

Terrorism and Political Science

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This article shows empirically, theoretically and statistically that domestic (or 'home-grown') terrorism in Western Europe occurs more frequently in countries with majoritarian political systems (typically first-past-the-post electoral systems and single-party governments) than in countries with consensus political systems (typically countries with PR electoral systems and coalition governments). Based on a survey of all domestic terrorist incidents in Western Europe from 1985 to 2010, the article shows strong negative correlations between consensus institutions and levels of terrorism; that is, the more disproportional the political system is, the higher the levels of terrorism are likely to be. Thus domestic terrorism tends to occur when minorities are excluded from the decision-making process on matters they find important. These findings indicate that constitutional engineering provides a more promising model of counterterrorism than the prevailing orthodoxy.

Keywords: terrorism; electoral systems; Gallagher disproportionality; majoritarian democracy

There is something that is not working in the policies to combat terrorism. As a prominent scholar recently noted,

The record of the war on terror as actually practiced and pursued ... has not been at all inspiring. For this most extensive, expensive, expansive and ambitious human attempt yet to extirpate terrorism has not only failed to do so, in certain ways it has actually exacerbated the problem. In 2001, the year of the 9/11 atrocity, there were 1,732 recorded incidents worldwide; five years later ... the annual figure had risen to 6,659 (English 2010, 77).

This article proposes that our strategy is likely to improve if we take a constitutional engineering and an institutionalist reform approach to counterterrorism. The reason for this optimism is based on the hypothesis that domestic (or 'home-grown') terrorism is a result of political systems that do *not* allow all their citizens to gain influence on matters that they consider to be of vital importance. Because countries with winner-takes-all political systems only allow minorities little influence and few opportunities for representation, these minorities may resort to 'politics by other means' as other avenues into the political system are all but blocked. Consequently, according to our hypothesis, more opportunities for representation—as measured by, for example, the number of parties represented in parliament—should lead to lower levels of domestic terrorism. Needless to say, one should not underestimate the intricate problems pertaining to constitutional engineering (see Przeworski 2004), yet anecdotal evidence from Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka suggests that this avenue is fruitful (McGarry and O'Leary 2006; personal



communication, Professor Gamini Keerawella, November 2010). This article sets out to show why.

Recent research—though see Li (2005) and Jackson and Reiter (2007)—has been markedly empiricist and *ideographic* (see Hoffman (2006) for an overview).¹ This is, of course, legitimate and several studies using this approach have contributed to our understanding of terrorism (see English 2009). This article is based on a different approach, namely that of a theory-generating *nomothetic* political scientist.

The aim is to test Arend Lijphart's suggestion that statistically there is a 'slightly better performance of the consensus democracies' regarding low levels of political violence (Lijphart 1999, 271) and Bingham Powell's similar suggestion (Powell 1982). We do this by contrasting—and correlating—measures such as District Magnitude, the Laver-Hunt Index of Opposition Influence, Gallagher's Disproportionality Index and the Laakso-Taagepera Effective Number of (Parliamentary) Parties. These measures are typically used as proxies for consensus government (Lijphart 1999).

The overall hypothesis is that domestic terrorism in large measure (but not exclusively) is a result of a perceived disenfranchisement of a minority group, and that this sense of disenfranchisement can be remedied through introducing more inclusive and consensus-oriented political institutions such as, above all, proportional representation with a low district magnitude.

Focusing on domestic terrorism, the article thus adds to research recently published in this journal (Thomas 2010; Miller (forthcoming)), which considered other—and complementary—aspects of disenfranchisement of minority groups and the relationship between terrorism and democracy, though this piece is decidedly more 'positivist' in aims, objectives and philosophical inclination.

Methodology

The aim of this article is to determine whether particular political and constitutional institutions correlate with higher or lower levels of terrorism. Inspired by Lijphart's distinction between *consensus* and *majoritarian democracies* (Lijphart 1984 and 1999), the hypothesis is that the former are less likely to suffer terrorist attacks.

Limited for methodological reasons to countries in Western Europe in the period 1985–2010, the hypothesis is that political institutions—especially electoral systems—indirectly (and perhaps even directly) provide a mechanism for reducing the risk of terrorism, and that, contrary to what many assume, terrorism is less a result of social (Gurr 1970) and economic conditions (Enders and Sandler 2006; Krueger 2007) than it is a result of political factors, such as a feeling of political disenfranchisement of minority groups.

To render this conclusion plausible, the article:

- contrasts different social, economic and demographic models statistically;
- develops a theoretical model of terrorism (using a *structural-functionalist* approach); and

- correlates the incidents of terrorism with measures and indices of consensus and majoritarian government.

The method used in this article is comparative. The comparative method provides a way of isolating common denominators. However, there is always a danger that we are not comparing like with like, and that an apparent connection is merely the result of a statistical coincidence. To limit the risk of drawing inferences on the basis of incommensurable cases it is prudent to contrast so-called 'most similar cases'. As B. Guy Peters has noted, 'comparative politics [involves] the development of theories explaining behaviour within groups of countries which are essentially similar' (Peters 1998, 37).

By using this 'most similar cases approach' we are able to identify causes as the background variables are the same. It is with this in mind that this study focuses on West European countries, that is, countries 'where', to quote Ostrogorski, 'the social conditions produced by economic evolution are the same and where men [and women] are subject to similar influences' (Ostrogorski, quoted in Barker and Howard-Johnston 1975, 427).

Using this approach the article analyses *all* of the 1,908 recorded domestic terrorist incidents in West European countries between 1 January 1985 and 1 November 2010 (as identified by the RAND Database of Terrorism). The incidents thus include only attacks perpetrated by citizens of the country where the attack took place, such as the 7/7 bombers in London in 2005, but not the al Qa'eda attack on commuter trains in Madrid in 2004, as the latter was perpetrated by non-Spaniards.

The period selected was intended to coincide with the rise of Islamist terrorism. However, on closer inspection, it turned out—as we shall see—that terrorist attacks perpetrated by radicalised Muslims are less of a problem than the media would have us believe. Indeed, the fact of the matter is that while Islamist terrorism has been much debated since 9/11, the only major Islamist attack that has been perpetrated by domestic groups—that is, citizens of the country in which the attack took place—is the 7/7 bombing in London. All other fatal attacks were perpetrated by either Marxist, nationalist or separatist groups such as, for example, 17 November (*Epanastatiki Organosi dekaefia Noemvri*) in Greece, *Fronte di Liberazione Naziunale* and the *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA) in the Basque Country, France and Spain. The focus on the period 1985–2009 is thus arbitrary to a certain extent, though it provides us with a large N and focuses on the period after the demise of left-wing radicalism and attacks perpetrated by such groups as the Italian *Brigate Rosse*, the West German *Die Rote Armee Fraktion* and—albeit to a lesser extent—the Belgian *Cellules Communistes Combattantes* (Langgut 1986).

Social Factors and Terrorism

Traditionally, studies of political violence and terrorism have focused on the social and economic causes of terrorism. From the pioneering studies in the early 1970s (e.g. Gurr 1970) through to more recent studies (Townshend 2002; Hoffman 2006), there has been a focus on terrorism as a result of social causes. 'Relative deprivation'—often measured as economic inequality and a low level of economic

Table 1: Terrorism and Social Factors

Country	Terror	GINI	GDP per capita	Muslims
Austria	2	30	44,880	4.2
Belgium	48	25	42,610	3
Denmark	14	25	57,050	2
Finland	1	27	46,260	0.2
France	731	33	41,970	6
Germany	298	28	40,320	4
Greece	196	35	19,000	3
Iceland	0	26	40,112	0.01
Ireland	11	36	59,320	0.5
Italy	122	36	35,400	0.1
Luxembourg	2	28	130,000	3
Netherlands	33	31	46,750	5.7
Norway	5	26	82,480	1
Portugal	16	39	18,000	0.5
Spain	237	33	32,020	1
Sweden	31	25	49,600	2
UK	128	36	45,440	2.7
		R = 0.23*	R = 0.007**	R = 0.49***

Sources: RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents/> (Accessed 7 November 2010); PEW, <http://features.pewforum.org/muslim/number-of-muslims-in-western-europe.html> (Accessed 7 November 2010)

* Significant at 0.39; ** significant at 0.80; *** significant at 0.19. Overall variance explained $r^2 = 0.15$

income (Krueger 2007) has often been blamed for increased levels in the incidence of terrorist attacks. Far from wanting to dismiss these studies entirely, there is evidence to suggest that these causes do not account for the occurrence of terrorist incidents in Western Europe.

Based on the data from countries in Western Europe, there is little to suggest that social factors play a decisive role (see Table 1). Admittedly, the countries have been selected to account for differences in socioeconomic development. Yet with differences in GDP per capita ranging from \$18,000 in Portugal and \$19,000 in Greece to \$59,000 in Ireland and \$113,000 in Norway, it is surprising that there is practically no correlation between income and terror ($R = 0.07$, sign, 0.80). Further inequality, often seen as *the* crucial variable, does not fare much better. While an $R = 0.21$ is a respectable correlation, it is not as strong as we would have expected and, moreover, the figure is only statistically significant at the $P < 0.39$ (one-tailed). That these very factors show modest statistical correlations—indeed the two factors taken together only account for limited variance ($r^2 = 0.05$, significant at 0.66)—requires us to look for other factors.²

Using data from the period 1985–2010—the years when the threat of Islamist terrorism was *perceived* to have replaced political and nationalist terrorism as the

major threat (at least internationally)³—we would perhaps have expected to find a correlation between the presence of a large Muslim population and a large number of terror attacks. The correlation between the percentage of Muslims in a country and the number of domestic terrorist incidents, of $R = 0.49$, is not unimpressive per se. Yet this is *not* statistically significant ($P < 0.19$). There is a slight indication that a (possibly) disenfranchised population group can significantly increase the terrorist threat, but the evidence is at best weak. In Western Europe at least, nationalist and ethnic minorities are much more likely to carry out terrorist attacks than Islamist groups. The claim—often raised by political parties that want to limit immigration from Muslim countries—that a large Islamic population leads to higher levels of terrorism is *not* unequivocally supported statistically or empirically, though this could possibly change in the light of recent foreign policy interventions, which have led to more militarism among Muslims in Europe (Nesser 2011, 173). The question, therefore, is whether we can find an alternative explanation and, more particularly, if political institutions that allow for more involvement by minority groups will reduce terrorism.

Of course, some claim that we should not ever enter into a dialogue with terrorists, as their goals are inherently unacceptable (Dershowitz 2002, 24–25). Yet, case studies suggest that institutional reforms can reduce the threat of terror as they have seemingly done in Sri Lanka (personal communication, Professor Gamini Keerawella, November 2010), in Northern Ireland (McGarry and O’Leary 2006) and to a degree in Spain (Hopkin 1999). It seems that we ought at least to consider this possibility if it yields positive results.

Constitutional Engineering as Counterterrorism: A Theoretical Model

A dominant tradition in political theory going back to at least the authors of the *Federalist Papers* (Madison *et al.* 1987 [1787]) and John Stuart Mill (1991) suggests that it is possible to engineer political and constitutional institutions to alter the behaviour of political actors. This assumption was explicitly followed by those negotiating the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland (English 2009). The assumption in the latter case was that co-opting former perpetrators into the political process ensured that all groups were involved in government, and hence reduced the risk of terror (McGarry and O’Leary 2006). Similar approaches have been used elsewhere (Reilly 2006). Two questions present themselves if we accept the hypothesis that institutions can be used to change behaviour:

- (1) What is the theoretical explanation of this effect of institutions?
- (2) Which institutions are conducive to limiting the threat of terrorism?

According to David Easton’s much cited model (Easton 1965)—especially as developed by political scientists like Gabriel Almond *et al.* (2006)—the political system can be seen as an input-output model, in which groups in the surrounding environment *articulate* demands, which are channelled into the *political system* by *aggregators*, and transformed into policies, decisions and actions, in other words *outputs*. In the traditional structural-functional model, the role (or function) of *articulators* was performed by civic groups and trade unions (Almond *et al.* 2006, 67), whereas

the role of *aggregators* was performed by political parties that ‘aggregated’ (Almond *et al.* 2006, 81) the views ‘articulated’ by organisations and civic groups.

By performing this function, political parties ensured that concerns and demands from the environment were translated into policies (Almond *et al.* 2006, 67). Although the structural-functionalists were silent on the matter, terrorism can be seen as a result of a breakdown on the input side of the political system. Thus, in the period from 1920 to 1970, when the West European party system was ‘frozen’ along the lines of the main social, economic and religious cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), there was virtually no domestic political violence. Historically, the use of political violence and domestic terrorism emerged virtually at the same time as *de-alignment*, that is, at the time when the one-to-one relationship between aggregators and articulators broke down. When views articulated in the environment, say by minority groups, failed to be aggregated by political parties, the result was that some of these groups resorted to violence.

Terrorism thus became an alternative—and malign—aggregator.⁴ Of course, this hypothesis can be questioned. It is an open question whether *de-alignment* was solely responsible for the rise of ideological (Marxist-inspired) terrorism in Western Europe in the 1970s. But the fact that leftist parties were effectively banned in West Germany—and that leftists were subject to *Berufsverbot*—and the fact that the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI) in Italy was excluded from government and was—in Giovanni Sartori’s term (Sartori 1976) an irrelevant party—may explain the pressure that built up and fanned the flames of leftist discontent. Of course, not all minority groups resort to terrorism. A certain perception of disenfranchisement and a degree of alienation, perhaps coupled with a sense of discrimination, are commonly associated with radicalisation.

Under ideal circumstances, all groups are represented and have aggregators in the form of parties that represent their views. But when they are not, and they feel strongly about an issue, things may turn nasty. Under ideal circumstances the logic is as follows: the larger the number of parties represented the greater the chance that their voices will be heard and the greater the chance that they may—in some small way—influence the decision-making and policy output. This, in turn, will increase their trust in the political system, and reduce the level of terrorism. Conversely, with low representation (or, more likely, no representation at all), these groups’ grievances will not be heard and they will in, Clausewitzian fashion, resort to a form of ‘continuation of politics by other means’ (Clausewitz 1982, 119).

We all stand on the shoulders of giants. The assumption that terrorism is more likely to occur in polities with majoritarian institutions has been hinted at before. Powell (1982)—dichotomising countries with proportional representation (PR) and first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral systems—found that the former were *less* likely to experience political violence. A similar finding—using the same dichotomisation—was proposed by Sara Jackson and Dan Reiter (2007). And in a study focusing exclusively on transnational terrorism, Quan Li (2005) suggested—also dichotomising PR and FPTP countries—that the former are less likely to suffer from attacks by transnational terror groups (Li 2005, 7). However, one of the problems with these studies is that they are based on a relatively simplistic dichotomy of PR and FPTP countries. Studies in recent years have shown that the crude dichotomisation

between PR and majoritarian democracies fails to appreciate the subtle nuances between the countries' institutional designs (Lijphart 1999; Monroe and Rose 2002). For example, despite having a system of list PR, Spain has a de facto two-party system due to a low district magnitude, and cannot therefore be categorised as a consensus democracy. Further, this dichotomisation fails to account for the fact that some countries have mixed-member systems such as the Federal Republic of Germany and more recently Italy (Benoit *et al.* 2000).

We shall return to how this problem might be solved below; however, for now the assumption is that the effect of political institutions requires us to use more subtle measures that take into account the advances in comparative politics, and that institutions are indirect causes of respectively lower or higher levels of terrorism incidents rather than their direct result (Taagepera and Qvortrup (forthcoming)).

A number of political statistical characteristics are associated with consensus government, namely a high Laakso-Taagepera Effective Number of (Parliamentary) Parties⁵ (Laakso and Taagepera 1979), a high level of opposition influence on government policy (e.g. as measured by the Laver and Hunt Index (Laver and Hunt 1992)) and a low level of Disproportionality (Gallagher 1991)⁶—in addition to these we may add District Magnitude (Shugart and Taagepera 1989), which may be seen as a proxy for consensus government as a large number of candidates elected in each constituency, *ceteris paribus*, will necessitate consensus solutions as more candidates from smaller parties are likely to get elected and hold the balance of power.

To test whether countries' consensus characteristics are less—or, indeed, more—likely to experience terrorist incidents, we may correlate the number of domestic terrorist incidents with these measures. Based on the statistics reported in Table 2, we find strong correlations between these variables and low levels of terrorism. A correlation does not establish a fact, so it is necessary to go through each variable one by one.

Research in recent years has shown that consensus democracies are characterised by a high effective number of parliamentary parties (Lijphart 1999; Colomer (forthcoming)). We would, all other things being equal, expect a high number of represented parties to lead to a lower level of terrorism, as representation provides a radicalised minority group with a voice and a channel through which they can make known their grievances. This hypothesis is supported statistically by the data in Table 2. Indeed, there is a rather strong inverse correlation of $R = -0.44$ between the number of domestic terrorist incidents and the effective number of parties, meaning that more parties are associated with a lower risk of terrorist incidents. That this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level further supports this correlation, and is in line with evidence from Northern Ireland which shows that the number of terrorist incidents dropped considerably after the number of represented parties in the Northern Ireland Assembly rose (McGarry and O'Leary 2006). Of course, this correlation needs some qualification. While the number of incidents fell in Northern Ireland, it needs to be pointed out that that this was not only a result of the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly itself, which was suspended on several occasions until the final breakthrough in 2007. Indeed, it was probably mainly the Provisional IRA's ceasefire that led to a marked reduction in violence. The point, however, is that once an agreement was in sight (after the

Table 2: Statistical Relationship between Terrorism and Political Indices

Country	Opposition Index	District Magnitude [†]	Gallagher Disproportionality	ENP (parl)	Total terror
Austria	4.1	20	1.3	2.9	2
Belgium	2.6	7.5	5.2	7	48
Denmark	6.5	9.4	1.8	4.9	14
Finland	4.9	14.2	3.2	4.9	1
France	3.4	1	21.9	2.3	731
Germany	3.5	2	4.6	3.4	298
Greece	2.2	3	7.4	2.2	196
Iceland	4.8	10.5	1.9	4	0
Ireland	4.1	4	6.6	3.4	11
Italy	7.1	1.3	7	5.3	122
Luxembourg	4	15	3.4	3.63	2
Netherlands	3.6	150	1.1	4.7	33
Norway	6.8	8	3.4	5.4	5
Portugal	—	11	1.3	2.6	16
Spain	2	6.7	4.3	2.5	237
Sweden	5.2	12	1.8	4.2	31
Switzerland	6	7.6	2.5	5	35
UK	2	1	17.7	2.2	128
	R = -0.37*	R = -0.58**	R = 0.77***	R = -0.44**	

Sources: RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents/> (Accessed 7 November 2011); Gallagher et al. (2005)

* Significant at 0.07; ** significant at 0.05; *** significant at 0.001; [†] excluding the Netherlands

election of the Labour party in the British general election in 1997), the prospect of power-sharing and hence representation for the nationalists and republicans created a credible avenue into the political system, which reduced the perceived alienation of these minority groups. The fact of the matter is that once these institutions were agreed upon, most of the nationalist, republican and, indeed, loyalist groups—with certain dishonourable exceptions—decided to substitute the ballot for the bullet, and to pursue their aims by peaceful means. One of the reasons why this worked was arguably that there was now a greater probability that the previously disenfranchised groups could be represented. It is for this reason that the measure of Effective Number of Parties is so important.

The inverse relationship between domestic terror incidents and the Effective Number of (Parliamentary) Parties is further strengthened by the strong *positive* correlation between Gallagher Disproportionality (Gallagher 1991) and the number of domestic terrorist incidents. With a Pearson correlation coefficient of $R = 0.77$ (significant at a 0.001 one-tailed) it is difficult to dismiss the proposition that the fairness of the political system is associated with the level of terrorism. Furthermore, the conclusion that there is a strong (and statistically significant) association between disproportionality and the number of terrorist incidents is consistent with

the fact that countries with high levels of terrorist incidents are also the countries that score highest on the Gallagher Disproportionality Index, for example Britain (17.7), France (21.9) and—to a degree—Greece (7.4). That the lowest number of domestic terrorist incidents take place in countries with low levels of disproportionality, for example Denmark (1.8), Sweden (1.8) and the Netherlands (1.1), further underlines this tendency. Moreover, the fact that all of these countries have similar percentages of Muslim populations suggests that consensus mechanisms neutralise the aforementioned correlation between Muslim population and terror incidents.

Using the Laver-Hunt Index of Opposition Influence (Laver and Hunt 1992), we can measure the degree to which non-government parties can have influence over government policies. Consistent with our hypothesis, we find a relatively high inverse correlation between the Laver-Hunt Index and the level of terrorism ($R = -0.37$, $P > 0.007$). While this correlation leaves room for other explanations, it is evident that more influence over public policy-making and *output* is a factor that reduces the risk of terrorism.

The fact that these measures of consensus government are significantly correlated with lower levels of terrorism goes a long way to corroborate the thesis that terrorism is negatively correlated with consensus measures.

District Magnitude—‘the decisive factor’ in determining the number of parties to be elected according to Matthew Shugart and Rein Taagepera (1989, 112)—is theoretically likely to be associated with a lower level of terrorism. The logic is straightforward: the higher the number of elected MPs per electoral district, the greater the chance that a representative from a small minority will be represented, and hence the greater the chance that the minorities’ views will be taken into account. Conversely, with the views of a minority shut out, they may resort to other means. The immediate correlation for District Magnitude is not too impressive ($R = -0.20$). However if we exclude the Netherlands (an extreme outlier as the whole country is one single constituency), the correlation increases to $R = -0.58$, significant at $P > 0.13$. Obviously, this does not prove that terrorism is caused by institutional design, but it renders this conclusion highly probable. Using statistics does not prove that district magnitude is the only factor. But the calculations support the hypothesis that district magnitude is an influential factor, and renders plausible the hypothesis that increased representation leads to a lower level of terrorism. What accounts for this at the micro level is still to be determined, but one factor that anecdotally seems to account for the finding is that there is a small inverse correlation between ethnic minority MPs and levels of terrorism (Freeman 2004). Based on impressionistic data, it seems noteworthy that countries with relatively high district magnitudes are also the countries with the highest number of ethnic minority MPs and local government representatives (Alonso and Ruiz-Rufino 2007).

Conversely, there is some evidence to suggest that the low representation of UK Muslims (a country with an extremely low district magnitude) was in part to blame for the radicalisation that has occurred since the late 1990s (Kirby 2007).

Taken together—using OLS multiple regression—these factors provide a strong correlation between the political factors and the number of terrorist incidents, with

Table 3: Multivariate Regression Model: Terrorism and Political Indices (Beta Variables in Brackets)

	Opposition Influence	District Magnitude	Gallagher Disproportionality Index	ENP (parliamentary)
Coefficient	-1.183	-5.908*	18.198	-26.633
Beta	(0.011)	(-0.176)	(0.558)	(-0.196)
$r^2 = 0.61$				
Constant: 155.2				
Significant at 00.5				

Sources: RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents/> (Accessed 7 November 2010)

* Excluding Netherlands (otherwise $R = 0.19$); dependent variable: RAND—domestic terror incidents

a $r^2 = 0.64$ (significant at 0.05). Based on the beta-variables—an admittedly somewhat imperfect measure of the weight of the respective variables—we find that Gallagher Disproportionality is the strongest factor (beta = 0.558) (see Table 3).

Constitutional Engineering as a Strategy for Counterterrorism?

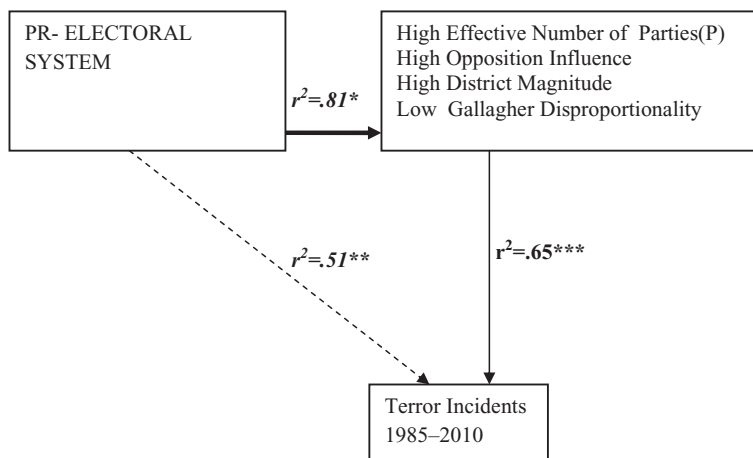
This finding begs the question whether institutional reforms can be undertaken to create democracies that are less prone to terrorism. There is already a considerable literature on the subject (for a recent example see Reynolds 2002).

So are there institutional reforms that can be undertaken to make countries safer from terrorism? Constitutional engineering has its limitations (Przeworski 2004) and getting to a situation where such consensus exists may not be possible everywhere. While institutional design and constitutional engineering may work in countries with democratic traditions—such as Northern Ireland—it is an open question whether the same would be true for countries such as Afghanistan and other countries with a recent history of mass violence. To determine this would require a separate study.

But focusing, for the time being, on Western Europe, which steps could be taken? Which institution could, *ceteris paribus*, reduce terrorism? One obvious candidate is electoral reform. There is—as Lijphart (1999) has shown—a strong correlation between consensus democracies and proportional electoral systems. The question is whether there is a direct correlation between PR and lower levels of terrorism.

To test the relationship between, on the one hand, the type of electoral system and the number of terrorist incidents and, on the other hand, the relationship between the type of electoral system and the institutions of consensus government, we can develop a crude index of electoral systems. If we split the electoral systems in Western Europe into three categories, majoritarian (FPTP and run-off), mixed

Figure 1: Statistical Relationships between Electoral Systems, Consensus Institutions and Terror Incidents



*Significant at 0.01 level; **significant at 0.01 level; ***significant at 0.05.

(MMP) and proportional (list PR and STV), and give values 1, 2 and 3 to the respective systems, we find a correlation between the type of electoral system and the number of terrorist incidents. The correlation between having a more majoritarian electoral system and having more terrorist attacks is relatively strong ($r^2=0.51$, significant at the 0.001 level (one-tailed)).

Yet, there is reason to believe that the relationship is not direct, as the statistical relationship between the consensus institutions and low levels of terror incidents is even stronger (see Figure 1). Theoretically speaking the relationship is not directly causal; this is not, to use the language of formal logicians, a simple case of a *modus ponens* (if p then q , p , therefore q), but rather a case of a hypothetical syllogism of the form 'if p then q , if q then r , consequently p therefore r '. In political science terms, there is a very strong correlation between having a proportional electoral system (either STV or list PR) and having a political system that is associated with consensus government ($r^2 = 0.81$, significant at the 0.01 level), which, in turn, is correlated ($r^2 = 0.65$) with lower levels of terrorism.

Thus by choosing an electoral system there is a high chance that one may change the political system, and thereby indirectly contribute to a lower risk of terrorist incidents. Political institutions matter. Discussions about electoral systems are not just the preserve of anoraks and theoreticians but can have a real impact on the safety and security of citizens.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, there have been very few studies of the policy effect of institutions and it is 'commonplace to observe that the causal relation between insti-

tutional arrangements and substantive policy is complex' (March and Olsen 2006, 8). This article is an exception as it shows that institutions *can* have an impact on a policy outcome, namely that systems of consensus democracy (typically countries with PR electoral systems with a large number of candidates elected in each constituency) have lower levels of domestic terrorism.

Having outlined a structural-functionalist model of terrorism, which sees domestic terrorism as a result of a malfunction on the political system's input side, the article presented a preliminary attempt to develop a general theory of the relationship between domestic ('home-grown') terrorist incidents and political institutions. The article found evidence to support the hypothesis that domestic terrorism is inversely correlated with consensus institutions; in short the more consensus-oriented the political system, the lower the level of domestic terrorism.

Whereas political parties are under normal (healthy) circumstances able to aggregate the articulated grievances of the environment, failure to do so with respect to radicalised minority groups has often prompted the latter to resort to violence. Hence, the risk of domestic terrorist attacks is considerably smaller when the chances of winning representation and influence are greater. Based on *all* of the 1,908 domestic terrorist incidents in Western Europe from 1985 to 2010 (identified by the RAND Terrorism Database), the article found several interesting—and thought-provoking—conclusions, which all corroborated the thesis that domestic terrorism is inversely correlated with consensus mechanisms. For example we found that that:

- a high Laver-Hunt Index of Opposition Influence is *inversely* correlated with a high level of domestic terrorism ($R = -0.37$);
- a high Effective Number of (Parliamentary) Parties is *inversely* correlated with a high level of domestic terrorist incidents ($R = -44$); and
- a high District Magnitude (when the outlier of the Netherlands is excluded) is *inversely* correlated with a high level of domestic terrorist incidents ($R = -0.58$).

Further the article also found *very* strong statistical evidence to suggest that there is a significant correlation between the Gallagher Disproportionality Index and the total number of domestic terrorist incidents in Western Europe from 1985 to 2010. In the latter case there is a Pearson's correlation coefficient of $R = 0.77$. Taken together the overall fit for the model of all the consensus measures was $r^2 = 0.62$.

While there are clearly other factors, these results corroborate the hypothesis and support the gist of the argument, namely that the types of political system that allow greater representation for minority groups and policy compromises through what Lijphart calls the 'politics of accommodation' are less likely to suffer domestic terrorist attacks.

Perhaps Benjamin Franklin had a point when he reportedly observed: 'Compromisers may not make great heroes, but they do make democracies' (quoted in Isaacson 2003, 19).

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Notes

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1. The article does not seek to prejudge whether these groups have legitimate aims or not. The term 'terrorist' is used as an analytical category comprising a group of individuals who are engaged in 'any activity that involves an act ... appears to be intended: (i) to intimidate or coerce a civil population; (ii) to influence a policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping' (see 107th Congress Homeland Security Act of 2002, Section II (15). Available online at: http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/privacy/privacy_hsa2002_222.pdf (Accessed 6 November 2010).
2. To these explanations we might add the prevailing policy towards terrorism. This is based on the 'theory' that it is possible to defeat terrorism militarily. Following this 'theory' we would expect to find a correlation between lower levels of terrorism and spending on military counterterrorism. In fact, there is reason to believe that it is the other way round. When we correlate military spending with the total number of incidents in Western Europe, we find a *positive* correlation of $R = 0.43$. In other words, more military, more terrorist incidents: aggression breeds aggression. (For a similar argument see English 2009, 127).
3. This result is interesting in the light of the changing nature of terrorist groups. Terrorism as it exists now is arguably different from the variant that existed in the 1970s. Whereas the 1970s and the early 1980s were characterised by political terrorism, such actions perpetrated by *Rote Armee Fraktion* in Germany, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP), *Brigate Rosse* in Italy and nationalist groups like *Euskadita ta Askatasuna* (ETA) in Spain/the Basque Country, and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Britain and Ireland, the predominant terrorist attacks perpetrated since 1990 have been carried out by religious organisations, such as al Qa'eda, *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah* (popularly known as *Ḥamās*) and Hezbollah. In the early 1980s only two out of the 64 major terrorist organisations were categorised as religious. In 2004 nearly half (46 per cent) of the 54 internationally operating terrorist organisations had religious aims. As of November 2010, only 32 (28 per cent) of terrorist organisations have left-wing aspirations and 24 (representing 21 per cent) are nationalist organisations. See <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents/> (Accessed 7 November 2010).
4. This explanation is also consistent with more qualitative research which suggests that 'terrorists protest that they have no other choice except to pursue this violent route towards grabbing attention and forcing a resolution of problems and injustices: in this view terrorism was necessary—indeed, essential—as the best or only effective way of pursuing the rightful solution to a problem' (English 2009, 44–45). Indeed, there are examples of groups or individuals who explicitly cite lack of meaningful democratic participation as the main cause for taking up arms. In Sri Lanka the leader of the Tamil Tigers complained that the 'Tamil People have been expressing their grievances in parliament for more than three decades. Their voices went unheard like cries in the wilderness' (quoted in Richardson 2006, 71).
5. The effective number of parties (ENP) is calculated using Laakso and Taagepera's original formula, according to which the *effective number of parties* is computed by:

$$N = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2}$$

where n is the number of parties with at least one vote/seat and p_i^2 the square of each party's proportion of all votes or seats.

6. The Gallagher Index is calculated using the formula:

$$LSq = \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n (V_i - S_i)^2}$$

The index takes the square root of half the sum of the squares of the difference between per cent of vote and per cent of seats for each of the parties.

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