1 11	21 21 11	N = n = T =	336 21 16
year	overall between within	2007.5	4.616647 0 4.616647	2000 2007.5 2000	2015 2007.5 2015	N = n = T =	336 21 16
attack	overall between within	26.50595	75.57078 32.73078 68.46611	0 0 -66.93155	675 93.4375 608.0685	N = n = T =	336 21 16
killed	overall between within	60.60417	310.1563 139.0895 278.7781	0 0 -555.3333	3925 615.9375 3369.667	N = n = T =	336 21 16
injured	overall between within	96.19345	319.5265 146.1149 285.8383	0 0 -488.369	2978 584.5625 2489.631	N = n = T =	336 21 16
arrivals	overall between within	1.28e+07	2.09e+07 2.11e+07 3069262	25700 36905.26 -3094840	8.45e+07 7.87e+07 2.71e+07	N = n = T =	336 21 16
expend~s	overall between within	1.15e+09	2.28e+09 2.14e+09 7.69e+08	2000000 4.68e+07 -2.12e+09	1.10e+10 8.46e+09 5.52e+09	N = n = T-bar =	264 20 13.2
gdp	overall between within	3.40e+11	6.60e+11 6.53e+11 1.71e+11	9.84e+08 3.15e+09 -6.24e+11	2.92e+12 2.33e+12 9.31e+11	N = n = T =	336 21 16



Figure A1. Number of attacks by country



Figure A2. Arrivals by country



Figure A3. Expenditures by country