Comparing Domestic Terrorist Threats in the US and UK

Is Global Jihad Our Greatest Adversary? A Comparative Case Study of Domestic Terrorist Threats in the U.S. and the U.K.

Abstract

The threat of homegrown terrorism in the United States and the United Kingdom since 2000 significantly outweighs the threat of international terrorism. Previous research has focused on the global implications of radicalized homegrown Islamic terrorism while diminishing the impact of other domestic activist groups. Using data from the RAND Corporation and similar research institutes as well as governmental reports, I will show however that it is not necessarily radicalized Islamic terrorism that poses the greatest risk to national security; non-Islamic extremist organizations are an increasingly imminent danger. I will further argue that homegrown terrorism develops in democracies as an unintended consequence of illiberal democratic practices. Ultimately, the threat of domestic terrorism may be reduced via a reconstruction of the political society to follow cosmopolitan norms.

Introduction

In this paper, I will examine the relationship between domestic and international terrorism incidents in the United States and the United Kingdom between 2000 and 2010 as well as the underlying motivations behind these occurrences. Domestic terrorism, or homegrown terrorism as I will refer to it, refers to incidents where the perpetrators of the crimes are citizens of the country in which they commit the attack and the group motivation often develops from within the country. Conversely, international terrorism refers to incidents in which the offenders cross national boundaries, assault citizens in foreign countries. The motivations extend over various nations, since the terrorist groups act on a global scale. A commonly held conception is that international terrorists groups—in particular, those whose members are religiously radicalized such as Al-Qaeda—pose a greater threat to both democratic countries than domestic terrorist groups. I will argue that in fact, the opposite is true: homegrown terrorism poses a far greater risk to the security of democratic nations than international terrorism. Moreover, it is not radicalized Islamic terrorism that is at the forefront of this attack as current counter-terrorism policy would have citizens believe. I do not doubt the significance of radicalized religious groups as an imminent threat; however, I do not believe it is as grave of a concern as it appears to be. Rather, extremist terrorism from animal rights groups and eco-terrorists plays the largest role but the fervor of religious terrorism has overshadowed this point.

I will defend my thesis by presenting a dataset that I have compiled for both countries from two databases of terrorist activity, and support from governmental bulletins and other research. After I have briefly summarized the motivations of terrorism, the current status of counter-terrorism policy for both countries and my results, I will suggest that terrorism in democratic countries is a systemic consequence of illiberal democratic practices. If my hypothesis if correct, it will significantly impact current counter-terrorism policy that both countries formed to target international Islamic terrorist groups. As a result, I will conclude with a policy initiative that would restructure society to follow cosmopolitan norms while reducing terrorism by reducing these illiberal practices.

Background
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Scholarly research on terrorism has evolved from a study of the general underlying conditions in society to individual motivations that have arisen as a result of these macro conditions. While the micro conditions form the basis of both domestic and international terrorism, the majority of research has solely focused on the international impacts of terrorism. The events of 9/11 saw scholarly attention focus on homegrown terrorism with particular emphasis on radicalized Islamic groups; however, this research still favored the international implications of domestic terrorism. Counter-terrorism and security policy that escalated since 2000 has only sought to secure the safety of the state on an international setting, by attempting to address the macro conditions of terrorism. These measures have scarcely aimed at fixing the individual micro motivations behind terrorism within the state itself. Even scarcer still is the focus on the internal consequences of homegrown terrorism as the threat of non-radical domestic groups is cast aside. Nor has any policy initiative suggested a positively-based normative solution that centers on the citizens. Such a broad normative policy would reduce terrorism via a reverse path: at the first level we address concerns for the individual motivations of homegrown terrorism and then proceed to the general conditions of society, following the logic of cosmopolitan thought.

Structural Conditions for Terrorism: The Macro Level

The most prominent body of literature in relation to terrorism has been the study of the structural conditions—namely the pre-existing political, social or economic status of a society— that gives rise to terrorist action. Research in political terrorism has been both geographically and historically bound, limited to analyses of certain regime types and the historical events within these regions.¹ Paul Wilkinson offers the most comprehensive definition of political terrorism as the systematic threat and use of murder and destruction to terrorize victims to concede to political aims.² He further examines the political motivations of terror itself, dividing political terror into sub-revolutionary, revolutionary, epiphenomenal, and repressive types. Ultimately, Wilkinson concludes that terrorism is a result of psychopathology and social discontent.³ While Wilkinson’s typology of political terrorism does acknowledge a difference between domestic and international terrorism, he still maintains a strong connection to what he considers Judeo-Christian values and he particularly focuses on Western liberal states. In her studies on the structural causes, Martha Crenshaw adds social characteristics to the political influence, concluding that terrorism is not a result of social cleavage of the masses, but rather fragmentation of the elite.⁴ Her definition generalizes the concept of terrorism across societies, showing that it is not necessarily the poor who engage in terrorist acts and that terrorist motivation is more than just political across various cultures. More recent thought has studied the economic influences of terrorism, playing with the conception that economic misfortune is a strong determinant of terrorist action. Much like Crenshaw, these findings show that terrorists are often well-educated and wealthy in some form. Compiling statistics from national databases, Alan Krueger shows that while economic factors provide some motivation for conflict, it is more often the political regimes that lead to insurgency.⁵ Similarly, Brian Burgoon argues that economic issues like poverty and development affect terrorism indirectly, by influencing religious and political practices.⁶

Individual Conditions for Terrorism: The Micro Level

Emerging from the general structure of society, the individual motivations for terrorism are a second important body of literature in this field. Both a reaction to and a reinforcement of the pre-existing structural conditions, individual motivations include religious radicalization, extremism, sovereignty, and “lone wolf” or independent ideology. The most important of these categories in contemporary society are religious radicalization and extremism. While sovereignty issues still significantly influence terrorist activity in separatist groups such as the Basque and Corse movements in Europe, these issues do not play such an important role in domestic terrorism in the United States or Britain. Lone-wolf terrorism is strikingly prevalent in the United States;⁷ however the ideologies associated with independent terrorism can often be tied to extremist or radicalized motivations as well. Recent scholarly research on domestic terrorism has particularly reflected on religious radicalization and the connection to Islam. Lorenzo Vidino for instance, analyzes the international instances of homegrown terrorist events since 1977 and the evolution of radicalized Islam as a player in these instances, finding the threat of domestic jihadism more prevalent in the United States.⁸ Kohlmann further supports evidence of this phenomenon with his historical analysis of Al-Qaeda’s jihadist methodology and the construction of hybrid terrorist networks—radicalized cells of seemingly lone-wolf actors who later declare themselves jihadist.⁹
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While homegrown radicalization is an important domestic risk especially when its outreach spans internationally, it is no longer the greatest threat that democracies face. Extremist terrorism is a rapidly increasing danger that has been overshadowed by the phenomenon of radicalization, but it should not be overlooked. Sean Eagan’s historical summary of eco-terrorism since the 1980’s supports this point: although eco-terrorism has declined since the 1980’s, it is rising and will continue to rise as individual actors promote radical agendas. In the first section of this paper, I will argue that both homegrown extremist terrorism and radicalized terrorism are imminent threats to domestic security and that extremism is quickly becoming the larger of the two dangers. Often overshadowed by political terrorism and a focus on international terrorism, extremist ideology has found a niche within democratic societies, silently expanding while attracting little attention. Following my support of this assertion, I will offer an analysis of current counterterrorism policy and suggest a normative solution to address this issue.

Methodology

The following research aims to show that domestic terrorism in democratic societies is more prevalent than international terrorism. Underscoring this contention is the premise that extremist terrorism and radicalized religious terrorism are greater threats than separatist or lone wolf terrorism. While I do not argue that lone wolf terrorism is also an increasing trend—particularly in the United States—the ideologies for lone wolf terrorism often blend into extremist and religious terrorist ideologies. Therefore, the research must show that in both the United States and the United Kingdom, domestic or homegrown extremist and religious terrorism have the highest values over all other variables.

Research Method

My research compiles terrorism incidents from two U.S.-based databases: 1) the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) from the University of Maryland’s Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) Consortium and 2) the Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents from the RAND National Defense Research Institute. Both databases maintain a definition of terrorism similar to the previously mentioned version held by Paul Wilkinson; however, the databases differ on two aspects of this definition.

First, GTD allows economic, religious and social motivations for terrorism in addition to political influences while RAND specifically focuses on political objectives as terrorist motivation. Second, GTD distinguishes that terrorist actions are only considered as such if they fall outside of International Humanitarian Law, violating basic human rights whereas RAND does not make this distinction. GTD’s criterion for terrorism also allows for incidental doubt where acts may be considered insurgency, internal strife, mass murder, or purely criminal. These distinctions allow a limited amount of clarity in defining terrorism: while GTD offers more concrete distinctions between anti-humanitarian crimes and purely criminal acts, there are some cases where what would normally be considered ‘hate crimes’ are included in the terrorism dataset. These instances may be partially attributed to the variance in definitions, but they may also be attributed to the dataset itself where GTD switches in 2008 to real-time accounts of incidents. Thus, all events are included in the dataset even if they do not fit the same criteria as the previous years’ events.

Another important distinction within the datasets was RAND’s separation between domestic and international terrorism. This definition is crucial to my interpretation of the data because it will officially determine whether there have been more domestic attacks in the United States and United Kingdom than international attacks rather than applying my own definition to the datasets. Since RAND is the only database of the two that supplies such a distinction, I will use this source in my dataset. Here, it is determined that a “domestic” (or homegrown) attack is the default categorization for terrorist incidents. For an incident to be considered international there must be some foreign element to the attack such as a perpetrator, target etc.

A third and final characteristic that deserves mention is the definition of groups and motivations. Both GTD and RAND list any suspected or convicted perpetrators who may then fit into the categories of extremist, lone wolf, separatist, and religious individual motivations. In instances where there is no known suspect, the category is
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marked as unknown. In the case of lone wolf terrorism however, these incidents have been charged to a certain individual or individuals who do not affiliate themselves with any known terrorist group. In instances where no perpetrator has been officially convicted but there is a suspect, the category is labeled in question.

Results

In my first case study of the United Kingdom, my primary focus was role of homegrown terrorism over international terrorism. The dataset compiled a total of 45 terrorist events from 2000 to 2010. Of these 45 incidents, 76% (34 events) were considered domestic while only 24% (11 events) were considered international according to the RAND definition. However, there are a few cases in which I question the categorization of the events because they do not strictly follow RAND’s distinctions. For instance, in 2000, the CIRA and RIRA committed two attacks in London (events 3 and 4 in Appendix A). According to the data sources, the perpetrators were citizens of the UK and their terrorist organization also fell within UK jurisprudence. It would follow then that both of these attacks should be considered domestic according to the RAND definition; however, they have been classified as international. Therefore, I have put these classifications into question in my dataset. Similarly, in 2007, Al-Qaeda—a proscribed international terrorist organization according to both the US and the UK—committed terrorist acts in London and Glasgow, both of which RAND classified as domestic acts and both of which I have also questioned in my dataset. For these questionable cases then, if the numbers were adjusted, 82% of terrorist activity (37 events) would be domestic while only 18% (8 events) would be considered international. In any case, we see that homegrown terrorism is a larger threat in the UK than international terrorism.

The second part of my analysis for the UK focused on the motivations and groups—the individual motivational factors—behind these occurrences. Of the 45 total cases, 35% (16 events) were extremist incidents. 94% (15 events) of these extremist incidents was committed by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) or some relation to them while only 6% (1 event) was committed by the Federazione Anarchica Informale (FAI), an anarchist Italian federation. The second-largest category of terrorist cases was separatist incidents, which comprised 27% (12 events) of all occurrences. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and its divisions—the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA) and the Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA)—perpetrated the majority of separatist incidents: 67% (8 events) by the RIRA, and 8% (1 event) each for the CIRA and IRA. Conversely, the Scottish National Liberation Army (SNLA) committed 17% (2 events) of these incidents. The third-largest section was comprised of both unknown motivations and unknown groups, constituting 20% (9 events) of terrorist occurrences in the UK. Finally, in the smallest tier, were both lone wolf and religious motivations at 9% (4 events) of all incidents. Al-Qaeda reportedly carried out half of the religiously-motivated incidents, while the other half was carried out by two homegrown Islamic groups: the Secret Organization of Al-Qaeda in Europe and Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades.

My second case study of the United States also primarily focused on the role of domestic terrorism versus international terrorism. The dataset counted 129 total events from 2000 to 2010, of which 97% (125 events) were domestic and only 3% (4 events) were international. Similar to the UK dataset however, there were some discrepancies in the RAND distinction between domestic and international terrorism. For example, both 2002 and 2009 listed terrorist attacks were carried out by non-American citizens (events 55 and 129 respectively in Appendix B), yet both attacks were marked as domestic. If the numbers were adjusted for these incidents then, 95% (123 events) of the total 129 incidents would have been homegrown as opposed to 5% (6 events) international. Once again, we see that domestic terrorism is a far greater threat to the democratic society than international terrorism.

Following the same trend as the UK, the primary motivation for terrorism in the U.S. was extremism with 71% (92 events) of all cases. Of these occurrences, 72% (66 events) were carried out by the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and its branches and 22% (20 events) were carried out by ALF and its branches, dominating 94% majority of extremist action. These 2 groups also collaborated with the Coalition to Save the Preserves (CSP) for 5% (5 events) of extremist action whereas CSP only performed 1% (1 event) on its own accord. Contrary to the UK, the second-largest group of terrorist action in the United States was lone wolf terrorism with 16% (21 events) of all terrorism. The third-largest sector was unknown motivators and groups with 11% (14 events) of all terrorist action,
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while religious terrorism of Al-Qaeda held 2% (2 events). Separatism played no role in U.S. occurrences as opposed to its significant role in the UK; however, the religious and lone wolf motivations blended together more in the United States’ record as there were more unsure instances. Surprisingly, there were no known homegrown radicalized Islamic incidents for the U.S.—the only event that is domestic is the previously mentioned event in 2009 in which the act contained foreign elements (crossing international boundaries, perpetrator was not a U.S. citizen etc). Therefore, I would consider this act in the adjusted group of international events. Rather, we see from the data that extremism and lone wolf terrorism are the largest motivations in the U.S.

The data from both appendices clearly displays that domestic or homegrown terrorism in the United States and the United Kingdom is more prevalent than international terrorism in these countries, supporting the first part of my argument. However, the second part of my hypothesis—the contention that extremist and religious motivations for terrorism were the largest threat to national security—was only partially proven. For both the United States and the United Kingdom, it is true that extremism is the primary motivator. Nevertheless, religiously motivated groups containing citizens whom we consider ‘radicalized’ (such as Al-Qaeda) were significantly under-represented within the datasets. Officially ranking in last place for both countries, it would appear that religion plays almost no role in terrorism. On the other hand, if we consider religion as a key ideological influence for lone wolf terrorism, which is often thought to be true, then we cannot rule out the significance of radicalized religious groups altogether. (This significance will be important for understanding the forthcoming discussion of current counter-terrorism policy further in this analysis). Consequently, the data shows that separatism still plays an astonishingly important part in terrorist motivation in the UK while lone wolf terrorism in the US is the most recent trend. Both countries also possess a rather large sector of unknown terrorist motivation at 11% and 20% respectively.

Analysis

To explain these results, I will analyze the current counter-terrorism policy trends for both countries. This discussion must not only include a historical summary of terrorism accounts for both countries, but must also look into the modern social perception of citizenship within democratic societies. The politico-socio connection between populations, rights, and opinion will prove most important in this section because it will analyze multiculturalism as well as the impact of the process of radicalization on this doctrine. While both the United Kingdom and the United States adhere to multiculturalist policy, it appears that the new phenomenon of radicalization has surfaced doubts about both countries’ support of this doctrine. Indeed, the public has become increasingly aware of multiculturalism’s flaws within democratic societies which lead to illiberal democratic practices and perpetuate the rise of terrorism. As the U.S. and the UK re-examine their approach, neither government has offered a new doctrine for policy basis. In the absence of suggestion therefore, I maintain that cosmopolitanism may be a preferred solution that will reduce the threat of terrorism from the domestic to the international level via a reconstruction of societal norms.

Current policy trends: the UK

Historically, the UK’s involvement with terrorism has been limited to domestic separatist influences, primarily from northern Ireland. As such, all counter-terrorism policy measures since the 1970’s have pursued an aggressive punitive approach devoted at swiftly pursuing any assailant. However, despite the aim to prevent terrorism, all approaches have been broad-based and initiated in retaliation to terrorist action. With the influx of Muslim immigrants and the rise of international Islamic radicalism, the UK’s counter-terrorism approach has shifted internationally and focused on obtaining greater powers from Parliament to ensure the safety of its citizens. The government summarized its legislative approach as fulfilling three aims:

To create legislation which is both effective and proportionate to the threat which the United Kingdom faces from all forms of terrorism, which ensures that individual rights are protected, and which complies with the United Kingdom’s international commitments.

This measure led to the Terrorism Act of 2000 and similar legislation that granted authorities search and seizure rights and the right to detainment with no charge for any suspected non-British terrorists. While many citizens
viewed this approach as acceptable at the time, it is clearly a defensive approach to deal with terrorism and does not offer any solution to the underlying causes of the issue. The UK, one of the first governments to promote multiculturalism as a democratic policy has swiftly become one of the many democratic nations to engage in “illiberal democratic practices”, or those practices that do not support constitutional liberalism’s goals of protecting individual autonomy and free will against coercion. Although the government may claim to act in the best interest of its majority population, its violation of human rights for those few detainees constitutes an illiberal democratic act for one example. Indeed, in recent months, British parliament has begun questioning its doctrine of multiculturalism as waves of Muslim citizens have protested against such illiberal actions. Multiculturalism it seems, has worked against itself by embracing the citizens’ differences to the point of group self-exclusion.

**Current Policy Trends: the U.S.**

Perhaps even more problematic than the UK’s counter-terrorism efforts, however, is the U.S.’s counter-terrorism policy approach. The history of terrorism incidents has been relatively low compared to other countries: U.S. terrorism has either been composed of scattered domestic events on a small scale or large-scale international ‘wars against terrorism’. Therefore, its approach has been just as unclear on whether to tackle domestic terrorism or international terrorism. The State Department claimed in its annual “Patterns of Global Terrorism Report” in 2001, that domestic terrorism was “probably a more widespread phenomenon than international terrorism,” but because international terrorism has a “direct impact on U.S. interests, it is the primary focus.” Thus, as the phenomenon of global jihad rose, the U.S. adopted a ruthless preventive approach which only increased after the Al-Qaeda attacks. Using the statute contained in Title 22, Section 2656f (d) of the U.S. Code to define terrorism, U.S. counter-terrorism policy formed around four pillars of action:

1. First, make no concession to terrorists and strike no deals. Second, bring terrorists to justice for their crimes. Third, isolate and apply pressure on states that sponsor terrorism to force them to change their behavior. Fourth, bolster the counterterrorist capabilities of those countries that work with the United States and require assistance.

The PATRIOT ACT was one of the first substantial outcomes of this policy initiative. Much like the UK’s Terrorism Act, the PATRIOT ACT allowed for seizure and detainment. On the other hand, it also added government surveillance, making the UK’s broad-based tactics look like a half-hearted defense. Preemptively lashing out against any opponent, the U.S. counter-terrorism tactics have led to a “Fortress America mentality”, negating any chances of negotiation with terrorist groups. Just like the UK, most citizens viewed this approach favorably directly after 9/11, but since then, many have cried out against counter-terrorism policy’s illiberal tendencies. For instance, the detainment of the Guantanamo Bay prisoners lingers as a human rights violation, and the recent congressional hearing against Muslims subjugates minorities, violating their civil liberties. The process of radicalization has only exacerbated both countries’ unease with multiculturalism since the majority of the public has inconveniently assumed its largest religious minority group (Muslims) to have ties to radicalized Islamic terrorist groups. Once again, multiculturalism appears to have been pushed to its limit as a minority group is singled out to stand trial. As multiculturalism appears to be faltering, governments are searching for a solution. Rooted in similar ideals of cultural acceptance as multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism seems a rational and reasonable solution to this problem.

**Cosmopolitanism: A solution to Democratic Problems?**

Current solutions to terrorism all follow a defensive approach that aims to secure the safety of the state and its citizens. At best, these solutions have attempted to address the macro-structure of society, but they have hardly attempted to address the individual motivations of terrorism. My application of cosmopolitanism will first seek to reduce terrorism at an individual level, focusing on the domestic consequences, and may then apply more broadly to reduce international terrorism as well. I do not believe cosmopolitanism will eliminate terrorism altogether: justice is unable to fully eradicate terrorism as there will always be some inequality. However, its optimistic approach on relations between societies and individuals suggests that cosmopolitanism would be a more effective means to this end. Based on Immanuel Kant’s doctrine of cosmopolitan right and John Rawls’ Law of
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Peoples, this model aims to solve injustices within societies and thus leaves some hope that justice may be able to reduce terrorism or violence in general. Terrorism is not one of these injustices, but rather the acts themselves are often a result of injustices. I will argue that this injustice is an indifference to human rights such as the freedom of religious expression, movement and secession. Injustice does not excuse terrorism as permissible, however. In any event, terrorism is unreasonable. It merely begs the question, “How does one justify terrorism, if possible?” I would argue that terrorism can be broken down into either irrational or rational (and unreasonable) action.

Irrational and unreasonable action refers to those instances in which action has no logical basis—such as the events of global jihad, for example, where an illogical action cannot be prevented. In these cases, I would largely classify the actors as having lone wolf ideology or certain radicalized religious beliefs. Often, these actors have a polarized ideology that adheres to a strict fundamental interpretation of their comprehensive doctrines. Terrorists also maintain a transcendental “revolutionary morality” that holds members above any liberal doctrine of humanitarian law or any universally accepted set of ethics. Consequently, as a weapon of religious fanaticism for actors in radicalized sects, terrorism becomes a sacramental duty—albeit an abhorred and condemned action by both the leaders and majority of the religion—which places significant pressure on the positive conveyance of a particular message. Indeed, these groups’ lethal intent on the systematic annihilation of certain populations has made them the most serious danger on an international scale. Commonly referred to as “new religious movements (NRM’s)” by sociologists, religiously radicalized groups like Al-Qaeda have chosen terrorism as a specific strategy for means to a divine end, rather than merely as a tactic for political change. For lone wolf actors, terrorism becomes a weapon of independent ideology, a personalized answer to psychopathological frustrations. The individual faces similar pressures to positively convey a political message, but this message often uncovers a mixture of additional motivations. Known as “relative deprivation theory”, individuals deviate from the norms of society because of social exclusion and economic deprivation, among other factors. Since individuals cannot rationally explain these attributes (or lack of these attributes), they resort to religious influences and other instructive models to compensate for depravity and to provide change.

Both lone wolf and religiously motivated terrorism are not only unreasonable in their use of violence over all other courses of action, but they are also irrational because they lack logical justification for their use of violence. Whether this action is either a result of a personal inability to cope with inequalities or a belief in a comprehensive doctrine’s superiority and divine goal, both motivations have no logical foundation. In the case of lone wolf terrorism, institutions may hold some accountability for the conditions of depravity, but they cannot control individuals’ abilities to deal with inequality. Similarly, radicalized religious terrorism places a surreal demand upon institutions by comparing them to a metaphysical standard that is not a universal belief. To hold a government or society accountable for not fulfilling a personal expectation or a belief in a comprehensive doctrine is practical because it is a rational desire. However, to hold a government or society accountable to a utopian or metaphysical standard for current conditions and to violently react with no attempt of negotiation seems highly irrational, particularly when terrorists place themselves outside of any ethical model that would hold them accountable for their actions either domestically or internationally. By separating themselves from society, I would argue that religious and independent actors merely reinforce exclusion and thus to some extent, forfeit the possibility of reasonable negotiation and positive change. At this point, any changes to the society’s current conditions will not deter violence; it merely becomes an inevitable, illogical action.

Rational and unreasonable action, on the other hand, refers to those instances in which action has a logical basis even though it still falls outside the lines of reason. Societies still do not see these actions as acceptable because they violate humanitarian law. Nevertheless, the action becomes more justifiable if it possesses a higher level of rationality because then the motivations behind it may be altered to reduce or prevent similar occurrences. Actors in this category often have either extremist or separatist motivations because their use of violence to convey a message follows the ‘traditional’ targeted path of terrorism rather than the newer strategic path. Instead of using premeditated violence for specific ends like a religiously-motivated systematic destruction and division of a society and culture, traditional terrorism merely uses violence as a tactic to gain political autonomy and individual rights or to draw attention to a discomfort within the society. That is to say, traditional terrorism is more domestic by nature. While the extremist and separatist organizations such as ALF/ELF or the IRA may exist in nations all over the world or have sympathizers in other countries, the branches in each country act strictly in their own self-interest.
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Extremist groups’ primary goal is for better environmental protections or animal rights within their nations, for instance, and separatist groups’ primary goal is for their own political autonomy. (In comparison, homegrown radicalized cells or lone wolf individuals may develop within certain countries, but they often subscribe ideologically to motivations higher than their own self-interests within the country of origin. These motivations are specific in their demands, but extend internationally.)

As a result, this use of violence is still unreasonable as an attempted solution to any problem, but the action has some rational basis because the problem concretely exists. Institutions are not held to a utopian or metaphysical ideal, but are accountable for more physically-manifested vices within the current conditions of the society. Governments can grant political autonomy to separatist groups or abolish political institutions to appease anarchist groups. Similarly, they can initiate stronger environmental regulations or legislation for animal rights and environmental extremists, or they can segregate racial minorities to appease separatist groups. Granted, completely adhering to the terrorists’ desires would be a morally impermissible reaction on the government’s behalf. However, the society can more readily accept the rationality of these terrorists’ actions because the concreteness of the issues allows the society to make a reasonable and rational response. While the actors of rational terrorism still may hold themselves outside of ethical norms, they are not as distant from society as their irrational cohorts and thus, rational actors still allow the possibility of reasonable negotiation and positive change.

If we accept these attempts to justify terrorism then, the next question we must ask is, “At what point does terrorism become most rational?” As previously mentioned, I would argue that terrorism is most rational—and therefore, can be explained—when human rights are denied as a result of illiberal democratic practices. I do not mean that democratic societies are illiberal because they do not offer or enforce human rights for their citizens. Arguably, the U.S. and the UK have equally just distributions of rights as liberal societies. Rather, certain human rights within these societies are either not enforced to their fullest potential or are denied. In particular, I will mention the freedoms of religious expression, movement, and secession. Both the U.S. and the UK declare a right of religious expression for their citizens, but it is not enforced to its fullest extent possible. Individuals may choose the religion of their choice, wear religious symbols, and even construct areas where they can practice their beliefs but may only do so to a certain extent as limited by their societies. Once a religious majority takes hold within a nation, most competing doctrines become minority views with limited expression. Although legislation such as that set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guides liberal democracies in promoting religious expression, subjugation of religious minorities—most recently, the Muslim population in both the U.S. and the UK—still exists. Both countries maintain an international foreign policy of religious tolerance which follows their doctrine of multiculturalism; nevertheless, the presumption that the governments uphold domestic religious tolerance is decidedly misled.

Current studies that examine the social gap between the Muslim populations and the majorities within these countries confirm this assertion. Sociologist Sophie Body-Gendrot notes that ethnicity serves to externalize Muslims. In some instances, Muslims choose self-externalization as a “buffering mechanism against outer forces,” naturally preferring a communitarian existence. However, more often than not, Muslims suffer externalization from the societies in which they live. This exclusion is accentuated by the “macro-mutations that all post-industrial societies are experiencing” (i.e. globalization, immigration, inequality etc) which leads to rougher social interaction as xenophobic tension rises, and increasing interpersonal violence. As a result, some disenfranchised citizens may adopt extremist ideology through the process of radicalization which results in homegrown terrorism. Consequently, multiculturalism generates a homogenization of cultures in liberal democracies that encourage religious toleration, while simultaneously creating dysfunctional fragmentations of excluded religious minorities whose rights are not fully enforced because they differ from the societal norm. If governments were to uphold this right of expression, individuals would experience greater social cohesion and thus may not choose radicalization, reducing religious and lone wolf motivations.

The sentiments of exclusion imposed upon citizens of liberal democracies extend even further if we consider that neither the U.S. nor the UK exclusively grants a universal right of movement or secession. In the first case, both the U.S. and the UK follow international humanitarian law by allowing freedom of movement for citizens within their respective countries, and both governments allow citizens the right to leave their country via emigration.
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Nevertheless, there is no universal right for individuals to enter a country via immigration if they are not citizens, unless they are seeking asylum from persecution. Since governments ultimately determine whether the reason for asylum is legitimate, individuals’ freedom of movement remains partially constrained. In the second case, neither the U.S. nor the UK allow freedom of secession for any groups within these countries. While the denial of these rights is rational in the interest of national security and protection of state sovereignty, the absence of movement or secession rights questions the scope of liberalism within democratic societies and expands tensions associated with multiculturalism. If governments were to adopt a freedom of movement, this may also help reduce terrorism because individuals would be able to leave unfavorable conditions in which they are living. They could improve their social, economic, or political status as citizens in a different country and ultimately as “citizens of the world.” Similarly, if governments adopted a right of secession, separatist terrorism like that seen in the U.K. might decrease. Perhaps there would have to be a stipulation of some type (i.e. a threshold majority vote) to maintain order throughout this process. In any case, granting individuals more autonomy might reduce this type of terrorism where political representation is not enough.

A cosmopolitan approach to combat terrorism would supplement current counter-terrorism policy by focusing on the significance of individuals. It would improve conditions within democratic societies by reinforcing the government’s role in upholding human rights, namely those freedoms of religious expression, movement, and secession. If states were deterred from denying human rights and increased commitment towards individual rights, then they would create an atmosphere in which the citizens of the society would also take human rights more seriously. Incorporating cosmopolitanism into governmental policy would transfer to the structure of society as well, so that individuals would treat each other according to the basic principles of tolerance, reciprocity, mutual respect and hospitality. Rather than perpetuate injustices caused by illiberal practices, democracies would focus on the creation of just institutions in which the conditions that cause terrorism would be less likely to occur.

One institution would be education. Contemporary cosmopolitans such as Martha Nussbaum have interpreted the theory as a type of “enlightened morality,” conceiving individuals as holding extreme moral importance. As “citizens of the world”, we may hold some patriotic ties, but our duty is towards the enlightenment of one another to form an interlocking community of peoples that may be unbounded by national partiality. Consequently, a cosmopolitan education would stress increased cultural awareness for individuals, beginning at the elementary level. Furthermore, government policy would augment social cooperation and tolerance with the creation of support networks for different groups overcoming cultural barriers to create cross-cultural awareness. By expanding multicultural education, democracies would not only reinforce their existing liberal policies, but they would also reduce exclusion between social groups.

Another institution would be economic redistribution. Both Thomas Pogge and Charles Beitz have reinterpreted Rawls’ difference principle to distribute wealth equally among the world’s poor through an international tax system. If we were to apply this cosmopolitan ideal domestically, economic redistribution within the areas where radicalization is thought to occur may reduce terrorism by improving the economic situation of the worst off. Redistribution would not only focus on improving the living conditions within these areas, but would also include creating opportunities for equal employment, for instance. Combined with the improvements in the educational system, the redistributive scheme would also promote multiculturalism and social integration by attracting other citizens to move into these areas as the conditions improve. By incorporating cosmopolitan ideals into governmental policy, democratic societies will not only increase the cooperation of its citizens, but the tensions between groups in these multicultural societies would decrease. The maintenance of these institutions over time and protection of the rights of expression, movement, and secession will further support social cohesion. As a result, justice may reduce terrorism at all levels.

Conclusion

The data from the United States and the United Kingdom since 2000 clearly shows that homegrown terrorism within both countries is a larger risk than international terrorism. While extremism is the most prevalent form of homegrown terrorism, its significance is largely overshadowed by the gravity, intensity, and global expanse of radicalized religious terrorism. The overwhelming fear of this threat is particularly obvious because religion is the
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lowest ranking motivation of terrorism for both democracies. In the U.S., lone wolf terrorism stands at second place, but it is rapidly rising as it branches the gap between religious and extremist terrorism. In the UK, separatism remains a dominant force. Yet, it has always played a unique role in the United Kingdom’s history. What may be of crucial concern to law enforcement and policymakers is the breadth of unknown motivations for both countries. Perhaps this area is so vast because it is impossible to classify every terrorist act, especially at the international level. Regardless, we should not underestimate the force of this group whose actions strongly resemble lone wolf and religious ideologies. Granted, it would be even more naïve to ignore the international threat of strategic terrorism; however, both countries may better serve their citizens if they do not cast aside domestic terrorism as a less significant threat than international terrorism.

While no type of terrorism is permissible, we may understand the action better if we are able to justify it and breaking terrorism down into rational and irrational action is one route towards justification. Neither irrational nor rational terrorism is reasonable since both courses of action defy the moral obligations imposed on individuals by humanitarian law as well as any negotiation process based on social cooperation. Irrational terrorism may be completely unacceptable to reasonable people then, since they would find the justification illogical. On the other hand, in spite of its unreasonable nature, rational terrorism may be a more acceptable form of justification because reasonable people can understand its logic even if they do not agree with it. The positive nature of the cosmopolitan approach would address the underlying causes and justifications of terrorism by promoting tolerance, hospitality, reciprocity, and mutual respect of ideals in and across societies so that liberal democracies like the U.S. and the UK may enhance their multicultural policies. In addition, the supplementation of cosmopolitan ideals to current counter-terrorism methods via the formation of just institutions will promote human rights such as the freedoms of religious expression, movement, and secession. Enforcing these rights will not only deter exclusion among societies, but will broadly reduce terrorism from the domestic to the international level by placing greater moral concern on the individual.

Future research could further expand the cosmopolitan approach to offer insight into policy initiative implementation where my theory is lacking. In light of both countries’ recent multicultural investigations, both nations would do well to re-evaluate the effectiveness of their current counter-terrorism methods and consider the role of cosmopolitanism in the peace process to potentially deter terrorists. As Wilkinson notes, “There are severe limits to what a democratic government can achieve by purely political means in countering terrorism.” True, there will always be some form of exclusion within liberal democracies and thus, there will always be some form of terrorism. Nevertheless, he claims, “a peaceful political sentiment is meaningless if it is just a constitutional or legal formula lacking the basis of any genuine political goodwill and moral legitimacy among the people.” Ultimately, we must not abandon hope that individuals can reconcile their differences and that democracies may achieve a lasting peace.

Notes

2. Ibid, 55.
3. Ibid, 56.
9. Evan Kohlmann. “‘Homegrown’ Terrorists: Theory and Cases in the War on Terror’s Newest
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19. See Appendix A for my compiled dataset.
22. See Appendix B for compiled dataset.
25. Ibid.
30. Ibid, 91.
31. Ibid, 86.
33. Derived from ancient Greek thought, cosmopolitanism describes human beings as citizens of the world. Rather than binding individuals to a sovereign ruler, cosmopolitanism binds individuals to each other in a singular community regardless of political affiliation. The individuals within the community may affiliate themselves with certain political and social groups; however, the relationship between individuals supersedes the importance of these group connections. While Stoics connected cosmopolitanism to...
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34. Combined with the belief in perpetual peace, Kant suggests in his doctrine of cosmopolitan right that civil rights upheld via representative republics would apply not only to individuals within nations and to states on an international level, but also on a universal legal and moral basis to all mankind. It is not the type of regime that would matter, but the type of constitution that would ensure a cosmopolitan order and perpetual peace, ensuring individuals’ basic rights of peace and freedom. Formal peace-keeping institutions would then uphold these constitutions on a global scale. Most important in Kant’s work however was his concept of feodus pacificum—or a pacific federation of states—in which states would form a loose confederation on an international level, securing perpetual peace through their determination to end all wars. Essential to the federation are enlightenment and awareness between all peoples within nations and their confident, reasonable and rational interpretation of international right as the right to maintain peace among a confederation of states. If these characteristics do not exist, then peace will only be temporary and invalid. [See: Hans Reiss. Kant’s Political Writings. Cambridge: University Printing House, 1970. (93-104).]

35. John Rawls expands Kant’s liberal idealism and universal ethics beyond its original conception with his construction of a Law of Peoples. Following the principles of perpetual peace and feodus pacificum, a Rawlsian cosmopolitan society bases itself on social cooperation to create a just foreign policy for domestic societies. Using a more general form of his concept of “justice as fairness” as outlined in A Theory of Justice, Rawls extends a social contract idea of liberal constitutionalism via the original position, ultimately contending that “justice as fairness” combined with social cooperation will uphold basic human rightsif peoples—ignorant of comprehensive doctrine—allot themselves an equal distribution of individual rights. Both ideal and non-ideal theoretical applications would impose the moral duties of philosophy across societies, motivated by the possibility of a realistic utopia so that citizens would coexist as peoples rather than merely as members of states making democratic peace possible rather than just a feeble modus vivendi. Rawls intently states, however, that his application is only for the domestic case, and thus strays from cosmopolitanism in this sense, fulfilling only the conditions of distributive justice within societies rather than ultimately concerning itself with the well-being of individuals. [See: John Rawls. The Law of Peoples. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.]

36. Groups such as the Palestine’s Hamas or Japan’s Aum Shinrikyo come to mind here. However, I say “often” because it is important to remember that not all fundamentalist sects espouse terrorism. While puritanical in its interpretations, Wahabbism for example has only been recently connected to terrorism, particularly in Western society.

40. Ibid, 5.
41. Ibid.
42. Consider, jihadist doctrine, for instance. Salafi Islam stresses transnational identity and a global Muslim peoplehood (umma) instead of a communitarian-like existence within the state. Salafism is simply a reform toward Wahabbism, but unlike Wahabbism that is merely a creed, Salafism is a global movement that calls for all Muslims to reunite at their religious roots. Thus, the motivation is above self-interest in


46. Ibid, 120.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Most recent studies on radicalization and homegrown terrorism have focused on this connection to Islam (as previously mentioned in my literature review). While I believe it is rational for these individuals to develop feelings of discontent for their socio-economic situations, I do find their behavior neither rational nor reasonable. The distinction between these types of terrorism and the individuals’ actions is still hard for me to make, but I would argue that lone wolf actors take a rational malcontent and convert it into an irrational reasoning for their action. Similarly, once individuals choose a radicalized religious path, they have abandoned both ration and reason to deal with the problem at hand in favor of an illogical elusive solution for the current situation. By asking its followers to believe in the abstract, faith steps outside the lines of ration and reason as well. However, it does not entirely preclude rational and reasonable action from its believers; that process is merely an individual interpretation. Strategic terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda are so significant because their interpretation of religious doctrine has created a dogma based on social exclusion. It is “rooted on an insurmountable sense of exclusion, on an unbridgeable gap with the ‘other’ and on a dogmatic perception of being in the sole possession of the truth.” [See: Giandomenico Picco. “The Challenges of Strategic Terrorism.” In Terrorism and Human Rights, edited by Paul Wilkinson and Magnus Ranstorp, (New York: Routledge, 2008). (6).]


51. Ibid.

52. For example, see: Alejandro J. Beutel, Minaret of Freedom Institute. “Data on Post-9/11 Terrorism in the United States,” (accessed 19 April 2011). http://www.mpac.org/assets/docs/publications/MPAC-Post-911-Terrorism-Data.pdf. Here, he shows that increased efforts for social cooperation and integration of Muslim communities in American society has led to a decrease in homegrown Muslim
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terrorist attacks because the non-radicalized Muslims enacted a community-oriented policing program and received recognition for their accomplishments. This initiative was also suggested in a previous report on the UK. [See: Alejandro J. Beutel, Minaret of Freedom Institute. “Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism in Western Muslim Communities: Lessons Learned for America,” (accessed 13 February 2011). http://www.minaret.org/MPAC%20Backgrounder.pdf]


54. The UNDHR does not apply here because its application is for individual rights.

55. Joseph Carens examines the limits of liberalism to uphold individual freedom and equality when bounded by state sovereignty. Liberal democratic societies may promote multiculturalism to represent these individual freedoms and equalities, but concern to sustain these freedoms is held within states and communities rather than extending to all individuals internationally. Thus, Carens ultimately argues for open borders among states in order to truly promote the cosmopolitan ideal of individual well-being and reconcile cosmopolitanism with the liberal democratic ideal of self-determination. [See: Joseph H. Carens. Culture, Citizenship and Community: A Contextual Exploration of Justice as Evanhandedness, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000 (68)].


59. One example would be how law enforcement would continue to deter the violation of human rights after cosmopolitanism is integrated into policy. That is to say, how would we punish violations of human rights within democracies and outside of their borders? Drawing from Rawls’ work, in an ideal society we would not need to worry about such a violation of rights in liberal democracies because they would have constructed just institutions from the beginning. At the same time however, his application of non-ideal theory does not really apply to liberal societies either; they seem to fit in between his conception of liberal democracies and his conception of decent hierarchical societies. Expanding his work beyond the political conception of justice on an international scale, the implementation of cosmopolitanism will help liberal democracies become more just, but we will always face some type of inequality. Despite international humanitarian law and the development of organizations like the International Criminal Court, European Council on Human Rights etc, democracies still struggle with this question of enforcement, particularly in instances where allies are the ones violating human rights. Finally, once we have discerned how to reprimand human rights violations, do we persecute terrorists by the same method or do we refer back to military tribunal? Or, do we add jurisdiction to the ICC to persecute terrorists while upholding their human rights? [See: Mira Banchik. “The International Criminal Court and Terrorism,” Peace Studies Journal, vol. 3, West Yorkshire: University of Bradford, 2003. (1-19).]


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