Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists

MAX ABRAHMS

Any use of force, short of the lengths of repression to which democracies are unwilling to go, creates incentives for terrorists to attack democracies above states unencumbered by concerns over civil liberties.[1]

Martha Crenshaw

The conventional wisdom is that terrorists tend to target democracies because they are uniquely vulnerable to coercion. Terrorists are able to coerce democracies into acceding to their policy demands because liberal countries suffer from two inherent counterterrorism constraints: (1) the commitment to civil liberties prevents democracies from adopting sufficiently harsh countermeasures to eradicate the terrorism threat, and (2) their low civilian cost tolerance limits their ability to withstand attacks on their civilian populations. This article tests both propositions of the conventional wisdom that (a) terrorists attack democracies over other regime types because (b) liberal constraints render democracies vulnerable to coercion. The data do not sustain either proposition: illiberal countries are the victims of a disproportionate number of terrorist incidents and fatalities, and liberal countries are substantially less likely to make policy concessions to terrorists, particularly on issues of maximal importance. A plausibility probe is then developed to explain why democracies have a superior track record against terrorists. The basic argument is that liberal countries are comparatively resistant to coercion—and hence inferior targets—because they are superior counterterrorists. Liberalism's commitment to civil liberties and low civilian cost tolerance are, in the aggregate, actually strategic assets that help democracies prevail in counterterrorist campaigns, thereby reducing the incentives for terrorists to target this

[1] Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism, Legitimacy, and Power: The Consequences of Political Violence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 18.

regime type. These findings have important implications for how democracies can defend their liberal values and physical security in the age of terrorism.

Within terrorism studies, two interrelated questions have historically dominated the research agenda: what targets do terrorists attack? and why? The prevailing scholarly view is that terrorist groups are rational actors motivated by the desire to alter undesired governmental policies and that democracies are therefore the preferred target because this regime type is prone to making policy concessions.[2] Democracies are allegedly vulnerable to coercion because of two limitations inherent to liberal government: (1) commitment to civil liberties prevents democracies from adopting sufficiently harsh countermeasures to eradicate the terrorism threat, and (2) low civilian cost tolerance limits the ability of democracies to withstand attacks on their civilian populations. Because these liberal constraints preclude a maximally effective counterterrorism strategy, democracies are supposedly susceptible to appeasing terrorists, which creates incentives for them to attack this regime type.[3] If the dominant scholarly view is valid, democracies are therefore locked in a zero-sum conflict between their liberal values and physical security. Democracies can neutralize the terrorism threat but only by compromising their liberal values. Or democracies can choose to maintain their liberal values but would remain flawed counterterrorists and hence prime targets.[4]

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[2] See Leonard B. Weinberg and William L. Eubank, "Terrorism and Democracy within One Country: The Case of Italy," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 98–108; Leonard B. Weinberg and William L. Eubank, "Does Democracy Encourage Terrorism?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 417–43; Leonard B. Weinberg and William L. Eubank, "Terrorism and Democracy: What Recent Events Disclose," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, no.1 (Spring 1998): 108–18; William L. Eubank and Leonard B. Weinberg, "Terrorism and Democracy: Perpetrators and Victims," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no.1 (Spring 2001): 155–64; Quan Li and Drew Schaub, "Economic Globalization and Transnational Terrorism: A Pooled Time-Series Analysis," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 2 (April 2004): 249; Quan Li, "Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 2 (April 2005): 278; Jeffrey Ian Ross, "Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism: Towards a Causal Model," *Journal of Peace Research* 30, no. 3 (August 1993): 321; Christopher Hewitt, "The Political Context of Terrorism in America: Ignoring Extremists or Pandering to Them?" in *The Democratic Experience and Political Violence*, ed. David C. Rapoport and Leonard B. Weinberg (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 325–44; Brian Michael Jenkins, *Fighting Terrorism: An Enduring Task* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1981), 4.

[3] See Weinberg and Eubank, "Does Democracy Encourage Terrorism?" 417–43; Robert Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (August 2003): 7–8; Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), 44–45; Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 59–62; Audrey Kurth Cronin, "How al-Qaida Ends," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 31; Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 22, 24, 46–47; Richard A. Clarke, Rand Beers, et al., *The Forgotten Homeland: A Century Foundation Task Force Report* (Washington, DC: Century Foundation Press, 2006), 8; Li, "Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents?" 278.

[4] Alex P. Schmid, "Terrorism and Democracy," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 14–15; Peter Chalk, "The Liberal Democratic Response to Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 35; Crenshaw, *Terrorism, Legitimacy, and Power*, 18.

This pessimistic outlook lacks a firm empirical basis. It remains to be proven that terrorists do, in fact, prey disproportionately on democracies. This popular perception is due, at least in part, to the fact that attacks against democracies attract significantly more media coverage than attacks against non-democracies.[5] Although several large-N studies have found that democracies bear the brunt of terrorist attacks, they have relied on partial datasets. The three datasets traditionally employed in terrorism research—the Rand-St. Andrews' Chronology of International Terrorism, u.s. Department of State's Patterns of Global Terrorism, and International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events (ITERATE)—were designed for u.s. policymakers concerned almost entirely with international terrorism.[6] Studies relying on these datasets have concluded that democracies attract the preponderance of terrorism, despite their omission of domestic terrorist incidents.[7] Other recent studies have reached the same conclusion based on the target selections of suicide terrorist groups.[8] These studies are misleading because each year international terrorism and suicide terrorism invariably account for only a small fraction of the total number of terrorist attacks and fatalities around the world. If the belief that terrorists disproportionately target democracies warrants further empirical testing, then any explanation for why democracies may invite terrorism lacks a solid premise. Moreover, the belief that democracies are prone to appeasing terrorists has not yet been tested.

This article tests both propositions of the conventional wisdom that (1) terrorists disproportionately attack democracies, and (2) liberal constraints render them uniquely vulnerable to coercion. To avoid the pitfalls of previous studies, I analyze a recently released dataset that includes both international and domestic terrorist incidents. Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), created in 2004 by the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), includes all known incidents of "politically motivated violence" in which "subnational or clandestine groups or individuals... attacked civilians or noncombatants." In practice, the terrorism dataset includes armed attacks, arson, assassinations, bombings, and hijackings where the presumed goal of the perpetrators was to spread fear for political gain.[9] According to the RAND Corporation, WITS is "the most comprehensive compilation of worldwide [terrorist] incidents ever released" by the u.s. government—a significant improvement over its now defunct predecessor, Patterns of Global Terrorism, which selectively omitted

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[5] See Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), 80.

[6] See Bruce Hoffman, "Is Europe Soft on Terrorism?" *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1995): 65.

[7] See Eubank and Weinberg, "Terrorism and Democracy: Perpetrators and Victims," 155–64; Weinberg and Eubank, "Terrorism and Democracy: What Recent Events Disclose," 108–18; Li and Schaub, "Economic Globalization," 249.

[8] See Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," 7–8; Pape, *Dying to Win*, 44–45.

[9] National Counterterrorism Center, Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, "Methodology Utilized to Compile NCTC's Database of Terrorist Incidents," http://wits.nctc.gov/Methodology.do.

numerous terrorist attacks.[10] The WITS data do not sustain the established view that democracies attract an inordinate amount of terrorism. In fact, the evidence suggests the exact opposite: the world's most illiberal countries are the victims of a disproportionate number of terrorist incidents and fatalities.

To test the second proposition of the conventional wisdom—that liberal constraints make democracies easier to coerce—I have created an original dataset. Contrary to expectations, the evidence suggests that the liberalness of target countries and the policy effectiveness of terrorism are inversely related. Liberal countries are significantly less likely than illiberal countries to make policy concessions to terrorists, particularly on issues of maximal importance. Although terrorism occasionally compels liberal countries to prematurely end their foreign occupations, it has been powerless to change liberal countries' ideology or borders. Illiberal countries, by comparison, are frequently coerced by terrorism into altering their ideological orientation or ceding a portion of their country for the self-determination of a minority group residing in it.

The bulk of this article develops a model to explain why democracies have a superior track record against terrorists. The basic argument is that liberal countries are comparatively resistant to coercion—and hence make for inferior targets—because they are superior counterterrorists. Liberalism's commitment to civil liberties and aversion to civilian losses are, in the aggregate, actually strategic assets that help democracies prevail in counterterrorist campaigns, thereby reducing the incentives for terrorists to target this regime type. These findings have important implications for how democracies can defend their liberal values and physical security in the age of terrorism.

THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

For decades, political scientists and terrorism specialists have asserted that the lion's share of terrorism is directed against democracies. In recent years, high-profile al-Qaeda attacks against democratic countries (United States, Spain, Britain), Islamist threats to terrorize the West, and trends in terrorism scholarship have reinforced this view. Post-9/11 terrorism research has focused on terrorist campaigns against democracies, Western responses to terrorism, and the terrorist threat to democratic governance. This emphasis has bolstered the longstanding belief that democracies are inherently susceptible to terrorist attacks.[11] Several large-N studies have claimed to corroborate the view that

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[10] RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database, "Frequently Asked Questions," MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, http://www.tkb.org/NCTC/Faqs.jsp (accessed 8 February 2006).

[11] See Robert Art and Louise Richardson, *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006); Richard Ashby Wilson, ed., *Human Rights in the War on Terror* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Timothy J. Naftali, *Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

democracies attract a disproportionate amount of terrorism.[12] In a seminal 1994 article on the relationship between terrorism and regime type, Leonard Weinberg and William Eubank applied methods of statistical inference to demonstrate that in the year analyzed (1987), a terrorist attack was nearly four times more likely to occur in a democracy than in a non-democratic country.[13] Todd Sandler objected that authoritarian regimes are more likely to conceal the identity of the perpetrators behind an attack, inflating the relative number of democracies known to have a terrorist group presence. To mitigate the problem of underreporting in closed societies, Sandler proposed using events data since "an authoritarian regime would have [comparative] difficulty in hiding the fact that a bomb had exploded in a major city or that a commercial aircraft had been hijacked."[14] The events data approach subsequently became the preferred methodology for numerous studies purporting to show that democracies invite terrorism.[15]

Rational choice models posit that the target selections of terrorists are a function of opportunities and incentives. Opportunity refers to the ease of attacking a given target, while incentive refers to the strategic benefits of carrying out an attack. It has been said that terrorists prefer targeting democracies—with their freedom of association and movement, plethora of high value targets, and commercially available weapons and technology—because democracies afford terrorists the greatest opportunity to mount operations.[16] Opportunity-based explanations have fallen out of favor, however, for two main reasons. First, as Jeffrey Ross argues, opportunity is a "necessary but not sufficient" condition for terrorists to attack a target. Terrorists are not vandals who blow things up willy-nilly simply because they can; rather, terrorist groups are purposive actors who use violence to further their political agendas.[17] If opportunity was the key variable affecting target selection, failed states would attract the preponderance of attacks, which is not the case.[18] Second, opportunity-based explanations are not prescriptively useful. Although it is frequently noted that terrorism is nonexistent in "effective dictatorial regimes," in reality only a handful of governments have precluded terrorist operations. As Martha Crenshaw observes, nearly all states "can be

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[12] Eubank and Weinberg, "Terrorism and Democracy: Perpetrators and Victims," 155–64; Weinberg and Eubank, "Terrorism and Democracy: What Recent Events Disclose," 108–18; Li and Schaub, "Economic Globalization," 249.

[13] Weinberg and Eubank, "Does Democracy Encourage Terrorism?" 417–43.

[14] Todd Sandler, "On the Relationship between Democracy and Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 2.

[15] See Eubank and Weinberg, "Terrorism and Democracy: Perpetrators and Victims"; Weinberg and Eubank, "Terrorism and Democracy: What Recent Events Disclose"; Li and Schaub, "Economic Globalization," 249.

[16] See Ross, "Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism," 321–22; Li and Schaub, "Economic Globalization," 242; Li, "Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents?" 278.

[17] Ross, "Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism," 321.

[18] My appreciation to Erica Chenoweth for this insight.

placed in the permissive category" as "inefficiency or leniency can be found in a broad range of all but the most brutally efficient dictatorships."[19] The Narodnaya Volya, for example, had no problem launching attacks in authoritarian Russia, and even during the height of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship in the 1980s, the Kurdish Iraqi Democratic Front managed to carry out dozens of attacks inside Iraq.[20] Indeed, high value targets exist even in the most illiberal countries. If terrorists target "anywhere people congregate in numbers," noted the Middle East's leading English language daily, "then it is impossible to stop them from finding somewhere they can bomb."[21] Moreover, there is no shortage of weapons in illiberal countries. With histories often characterized by civil wars, insurgencies, and ethnic strife, illiberal countries are home to robust black markets teaming with inexpensive, unregulated explosives and small arms ideal for carrying out terrorist attacks. Even in countries where ready-made weapons are difficult to procure, the manufacturing of makeshift weapons, such as by siphoning gasoline to make Molotov cocktails, is extremely easy.[22] In sum, opportunity-based explanations have been found lacking because (1) terrorists do not strike targets simply because they can, and (2) only a handful of countries are so atomized that opportunities do not exist for terrorists to mount operations.

The main reason political scientists believe democracies attract terrorism is that they are supposedly prone to making policy concessions. As Walter Laqueur succinctly puts it, "Democratic authorities instinctively give in to blackmail."[23] Democracies are allegedly vulnerable to coercion due to two liberal constraints on counterterrorism. First, it is frequently said that "brutality pays" in counterterrorist operations.[24] Authoritarian regimes have more leeway to escalate the level of violence against their enemies.[25] In this vein, Quan Li writes: "The largely unconstrained, repressive military regime... can disregard civil liberties, effectively crush terrorist organizations, and reduce terrorist incidents."[26] During clashes with the Kurds in 1963, for instance, the military governor of northern Iraq decreed: "We warn all inhabitants of villages in the provinces of Kirkuk, Sulaimaniya and Arbil against sheltering

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[19] Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," 383. See also Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987), 8, 172.

[20] RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database, "Iraqi Democratic Front," MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, at http://www.tkb.org.

[21] "There Are Limits to Intelligence But Not to Stupidity," *Arab News*, 12 August 2006, http://www.arabnews.com/?page = 7&section = 0&article = 79110&d = 12&m = 8&y = 2006.

[22] Ross, "Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism," 325.

[23] Laqueur, *Terrorism*, 224. Pape makes the related argument that democracies encourage terrorism because they are at least "thought to be especially vulnerable to coercive punishment." Pape, *Dying to Win*, 44.

[24] Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 22, 24, 46–47; see also Pape, *Dying to Win*, 44–45; Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," 7–8; Laqueur, *Terrorism*, 221.

[25] Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, 22, 46–47.

[26] Li, "Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents?," 283.

any criminal or insurgent and against helping them in any way whatsoever. We shall bomb and destroy any village if firing comes from anywhere near it against the army, the National Guards or the loyal tribes."[27] By contrast, democracies must continuously balance operational effectiveness and liberal democratic acceptability, which, so the logic goes, restrains their counterterrorism response and predisposes them to a strategy of appeasement.[28]

Second, political scientists routinely assert that democracies are vulnerable to coercion because of their low threshold for sustaining civilian casualties. Democracies, sensitive to individual sacrifice, are thought to be particularly vulnerable to enemies who, by definition, attack civilian targets. Authoritarian regimes, by comparison, are unresponsive to everything but the plight of the ruling class and are hence better suited to withstand high civilian costs.[29] Figure 1 illustrates the conventional wisdom for why democracies reputedly make for prime terrorist targets. In this depiction, a maximally effective counterterrorism response is a function of high counterforce and cost tolerance. Lacking these strategic assets, democracies are prone to appeasing terrorists, which reinforces the strategic logic for terrorists to target democracies.

DO TERRORISTS REALLY PREFER ATTACKING DEMOCRACIES?

Studies purporting to show that terrorists primarily attack democracies have relied on three datasets: the Chronology of International Terrorism, Patterns of Global Terrorism, and ITERATE. These datasets employ a standardized definition of terrorism. The attacks included in the datasets were: (1) perpetrated by substate actors, (2) directed against civilian targets, and (3) presumed to be politically motivated. This definition is practical and sound, but the datasets contain only international terrorist incidents, that is, attacks involving institutions, governments, or citizens of more than one country. Domestic terrorism, which pertains to incidents that begin and end in the same country, is

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[27] U. Zahler, "Political Developments in Iraq 1963–1980," in *Saddam's Iraq: Revolution or Reaction*, ed. CARDRI (London: Zed Books, 1989), 63.

[28] See Chalk, "The Liberal Democratic Response to Terrorism," 35; Schmid, "Terrorism and Democracy," 14–15; Crenshaw, *Terrorism, Legitimacy, and Power*, 18; Ross, "Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism," 322, 325; Pape, *Dying to Win*, 44–45. For a quality book on how democracies must balance operational effectiveness and liberal democratic acceptability, see Philip B. Heymann and Juliette N. Kayyem, *Protecting Liberty in an Age of Terror* (Cambridge, MA: BCSIA, 2005). There is widespread agreement that norms constrain democracies more than other regime types. It should be added, however, that democracies are less restricted by normative constraints when their counterterrorism campaigns take place outside their own countries than when the locus of counterterrorist activity is directed against their own electorate. My appreciation to an anonymous reviewer for this insight.

[29] Weinberg and Eubank, "Does Democracy Encourage Terrorism?" 420; Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, 22, 46–47; Kydd and Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," 59–62; Cronin, "How al-Qaida Ends," 31; Clarke, Beers, et. al., *Forgotten Homeland*, 8; Li, "Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents," 283.
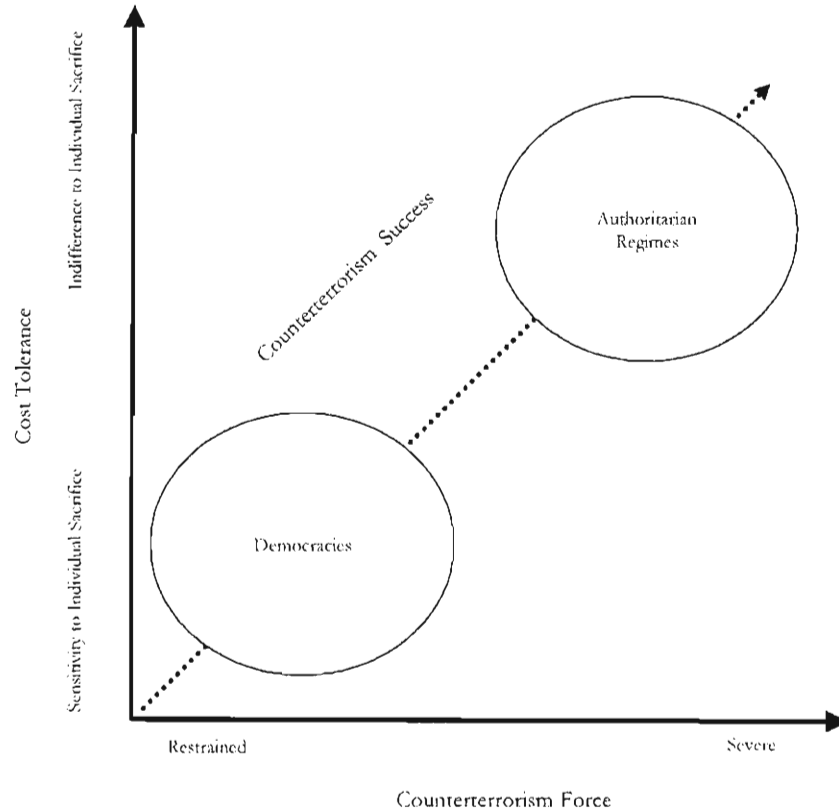
FIGURE 1 Conventional wisdom for why democracies are choice targets.

excluded.[30] Ted Robert Gurr noted two decades ago that without incorporating domestic terrorism events data, researchers cannot accurately assess the target preferences of terrorist groups.[31] Paul Wilkinson likewise notes, "Terrorism analysis based entirely on international incident statics (sic) cannot provide an accurate picture of world trends in terrorism because it excludes...[a large percentage] of terrorist activity around the globe."[32] Indeed, politically motivated attacks by substate actors against noncombatants have

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[30] ITERATE does contain events data for domestic campaigns when "its ramifications transcend national boundaries." It excludes, however, the vast majority of domestic terrorist incidents, such as attacks from the Irish Republican Army, Tamil Tigers, Basque Nation and Liberty, and Italian leftist groups. Edward F. Mickolus, "How Do We Know We're Winning the War Against Terrorists? Issues in Measurement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 25, no. 3 (May–June 2002): 152.

[31] Ted Robert Gurr, "Empirical Research on Political Terrorism," in *Current Perspectives on International Terrorism*, ed. Robert O. Slater and Michael Stohl (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 122, 128, 145. Schmid also makes this point in *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 174.

[32] Paul Wilkinson, "The Strategic Implications of Terrorism," in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, ed. M.L. Sondhi (New Delhi: Indian Council of Social Science Research and Har-anand Publications, 2000), 21.

historically hailed from domestic campaigns. In the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of the world's terrorist incidents were perpetrated by such domestic groups as the Irish Republican Army, the ETA, Corsican separatists, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization.[33] Terrorism continues to be a mainly homegrown problem: domestic campaigns in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, and Sri Lanka currently account for a major component of the world's terrorist activity. International terrorism, despite its massive press coverage, accounted for less than 11 percent of the worldwide terrorist incidents and one-quarter of the fatalities from 1998 to 2005. When the outlying year of 2001 is excluded, international terrorism accounted for less than 15 percent of the fatalities.[34]

Based on the attack patterns of suicide terrorists, Robert Pape has likewise suggested that democracies invite terrorism.[35] Yet suicide terrorism was responsible for less than 4 percent of worldwide terrorist attacks and 38 percent of the fatalities from 1998 to 2005; when the outlying year of 2001 is excluded, the fatality figure drops to under 30 percent.[36] The claim that democracies are inherently choice targets is thus inconclusive because it is based on only a small fraction of worldwide terrorist activity.

TERRORISTS PREFER ATTACKING ILLIBERAL COUNTRIES

WITS, a newly released U.S. government dataset, is not limited to international or suicide terrorist attacks and is thus an unprecedented and superior resource for analyzing terrorist target selections. WITS contains events data of domestic and international terrorist incidents from 1 January 2004 to 1 June 2005. Terrorism scholars have appealed for the creation of such a dataset not only to expand the sample of terrorist events data, but also to blunt the distinction between domestic and international terrorist attacks, which has increasingly become regarded as a contrivance. Nearly all domestic terrorist campaigns have an international dimension, with terrorist leaders devoting significant effort to securing external sources of money, weapons, fighters, safe haven, and political support.[37] According to Bruce Hoffman, the distinction between domestic and international terrorism has been "evaporating" since the late 1990s. The majority of Aum Shinrikio's members hailed from Russia, not Japan; the Oklahoma City bombers were allegedly linked

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[33] Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response, Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 38. See also Jan Oskar Engene, *Terrorism in Western Europe: Explaining the Trends since 1950* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2004), 60–62, 168.

[34] RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database, MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, http://www.tkb.org (accessed 3 March 2006).

[35] Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," 7–8; Pape, *Dying to Win*, 44–45.

[36] RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database, MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, (accessed 3 March 2006).

[37] Ross, "Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism," 327; Gurr, "Empirical Research on Political Terrorism," 131; Wilkinson, "The Strategic Implications of Terrorism," 21.

with neo-Nazis in Britain and Europe; networks of Algerian Islamic extremists have operated in France, Great Britain, Sweden, and Belgium; and al-Qaeda-affiliated movements have joined forces with nationalist insurgencies in countries such as Iraq.[38] Furthermore, according to a 2005 report by the State Department, twenty-seven of the fifty most active terrorist organizations are comprised of or are supported by segments of ethnonationalist diasporas, which highlights the increasing difficulty, even obsolescence of separating domestic and international terrorist attacks.[39]

Like other studies testing the relationship between democracy and terrorism, this study uses Freedom House's "Freedom in the World" rankings to determine the regime types of the target countries.[40] Freedom House annually classifies countries as Not Free, Partially Free, or Free based on their commitment to political rights and civil liberties. I used Freedom House's 2004 rankings, rather than the 2005 rankings, to minimize the problem of endogeneity; the earlier rankings reduce any potential for the dependent variable (terrorism) to influence the independent variable (regime type). The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the distribution of the average number of incidents and fatalities among the three regime types. If the conventional wisdom is supported, we would expect to see a significantly greater number of terrorist incidents and fatalities directed against Free countries.

The results did not, however, indicate a significant difference in the average number of terrorist incidents among the three regime types.[41] The average (SD) number of incidents was 55.7 (254.8), 30.8 (105.8), and 26.6 (116.8) for the Not Free, Partially Free, and Free countries, respectively ($P = 0.11$). There was also no significant difference in the average number of fatalities among the three regime types. The average (SD) number of fatalities was 161 (822), 53 (149), and 26 (134) for the Not Free, Partially Free, and Free countries, respectively ($P = 0.068$). According to Cohen, small, medium, and large effect sizes for a one-way ANOVA are $f = 0.1$; $f = 0.25$; $f = 0.4$, respectively.[42] The effect sizes for the average number of incidents ($f = 0.08$) and fatalities (0.13) were thus small. Therefore, contrary to prevailing

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[38] See Hoffman, "The Confluence of International and Domestic Trends in Terrorism" (paper, International Conference on Aviation Safety and Security in the 21st Century for the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security, Washington, D.C., 13–15 January 1997).

[39] U.S. State Department Counterterrorism Office, Patterns of Global Terrorism, Office of Counterterrorism, 2005, www.state.gov.

[40] See, for example, Weinberg and Eubank, "Terrorism and Democracy: What Recent Events Disclose," 108–18; Li, "Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents?" 278; Gause, "Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?"; Alan B. Krueger and David Laitin, "Kto Kogo: A Cross-Country Study of the Origins and Targets of Terrorism," *Sage Foundation Mimeo* (November 2003).

[41] The frequency distribution of regime types was 49 (26 percent), 53 (28 percent), and 88 (46 percent) for Not Free, Partially Free, and Free countries, respectively. All testing was based on determining statistical significance at a two-sided alpha level of 0.05.

[42] Jacob Cohen, *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed. (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erbaum, 1988).

popular and scholarly opinion, when the universe of terrorist attacks was included in the analysis, I did not find sufficient evidence that Free countries were targeted more or suffered a greater number of fatalities than either Not Free or Partially Free countries. In fact, the data suggest the exact opposite trend: Not Free countries had on average more than twice as many incidents and six times as many fatalities as Free countries. The relative absence of fatalities in Free countries was most evident among the most fatality-ridden countries, as only two of the ten most dangerous countries were Free.

TABLE 1 Top Ten Target Countries by Fatalities

Rank	Country	Regime type
1	Iraq	Not Free
2	*India*	*Free*
3	Nigeria	Partially Free
4	Nepal	Partially Free
5	Afghanistan	Not Free
6	Russia	Not Free
7	Pakistan	Not Free
8	Colombia	Partially Free
9	Uganda	Partially Free
10	*Philippines*	*Free*

*NCTC, WITS dataset, 1 January 2004 to 1 June 2005.

As we have seen, democracies supposedly attract terrorism because of their liberal constraints. Spearman's rho correlation coefficient is used to test the association between the civil liberty scores of the target countries and both the number of terrorist incidents and fatalities. Freedom House's civil liberty index operates on a seven point scale: countries with a score of one come closest to the ideal of permitting freedom of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion, while countries with a score of seven permit "virtually no freedom."[43] If the conventional wisdom is supported, we would expect to see a negative association between terrorist activity and the target countries' civil liberty scores. The results, however, indicate a statistically significant, positive association between the number of terrorist attacks and the civil liberty scores of the target countries rho $= 0.18$ (P $= 0.015$). There was also a statistically significant, positive association between the number of fatalities and the civil liberty scores of the target countries rho $= 0.22$ (P $= 0.002$). There was thus statistically significant evidence of greater terrorist activity in countries with poorer civil liberties—even when Iraq was treated as an outlier and excluded from the analysis.

The moderate positive association between terrorist activity and illiberal countries found in this analysis understates the extent to which terrorism is

[43] Freedom House, *Freedom in the World: The 2004 Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 715.

aimed at illiberal countries. The NCTC warns of "difficulty in gathering data on Iraq and Afghanistan" because of high levels of crime and sectarian violence. Consequently, "the dataset does not provide a comprehensive account of all incidents in these two countries."[44] Undercounting terrorist activity in illiberal countries is hardly restricted to these two illiberal countries. Political scientists have long noted that the events data in illiberal countries are undercounted for five main reasons. First, collectors of events data depend on open, publicly available sources. In practice, this means news sources, which are by definition less robust in illiberal countries. Second, the media in illiberal countries are often owned or controlled by the state, and authoritarian regimes tend to conceal challenges to their rule, including terrorist attacks. Third, the international media do not devote equal coverage to all geographical regions. Laqueur found that "while in Western societies even the smallest incidents are recorded, this is not so in other parts of the world ... "[45] Fourth, the international media tend to report only spectacular events. This poses a problem for data collectors where political violence has become the norm. Because political unrest is symptomatic of illiberal countries, attacks on civilians by substate actors often go unreported. Fifth, and perhaps most important, terrorist incidents in illiberal countries are undercounted for reasons of semantics. Terrorism typically refers to select incidences of violence. When the level of violence rises to a certain level, the campaign is generally reclassified as a civil war or genocide. In the course of these intense and sustained campaigns, politically motivated attacks by substate actors against civilians are generally excluded from the terrorism events data. Terrorist incidents in these countries are systematically undercounted because mass-based insurgencies are characteristic of illiberal countries. For all of these reasons, it is reasonable to assume that the positive association between terrorist attacks and illiberal countries is significantly stronger than even the WITS data indicate.[46] Indeed, in the only study to quantifiably assess the presumed underreporting bias of terrorism events data in illiberal countries, the authors conclude: "Underreporting is indeed present ... the databases used by applied researchers represent an understatement of true terrorist activity worldwide ... this understatement is not simply an overall scaling-down effect randomly distributed

[44] National Counterterrorism Center, "Methodology Utilized to Compile NCTC's Database of Terrorist Incidents," MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, http://www.tkb.org/NCTCMethodology.jsp (accessed 3 February 2006).

[45] Laqueur. *Terrorism*, 166.

[46] See Engene,*Terrorism in Western Europe*, 52; Charles Lewis Taylor and David A. Jodice, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators: Third Edition*, 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 181; Weinberg and Eubank, "Does Terrorism Encourage Democracy?" 417–18; Taylor and Jodice. *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators*, 179; National Counterterrorism Center, Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, http://wits.nctc.gov/Methodology.do; Ariel Merari, "Terrorism as a Strategy of Insurgency," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 5, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 213–51; Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," 379; Crenshaw, "How Terrorists Think: What Psychology Can Contribute to Understanding Terrorism" in *Terrorism: Roots, Impact, Responses*, ed. L. Howard (London: Praeger, 1992), 71–93.

across countries ... it is highly concentrated in countries whose press is not free, which typically correspond to countries that lie on low levels of the polity scale (nondemocracies) ... this has significant implications for issues such as constructing indices of terrorism risk on a country level ..."[47]

ARE LIBERAL COUNTRIES REALLY MORE COERCIBLE?

Terrorism's effectiveness can be measured in terms of either combat effectiveness or strategic effectiveness. Combat effectiveness describes how well the use of force damages the target, while strategic effectiveness describes how well damaging the target enables the coercer to achieve its policy objectives.[48] There is little doubt that terrorism gets high marks on combat effectiveness. The hallmark of terrorism is its ability to wreak tremendous damage and fear with far fewer resources than the target government. There has been scant empirical research, however, on terrorism's strategic effectiveness. Crenshaw observed in the 1980s that "the outcomes of campaigns of terrorism have been largely ignored," and Gurr added that this is "a subject on which little national-level research has been done, systematically or otherwise."[49] Eubank and Weinberg's pioneering 1994 study shows that terrorist groups are concentrated in democracies, but it did not test their thesis that democracies attract terrorism because they are prone to making policy concessions. The numerous follow-up studies purporting to corroborate this thesis focus on the attack patterns of international and suicide terrorists, not on the tendencies of target countries to enter into political compromise.[50] The paucity of research on terrorism coercion rates is both a symptom and a cause of the lack of datasets with coded information on the outcomes of terrorist campaigns. To date, only one large-N study has systematically analyzed the strategic effectiveness of terrorist campaigns and it does not address the relationship between coercion rates and the regime type of the target country.[51]

A partial exception is Pape's study on suicide terrorism. He reports that from 1980 to 2003, six of the eleven terrorist campaigns in his sample were associated with "significant policy changes by the target state" and that "a

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[47] Konstantinos Drakos and Andreas Gofas, "The Devil You Know but Are Afraid to Face: Underreporting Bias and Its Distorting Effects on the Study of Terrorism," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50, no. 5 (October 2006): 734.

[48] See Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 56–57.

[49] Crenshaw, *Terrorism, Legitimacy, and Power*, 5; Gurr, "Empirical Research on Political Terrorism," 125.

[50] See Weinberg and Eubank, "Terrorism and Democracy within One Country," 98-108; Weinberg and Eubank, "Terrorism and Democracy: What Recent Events Disclose," 108–18; Eubank and Weinberg, "Terrorism and Democracy: Perpetrators and Victims," 155–64; Li and Schaub, "Economic Globalization," 249.

[51] Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 42–78.

50 percent success rate is remarkable." The perception that terrorism works against democracies, he affirms, is thus grounded in "reasonable assessments of the relationship between terrorists' coercive efforts and the political gains that the terrorists have achieved."[52] Although confined to suicide terrorist groups, Pape's research is frequently cited as evidence that terrorism in general is "effective in achieving a terrorist groups' political aims" when directed against democratic countries.[53]

Several methodological problems, however, undermine his conclusion that terrorism against democracies is an effective means of political coercion. Not only is his sample of terrorist campaigns modest, but these campaigns were directed against only a handful of countries: ten of the eleven campaigns analyzed were directed against three countries (Israel, Sri Lanka, and Turkey), and six of those ten were directed against a single country (Israel). The inclusion of six terrorist campaigns against democratic Israel biases the results because Palestinian terrorism has been described as "the paradigmatic example of terrorism that has worked."[54] Even more important, Pape does not examine whether the terrorist campaigns achieved their core policy objectives. In his assessment of Palestinian terrorism, for example, he counts the limited withdrawals of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in 1994 as two separate terrorist victories, ignoring the 167 percent increase in the number of Israeli settlers throughout the 1990s—the most visible sign of Israeli occupation. Similarly, he counts as a terrorist victory the Israeli decision to release Hamas leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin from prison in October 1997, ignoring the hundreds of imprisonments and targeted assassinations of Palestinian terrorists throughout the Oslo peace process.[55] Furthermore, Pape treats all the terrorist victories as evidence that democracies are uniquely prone to coercion, even though five of the eleven campaigns were actually directed against Partially Free countries as classified by Freedom House. Finally, Pape does not compare the terrorist success rates in his sample of Free and Partially Free countries to a control group of Not Free countries. Pape's research, therefore, demonstrates only that terrorists have occasionally scored tactical victories, not that democracies are particularly prone to making policy concessions.

ILLIBERAL COUNTRIES ARE ACTUALLY MORE COERCIBLE

The following analysis tests the common assumption within political science that liberal countries are easier for terrorists to coerce than illiberal countries.

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[52] Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," 6–13; *Dying to Win*, 61, 64–65.

[53] See Kydd and Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," 49.

[54] Alan Dershowitz, *Why Terrorism Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) 88. See also Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[55] Max Abrahms, "Dying to Win," *Middle East Policy* 12, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 176–78.

It assesses terrorism's strategic effectiveness against a sample of forty countries from 1972 to 2004. The sample countries are not limited to democracies or the handful of other target countries that typically attract an inordinate amount of international media coverage. Rather, the sample consists of the twenty most liberal and illiberal countries that (a) incurred the greatest number of terrorist attacks according to WITS and (b) maintained the same regime type in both 2004 and the peak year of attack. The sample criteria ensure that the countries analyzed experienced a substantial number of terrorist attacks and that evaluations of terrorism effectiveness are unaffected by changes in regime type over time.[56]

This study analyzes the strategic effectiveness of the primary terrorist campaigns against each of the forty countries. The primary campaigns were determined by locating the peak year of attack against each country and the terrorist group responsible for the greatest number of attacks on the country that year. Three datasets were used. Terrorism in Western Europe: Events Data (TWEED) contains domestic events data for western European countries from 1972 to 2004. RAND's Terrorism Chronology contains international events data from 1972 to 1997 for all countries. The RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database contains both domestic and international events for all countries from 1998 to the present. Although no single dataset contains domestic and international events data coverage over several decades, these datasets have a strong composite value based on their similar definition of terrorism and data collection method. Studies comparing the leading terrorism datasets have shown a "marked similarity" in the incident counts where the coverage overlaps.[57] A notable exception is the case of Germany. Only TWEED events data include the hundreds of right-wing racist attacks against German minorities in the 1990s. Because our focus is on terrorism's ability to coerce, this study analyzes only terrorist campaigns aimed at achieving policy concessions. Paramilitary organizations or death squads that are agents of the state, such as Haiti's Tonton Macoutes, are therefore also excluded. The research design provides a replicable method for assessing the strategic effectiveness of the terrorist campaigns with the greatest number of known attacks against a sample of the world's most targeted liberal and illiberal countries.

The coding of the policy objectives is based on the descriptions of the terrorist groups responsible for the campaigns in RAND's Terrorism Knowledge

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[56] The liberal countries have a civil liberty score of two or lower, while the illiberal countries have a score of five or higher according to Freedom House. WITS was used to select the target countries because of its superior events data coverage; it was not used to establish the peak years of attack because it covers a small period of time relative to the other datasets used in the study and employs a slightly different methodology. No country's regime type classification moved from Free to Not Free.

[57] Edward Mickolus, Todd M. Sandler, Jean M. Murdock, *International Terrorism in the 1980s: A Chronology of Events*, vol. 1, 1980–83 (Ames: Iowa State University Press), xi. See also MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, "Frequently Asked Questions." Differences between RAND definitions and coding of terrorism with those employed by other major terrorism datasets are described as "minor."

Base and the Federation of American Scientists' Directory of Terrorist Organizations.[58] A four-tiered rating scale is used to evaluate the strategic effectiveness of the campaigns. A "total success" denotes the full attainment of a campaign's stated objective against the target country. "No success" indicates the absence of perceptible progress in coercing the country to alter its policy. Middling achievements are designated as either a "partial success" or a "limited success" in descending degrees of effectiveness. Examples of partial success include al-Qaeda's attacks on Poland and Bulgaria since these two countries in 2004 announced their intent to significantly reduce their troop presence in Iraq. By contrast, al-Qaeda attacks on the United States and Romania are designated as limited successes because neither country announced by 2004 its intent to withdraw from Iraq despite the difficulties of sustaining the occupation. For analytic purposes, a "total success" and "partial success" are both counted as terrorist victories, while "no success" and "limited success" are both counted as terrorist failures. A summary description of the codings for each country can be found in the appendix.

Tables 2 and 3 display the outcomes of the campaigns. The Fisher's Exact Test was used to test for an association between regime type and coercion rates. If the conventional wisdom is supported, we would expect to see that liberal countries have been significantly more likely than illiberal countries to appease the terrorists. In fact, terrorists were more than five times as likely to achieve their policy objectives against illiberal countries. The number (percent) of countries successfully coerced was 11 (55 percent) versus 2 (10 percent) for the illiberal and liberal regime types respectively $(P = 0.006)$.[59]

Disaggregating the campaigns by objective type provides stronger evidence that liberal countries are more resistant to coercion than illiberal countries. Terrorist groups have three main types of policy objectives: regime modification, separatism, and foreign expulsion. Campaigns seeking regime modification try to coerce a government into altering its ideological orientation, typically along communist, Islamist, or populist lines. Separatist campaigns attempt to coerce a government into ceding a portion of its country

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[58] RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database. "Groups Sub-Categories," MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, http://www.tkb.org/Category.jsp?catID = 1; Federation of American Scientists, "Liberation Movements, Terrorist Organizations, Substance Cartels, and Other Para-State Entities," http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/.

[59] Tables 2 and 3 reveal that the peak years of attack on the illiberal countries are more recent than the peak years of attack on the liberal countries. One might speculate that the variance in coercion rates between the two regime types simply reflects the fact that terrorism has become more policy effective within the past decade. This hypothesis is unfounded as even recent campaigns against liberal countries have been largely ineffective. The peak years of the illiberal countries are relatively recent for a more prosaic reason: incomplete data. Terrorism against illiberal countries has tended to be domestic, and for non-European countries, domestic events data coverage begins in 1998. That terrorism against illiberal countries has tended to be domestic does not mean that terrorism against liberal countries has tended to be international. For most of the world's liberal countries, terrorist activity—measured in terms of either the number of incidents or fatalities—has been domestic. See Engene. *Terrorism in Western Europe.*

TABLE 2 Terrorism Against Liberal Countries: Objectives and Outcomes

Target	Peak Yr	Civil Liberty	Group	Objective	Objective Type	Outcome
US	2004	1	Al-Qaeda	Liberate Iraq	Foreign expulsion	Limited success
Britain	1974	1	IRA	Unify Ireland	Separatism	No success
France	1986	2	FLNC	Corsican state	Separatism	Limited success
Italy	1980	2	BR	Communist rule	Regime transformation	No success
Spain	1989	1	ETA	Basque state	Separatism	Limited success
Greece	1991	2	RO-17 Nov.	Communist rule	Regime transformation	No success
Germany	1984	2	RAF	Communist rule	Regime transformation	No success
Australia	2004	1	Al-Qaeda	Liberate Iraq	Foreign expulsion	No success
Canada	1972	1	FLQ	Independent Quebec	Separatism	No success
Cyprus	2004	1	Turkish Nationalists	Unify Cyprus	Regime transformation	Limited success
Japan	1983	2	Chukakuha	Communist rule	Regime transformation	No success
Bulgaria	2004	2	Al-Qaeda	Liberate Iraq	Foreign expulsion	Partial success
Portugal	1984	2	FP-25	Communist rule	Regime transformation	No success
Poland	2004	1	Al-Qaeda	Liberate Iraq	Foreign expulsion	Partial success
Netherlands	1975	1	FSMYO	Moluccan state	Separatism	No success
Ireland	1983	1	IRA	Unify Ireland	Separatism	No success
Belgium	1985	1	CCC	Communist rule	Regime transformation	No success
Sweden	2004	1	Global Intifada	Communist rule	Regime transformation	No success
Denmark	2004	1	Al-Qaeda	Liberate Iraq	Foreign expulsion	Limited success
Romania	2004	2	Al-Qaeda	Liberate Iraq	Foreign expulsion	Limited success

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TABLE 3 Terrorism Against Illiberal Countries: Objectives and Outcomes

Target	Peak Yr	Civil Liberty	Group	Objective	Objective Type	Outcome
Iraq	2004	5	Al-Qaeda	Sunni Islamist rule	Regime transformation	Partial success
Nepal	2004	5	CPN-M	Communist rule	Regime transformation	Partial success
Afghanistan	2003	6	Taliban	Islamist rule	Regime transformation	Limited success
Russia	2004	5	Chechens	Chechen state	Separatism	Limited success
Pakistan	2004	5	Al-Qaeda	Islamist rule	Regime transformation	Partial success
Algeria	1998	5	GIA	Islamist rule	Regime transformation	Limited success
Lebanon	2002	5	Pro-Syrian	Syrian influence	Regime transformation	Partial success
Burundi	2004	5	FDD	Increase Hutu power	Regime transformation	Partial success
Haiti	2004	6	NRF	Overthrow Aristide	Regime transformation	Total success
Egypt	1998	5	IG	Islamist rule	Regime transformation	Limited success
Sudan	2001	7	SPLA	Christian autonomy	Separatism	Partial success
Somalia	2001	7	OLF	Oromo state	Separatism	No Success
China	2004	6	ETIM	Uighur state	Separatism	No Success
Iran	2004	6	MEK	End clerical rule	Regime transformation	No Success
Saudi Arabia	2004	7	Al-Qaeda	Islamist rule	Regime transformation	Partial success
Uzbekistan	2004	6	IMU	Islamist rule	Regime transformation	No Success
Yemen	1998	6	IAA	Freedom to Operate	Separatism	Partial success
Congo	2001	6	RCD	Overthrow Kabila	Regime transformation	Partial success
Burma	2004	7	KNU	Karen state	Separatism	Limited success
Cote d'Ivoire	2002	6	FN	Overthrow Gbagbo	Regime transformation	Partial success

for the self-determination of a resident minority group. Campaigns for foreign expulsion attempt to coerce a country into ending its occupation of another country. Since the early 1970s, international mediation theorists have recognized that countries are more inclined to appease limited policy demands than maximalist policy demands. Specifically, countries are more opposed to altering their ideological orientation or dismembering their own territory than to withdrawing troops from abroad.[60] In this study, terrorist campaigns to alter the ideology or boundaries of illiberal countries succeeded about half the time, but these maximalist policy objectives consistently failed against liberal countries.[61] The number (percent) of maximalist objectives successfully coerced was 11 (55 percent) versus 0 (0 percent) for the twenty illiberal and liberal countries respectively (P = 0.001).
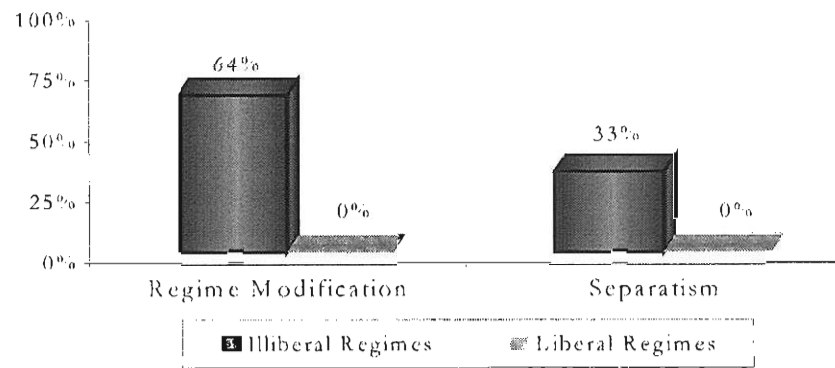

FIGURE 2 Coercion rates of maximalist objectives by regime type.

In sum, the conventional wisdom is that terrorists target democracies because they are uniquely vulnerable to coercion. The evidence presented here suggests precisely the opposite: terrorists prefer to attack illiberal countries, where they are far more likely to effect changes in policy. Liberal countries

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[60] See Marvin Ott, "Mediation As a Method of Conflict Resolution, Two Cases," *International Organization* 26, no. 4 (Autumn 1972): 613. See also John A. Vasquez, "The Tangibility of Issues and Global Conflict: A Test of Rosenau's Issue Area Typology," *Journal of Peace Research* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1983): 179. This observation is consistent with Bruce Jentleson, "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force," *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no.1 (March 1992): 49–74. In this pioneering study, Jentleson shows that democracies are considerably more likely to support military actions to resist campaigns directed against their own country than to remake foreign countries.

[61] William Odom correctly observes that terrorists "have never brought down a liberal democracy." See David McHugh, "Bin Laden Tape Urges Stopping Oil to U.S.," *Associated Press*, 18 December 2004. There are, however, two partial exceptions. In the early 1970s the democratically elected Uruguayan government tried to stamp out the Tupamaros by temporarily suspending civil liberties. More recently, Prime Minister José Maria Aznar's Popular Party was replaced by the Socialists following the 11 March 2004 Madrid train attacks. Some observers perceived the election outcome as a successful protest against maintaining Spanish troops in Iraq. In fact, Aznar's defeat was influenced more by the public's disgust over his transparent attempt to blame Basque terrorists for the attacks. As Philip H. Gordon testified before Congress, "The government appears to have paid more of a price for misleading the public than for its policy on Iraq." Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 31 March 2004.

are occasionally coerced into prematurely ending foreign occupations, but unlike illiberal countries, they do not alter their ideological orientation or the boundaries of their metropoles in the face of terrorism. The remainder of the article develops a theory to explain why terrorism poses less of a threat to liberal countries.

DEMOCRACIES ARE SUPERIOR COUNTERTERRORISTS

As we have seen, democracies allegedly make choice targets because their counterterrorism restraint and sensitivity to individual sacrifice render them vulnerable to coercion. In fact, democracies make for inferior targets because their ostensible liabilities are actually counterterrorism assets. A commitment to civil liberties restrains democracies from overreacting to terrorist provocations. This limits the likelihood that democratic governments will squander the support of the three constituencies—moderates, the international community, and their own publics—essential to prevailing. At the same time, liberalism's low civilian cost tolerance makes democracies extraordinarily motivated to combat terrorism. Liberalism's crosscurrents orient democracies toward locating the ideal balance between counterterrorism support and force. Below I examine both liberal currents and then their combined effects to develop a model for why democracies have a superior track record against terrorists.

Counterterrorism Restraint Preserves Support

Terrorists aim to provoke target governments into using excessive force.[62] David Fromkin notes that brutal or indiscriminate countermeasures are "an induced governmental response that has enabled terrorist strategies to succeed in many situations."[63] In fact, John Mueller observes that terrorists generally accomplish their objectives not from the initial violence but from overwrought government reactions.[64] Although civil liberties are generally thought of as a counterterrorism liability, they actually serve as a counterterrorism asset by restraining democracies from adopting harsh countermeasures that forfeit the support of the three constituencies necessary for defeating the terrorists.

First, respecting civil liberties prevents democratic governments from losing the support of their own publics. States which rely on indiscriminate or brutal countermeasures tend to undermine domestic support for the

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[62] David C. Rapoport, "Terrorism," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, ed. Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan (London: Routledge 1992), 1192; Michael Scott Doran, "Somebody Else's Civil War: Ideology, Rage, and the Assault on America," in *How Did this Happen: Terrorism and the New War*, ed. James F. Hoge Jr. and Gideon Rose (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2001),32.

[63] David Fromkin, "The Strategy of Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 53, no. 4 (July 1975): 687.

[64] John Mueller, "Six Rather Unusual Propositions about Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 2005): 491.

government. Strong domestic support is particularly important because counterterrorism campaigns, unlike other types of military conflict, typically take years, even decades to prosecute.[65] Domestic support for war is obviously vital for liberal governments because of the constitutional requirement for public consent. But illiberal governments also suffer from overzealous counterterrorism campaigns because they breed mass-based insurgencies, which are far more effective at accomplishing their policy goals than the more strictly terrorist campaigns.[66] This is consistent with the extant research on protest movements. James Denardo notes that "the more tyrannically the government behaves (the heavier its repression), the bigger the movement gets," which poses a problem for illiberal regimes because "the political fate of most radical movements depends... on the size of their following."[67] A contemporary example is in Nepal where King Gyanendra implemented an "encircle and kill" policy that has killed more innocent civilians than terrorists. These indiscriminate, brutal countermeasures have ignited mass opposition to the government, forcing the king to accept a power-sharing arrangement with the Communist party.[68]

Second, civil liberties restrict target countries from adopting repressive countermeasures that weaken the support of moderates. Terrorist groups purport to offer an alternative vision to the target government. To win the ideological battle against the extremists, target governments depend on enlisting the support of moderates. The U.S. Defense Department's 2006 *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* states that (1) "ideology is the component most critical to extremist networks and movements," (2) removal of it "is key to creating a global antiterrorist network," and (3) the outcome of the ideological struggle depends on whether moderates "lead the fight against the extremists."[69] If target governments require the support of moderates to delegitimize terrorism, terrorists seek "to provoke the target into [adopting] a disproportionate response that radicalizes moderates and drives them into the arms of the terrorists."[70] Terrorists hope that by eliciting extreme countermeasures, moderates will conclude that the target government is irredeemably committed to a policy of aggression and unlikely to compromise on acceptable terms. When terrorists win the sympathies of their moderate opponents, they can recruit more soldiers for the cause,

[65] Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work."

[66] Ibid. See also Wilkinson, *Terrorism versus Democracy*, 17–18.

[67] James Denardo, *Power In Numbers: The Political Strategy of Protest and Rebellion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 188, 209.

[68] RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database, "Group Profile: Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M)," MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID = 3531.

[69] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism*, report prepared for U.S. Department of Defense, 1 February 2006, 18, 20.

[70] David A. Lake, "Rational Extremism: Understanding Terrorism in the Twenty-first Century," *Dialogue-IO*, Spring 2002, 24.

expand their financial resources, and most importantly, bolster their ideological appeal.[71] Laqueur goes so far as to say that for terrorism to cause major "political change," moderates must be sufficiently radicalized to transform the campaign into a political mass movement.[72] To the extent civil liberties help retain the support of moderates, democracies have a strategic advantage in marginalizing the terrorists.

Third, respecting civil liberties helps target countries win the goodwill of the international community. Counterterrorism requires international support to dry up terrorist funds; gather and analyze intelligence; limit border crossings; prevent unfavorable, externally imposed peace settlements; and discredit terrorism as a method of political coercion. Terrorists, on the other hand, use violence as a communication strategy to convince the international community to back their policy agenda. The best way for terrorists to accomplish this (intermediate) objective is by provoking the target country into such savage acts of suppression that international sympathy is awakened to the terrorist cause.[73] Authoritarian regimes are far more likely than democracies to employ extreme tactics that mobilize the international community on behalf of the targeted group. Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in the late 1980s is an illustrative example. Used as a means to consolidate Saddam's rule over Iraq, the atrocities against "his own people" were repeatedly invoked during the lead-up to war as a principal moral and strategic justification for regime change.[74] Saddam's Iraq makes clear that unrestrained countermeasures are a strategic liability to the extent that they generate international sympathy and support for the targeted group at the expense of the government.

The realist counterargument is that counterterrorism restraint is epiphenomenal to policy effectiveness; that is, what makes illiberal countries vulnerable to coercion is not their propensity to adopt overwrought policies, but the fact that these regimes are already weak.[75] This contention is unconvincing because even strong, determined countries yield to terrorists when they adopt excessive, illiberal countermeasures. France's experience in Algeria is a revealing case study. In the 1950s, *Algerie Francaise* was the jewel of the French empire, an integral part of metropolitan France, and of vital importance to its position in the Mediterranean. The Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) appeared an unlikely opponent to prevail against a country that was "well prepared, highly motivated, and sufficiently endowed to fight in Algeria."[76]

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[71] David A. Lake, "Rational Extremism" 24, 20–21.

[72] Laqueur, *Terrorism*, 303.

[73] Michael Howard, "Terrorism Has Always Fed Off Its Response," *The Times*, 14 September 2001.

[74] Juan Cole, "Did Saddam Gas the Kurds?" *History News Network*, 4 February 2003, http://hnn.us/articles/1242.html.

[75] See Crenshaw, *Terrorism, Legitimacy, and Power*, 8.

[76] Meron, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, 98. See also Christopher Harrison, "French Attitudes to Empire and the Algerian War," *African Affairs* 82, no. 326 (January 1983): 75.

To win the "dirty war," French authorities resorted to harsh countermeasures "with little regard for moral considerations," including strict censorship in Algeria, summary executions, indiscriminate seek and destroy missions, systematic use of torture, and the policy of *regroupement*, which deracinated and resettled over a million Algerians under miserable conditions.[77] The policy of pacification likewise trammeled on French civil liberties at home: newspapers were seized on 265 occasions, strict curfews were imposed on large segments of the population, and Maghreban immigrants were the target of frequent harassment and killings by the police.[78]

Albert Camus once wrote that these illiberal tactics "did more harm to France's cause than a hundred armed enemy bands."[79] Specifically, the illiberal countermeasures eroded the support of the three constituencies essential for French victory. First, public anger over the repressive and often brutal policies both at home and in Algeria created profound fissures in civil-military relations. Majority support for war ended in 1957, the same year as the notoriously savage Battle of Algiers. As stories of French conduct spread in January 1958, support for staying the course further fell to 44 percent. This figure dropped to only 22 percent on the eve of negotiations with the FLN in April 1961.[80]

Second, extreme countermeasures prevented the French authorities from winning the proverbial hearts and minds of moderate Muslim villagers. In his firsthand account of commanding French troops during the war, Lt Col David Galula writes, "The general consensus was that this war could only be won if we succeeded in divorcing the rebels from the population. It was imperative that we isolate the rebels from the population and that we gain the support of the population."[81] Hoffman points out, however, that France's extreme tactics were "counterproductive" because their "sheer brutality alienated the native Algerian Muslim community. Hitherto mostly passive or apathetic, that community was now driven into the arms of the FLN, swelling the organization's ranks and increasing its popular support."[82]

Third, French tactics alienated the international community. According to one typical account, "It was in the international diplomatic 'theater of operations'—for this is what it was—that France and the cause of

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[77] Christopher Harrison, "French Attitudes to Empire and the Algerian War," *African Affairs* 82, no. 326 (January 1983): 75.

[78] Martin Harrison, "Government and Press in France during the Algerian War," *American Political Science Review* 58, no. 2 (June 1964): 278; Thomas Martin, "The British Government and the End of French Algeria, 1958-1962," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no.2 (June 2002): 173.

[79] Albert Camus, quoted in Chester W. Obuchowski, "Algeria: the Tortured Conscience," *The French Review* 42, no. 1 (October 1968): 97.

[80] John Talbott, "French Public Opinion and the Algerian War: A Research Note," *French Historical Studies* 9, no. 2 (Autumn 1975): 358.

[81] David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956–1958* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1963), 7, 104.

[82] Bruce Hoffman, "A Nasty Business," *Atlantic Monthly*, January 2002, 3.

Algerie Francaise suffered its most mortal blows."[83] In sum, *Algerie Francaise* demonstrates that even highly committed and endowed countries compromise their counterterrorism efforts when they adopt unrestrained countermeasures. For target countries, maintaining the support of their own publics, moderates, and the international community is generally more valuable than the presumed benefits of using unrestrained force.

Liberal Intolerance for Civilian Losses Creates High Motivation to Fight Terrorism

It is commonly assumed that terrorists prefer targeting liberal countries because their risk-averse publics have low cost tolerance for withstanding attacks on their civilian populations. The evidence, however, suggests that the liberal aversion to incurring civilian losses does not result in craven political concessions but rather in extraordinarily high motivation for combating terrorism.

Since the publication of *Perpetual Peace* in 1795, the democratic peace theory has dominated research on the relationship between regime type and war. Scholarly attention has focused on what Kant called the "pacific union" among republican governments, that is, the tendency of democracies to avoid fighting each other because of their shared norms. Yet Kant also predicted that liberal states would not be pacific in their relations with illiberal states. The very respect for individual rights that creates comity among liberal states would exacerbate relations between liberal and illiberal states.[84] Empirical research confirms that although democracies have historically refrained from attacking each other, they have fought numerous wars against non-democracies since the late eighteenth century. Studies have shown that democracies are especially eager to fight weak illiberal states,[85] but they have not addressed the related question of how democracies react to terrorism in particular. Kantian theory predicts that democracies would be extremely motivated to fight terrorists. Terrorists, after all, are quintessential enemies of liberalism: liberalism is a political philosophy founded on the natural goodness of the individual, and terrorists, by definition, intentionally attack civilian targets.

Empirical evidence suggests that democracies do not relate to terrorists in a purely strategic way. Since the late 1960s, the number of Americans killed by terrorism has been surprisingly small; in fact, the number is about

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[83] Martin S. Alexander and J.F.V. Keiger, "France and the Algerian War: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 2 (June 2002): 18.

[84] Michael Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (December 1986): 1157, 1162; Bruce Russett, *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 130.

[85] Randall L. Schweller, "Domestic Structure and Preventive War: Are Democracies More Pacific?" *World Politics* 44, no. 2 (January 1992): 235–69.

the same for those killed by lightning, deer in roadways, or allergic reactions to peanuts. In Europe as well, terrorism's direct effects have been minor compared to other international threats, yet terrorism invariably elicits a disproportionate response.[86] In public opinion polls, citizens of the United States and more than a dozen European countries have consistently rated terrorism as a greater threat than such perennial concerns as hunger, domestic problems, AIDS, oil dependency, nuclear weapons, poverty in developing countries, global trade and economy, China, and Russia. Not surprisingly, then, democracies have expressed a greater willingness to use military force to defeat terrorism than to achieve any other policy objective. Democratic publics have held these views for decades, well before policy experts began regarding terrorism as an overriding security threat.[87]

In public opinion polls, abstract support for the principle of using military force to combat hypothetical aggressors does not always translate into public support for real-life military actions.[88] The American public has been polled extensively on its willingness to use military force in response to two terrorist incidents: the 5 April 1986 Libyan sponsored bombing of a West Berlin nightclub that killed two American servicemen and the attacks of September 11. Contrary to the widespread belief that liberal governments are inclined to seek political settlements because of their high sensitivity to civilian costs, Americans responded to both attacks by offering overwhelming support for military action.

In a well-known study on American public opinion, Bruce Jentleson compared nine major U.S. military campaigns in the 1980s in terms of their popular support. Support for antiterrorism missions against Libya ranked first (80 percent), higher than the support for any of the other eight campaigns in the study, none of which were directly related to terrorism. Jentleson's intracase analysis demonstrated that before the nightclub attack, polls showed only 10 to 25 percent support for military action against Libya. Moreover, when asked whether military action should be taken against Iran or Syria

[86] Mueller, "Six Rather Unusual Propositions About Terrorism," 486, 488.

[87] Roper Poll, USYANKP.021097, R15BI, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 5–6 February 1997 (Storrs, CT: The Roper Center, University of Connecticut, 10 February 1997); Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, *American Public Opinion and* scfi *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 1987, polls 6 and 15, October–November 1986 (Chicago: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 1986), http://www.ccfr.org/publications/opinion/American%20Public%20Opinion%20Report%201987.pdf (accessed 5 March 2006); Los Angeles Times Poll/EOS Gallup Europe, 080896, R3, 3–6 August 1996; Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, "A World Transformed: Foreign Policy Attitudes of the U.S. Public After September 11," *Worldviews 2002* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2002), http://www.worldviews.org/key_findings/us_911_report.htm≠kf1. See also EOS Gallup Europe, USMISC.04Trans, R26G, 6–26 June 2004 (released 9 September 2004); Roper Poll, RO25I, USGREEN.01GLOBE, 4–6 December 2001 (released 11 December 2001); Roper Poll, USHARRIS.02CCFRA, R0315, 1–30 June 2002 (released 2 October 2002); Princeton Poll, 003, 4–11 September 1997 (Princeton: Princeton Research Associates International, 10 October 1997).

[88] Russett, *Controlling the Sword*, 37.

if allegations of state-sponsored terrorism against either was confirmed, unmatched levels of support were again found. Jentleson concluded that the nature of the policy objective—restraining the use of terrorism—was the decisive factor behind the unparalleled support for military action.[89] Similarly, the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations showed that the American public, in response to the nightclub bombing, was more supportive for counterterrorism operations than for any of the five non-terrorism related military campaigns included in the sample.[90]

The September 11, 2001 attack is the other terrorist incident for which there is substantial polling data on the American public's response. Americans again offered overwhelming support for military action. The vast majority of Americans (91 percent) supported the decision to target al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.[91] Following Operation Enduring Freedom, the Bush administration proceeded to sell Iraqi regime change in the context of 9/11, claiming there was "bulletproof evidence" of a link between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. On the eve of the invasion, two out of three Americans believed Iraq "provided direct support to the al-Qaeda terrorist group," the exact same percentage which supported regime change.[92] When respondents were asked to specify the most important reason they supported the invasion, the most common answer cited was to "prevent future terrorism." Throughout the 2004 presidential election campaign, Americans believed by an almost two to one margin that George W. Bush would do a better job than his less hawkish opponent, John Kerry, in "defending the country from future terrorist attacks."[93] Although Bush's reelection was not a direct referendum on the decision to invade Iraq, those who voted for him were most likely to attribute their vote to his strong stance against terrorism.[94] The American public has become increasingly disenchanted with the Iraq war since late 2003. Studies suggest, however, that the declining support is due less to the costs of the war than the growing perception that it is unrelated to the war on terrorism, counterproductive to the war on terrorism, or simply un-winnable.[95]

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[89] Jentleson, "The Pretty Prudent Public," 49–73.

[90] Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, *American Public Opinion*: 1987.

[91] Fox News Poll, USODFOX.113001, R09, 28 November 2001 (New York: Fox News Network, 30 November 2001).

[92] ABC News/Washington Post Poll, USABCWP.031505, R23, 10–13 March 2005 (New York: ABC News, 15 March 2005).

[93] Pew Poll, USPSRA.101002, R48F2, 2–6 October 2002 (Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 10 October 2002).

[94] Donald Rumsfeld, quoted in Eric Schmitt, "Rumsfeld Says U.S. Has 'Bulletproof' Evidence of Iraq's Links to Al Qaeda," *New York Times*, 28 September 2002; Princeton Poll, USPSRA.092804, RO5D, 22–26 September 2004 (released 28 September 2004); Fox News Poll, USODFOX.092702, R12, 24–25 September 2002 (released 27 September 2002).

[95] Christopher Gelpi, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler, "Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq," *International Security* 30, no. 3 (Winter 2005/06): 7–46. See also Chaim Kaufman, "Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas," *International Security* 29, no. 1 (summer 2004), 30–41.

ultimately jeopardize the outcome of counterterrorism campaigns, creating new incentives for rational terrorist actors to attack.

This study provides the strongest empirically grounded argument for democracy promotion in the context of the war on terrorism. The Bush administration's stated position is that "freedom and democracy are critical to defeating terror" because "when the citizens . . . cannot advance their interests and redress their grievances through an open political process, they retreat hopelessly into the shadows to be preyed upon by evil men with violent designs."[97] There is, however, scant evidence that elections reduce terrorism by providing a peaceful alternative for extremists to achieve their goals. On the contrary, in the post-Cold War era, the terrorism threat has intensified throughout much of the world instep with the rising number of electoral democracies; in the past several years, free parliamentary elections have legitimized and empowered Islamists in Morocco, Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the Palestinian territories.[98] Most importantly, Operation Iraqi Freedom has demonstrated that foreign interventions to depose illiberal rulers sometimes exacerbate the terrorism threat—at least in the short-to-medium term. Open, competitive elections are clearly not a panacea for terrorism.

The best course of action for the international community is not to promote electoral democracies per se but rather to foster a steady, worldwide improvement of civil liberties especially in the face of terrorism. In this counterintuitive fashion, the international community should encourage governments to become superior counterterrorists by not only granting their citizens greater freedom of expression, assembly, association, education, and even religion but, equally important, by restricting indiscriminate attacks, torture, searches, seizures, and infringements on due process. These restraints are essential for isolating terrorists, marshalling support for counterterrorism operations, and consequently denying terrorists the ability to achieve their policy goals, which is key to deterring their radical sympathizers from even entering the fray.

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[97] George W. Bush, quoted in Natan Sharansky, *The Case for Democracy: the Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 22; Condoleeza Rice, "The Promise of Democratic Peace," *Washington Post*, 11 December 2005.

[98] F. Gregory Gause III, "Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?" *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2005), 64.

APPENDIX

Terrorism against these countries was coded as strategically ineffective for the following reasons:

The United States did not announce its intent to withdraw its troops from Iraq despite the difficulties sustaining the occupation.

Britain was not compelled by the Irish Republican Army to unify Ireland.

France was not compelled by the National Liberation Front of Corsica to establish a Corsican state.

Italy was not compelled by the Red Brigades to go communist.

Spain resisted the ETA's demand to establish a Basque state.

Greece was not compelled by the Revolutionary Organization of 17 November to go communist.

Germany was not compelled by the Red Army Faction to go communist.

Australia did not withdraw from Iraq and actually boosted its troop levels in early 2005.

Canada was not compelled by the Front de Liberation du Quebec to establish an independent state.

Cyprus resisted pressure from Turkish ultra-nationalists to unify the island.

Japan was not compelled by the Chukakuha to go communist.

Portugal was not compelled by the Popular Forces of the 25th of April to go communist.

Netherlands was not compelled by the Free South Moluccan Youth Organization to establish a Moluccan state.

Northern Ireland loyalists were not compelled by the Irish Republican Army to support the unification of Ireland.

Belgium was not compelled the Communist Combatant Cells to go communist.

Sweden was not compelled by the Global Intifada to go communist.

Denmark did not withdraw its troops from Iraq.

Romania did not announce its intent to withdraw its troops from Iraq despite the difficulties sustaining the occupation.

Iran was not compelled by the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization to end its clerical rule.

Afghanistan, as of 2004, was not ruled by the Taliban.

Russia was not compelled to allow the establishment of an independent Chechen state.

Algeria was not compelled to replace its secular government with an Islamist one.

Egypt was not compelled by the Islamic Group to become Islamist.

Somalia was not compelled by the Oromo Liberation Front to allow the establishment of an Oromo state.

China was not compelled by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement to establish an independent Uighur state.

Burma was not compelled by the Karen National Union to establish an independent Karen state.

Uzbekistan was not compelled by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan to adopt Islamist rule.

Terrorism against these countries was coded as strategically effective for the following reasons:

Since Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraqi governance has been challenged by Sunni extremists.

The Communist Party of Nepal controls 70 percent of the countryside, forcing the leadership to enter a power-sharing agreement.

The Islamic Army of Aden has operated with impunity throughout large tracks of Yemen.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army was granted autonomy in southern Sudan.

Forces for the Defense of Democracy were able to set up parallel administration with the government throughout Burundi.

The Musharraf government has been forced to turn a blind eye to Islamist extremism in Pakistan.

Pro-Syrian terrorism has silenced opposition to Syrian encroachment on Lebanese sovereignty.

Haiti's President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was violently overthrown by several rebel factions in February 2004.

The House of Saud has been continuously unstable owing to its inability to reign in Islamist influence in Saudi Arabia.

Poland announced in 2004 that it would be withdrawing its troops from Iraq.

Bulgaria announced in 2004 that it would be withdrawing its troops from Iraq.

Rally for Congolese democracy was decisive in marginalizing and ultimately overthrowing Laurent Kabila.

The Forces Nouvelles took control of northern Cote d'Ivoire, compromising President Laurent Gbagbo's rule of the country.