

The Foreign v. the Domestic after September 11th: The Methodology of Political Analysis Revisited

Dirk Haubrich

University of Oxford

The implications of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 are far-reaching and have been discussed and analysed at great length. In this article, it is contended that the methodology of analysing the political, too, has been affected. The policies that liberal democracies have adopted over the past three years to contain the new threat of transnational terrorism call into question the methodological approaches that political researchers conventionally employ to analyse their subject matter. Rather than examining political processes at home separately from those occurring abroad, developments since September 11th demand that we dispense with those boundaries and develop an integrated approach.

Introduction

Political analysis is concerned with the investigation of the processes and practices of politics. This covers a multitude of differing perspectives and a wide diversity of approaches to the political. The analysis of foreign and domestic policy, as sub-fields of the political, is similarly open to various investigative advances. There is a widespread consensus in the academy, however, that what occurs at home is distinct from that abroad, and that both should be examined separately from each other, so that the 'outside' of a society is left to the discipline of international relations, while the 'inside' with its more formal domestic responsibilities is assigned to political studies broadly conceived.

Early modern scholars of international relations (IR), such as E.H. Carr (1939) and Hans J. Morgenthau (1951), were particularly eager to advance this dichotomy. On their view, the fundamental difference between the two domains rests in the observation that the former is hierarchical in nature, with power and authority exerted through the compulsory jurisdiction of political and legal processes, while the latter is irreducibly anarchic, whereby the absence of any overarching authority lets states pursue their national interest of survival and power maximisation. Most scholars of this conviction identify the state as the principal actor of analysis, so that international affairs are mainly seen as the interplay between states as rational and depoliticised unitary actors whose agency, moreover, is constrained by the precisely defined structure of the international system (Waltz, 1979). These themes are contrasted with the processes that apply domestically, where sub-state actors such as groups, political parties and even individuals have the capacity to influence courses of action that they are not granted internationally. Hence, the



reigning paradigm to study the resulting domestic phenomena employs closed polity models and policy network analysis as its operational mode. Until the present day, these are well-rehearsed and characteristic themes for this particular perspective in international affairs. Commonly referred to as realism and structural (or neo-)realism respectively, it has dominated the academic discourse of international politics for decades.

In this article, it is contended that the political developments that have resulted from the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 have made the foreign and the domestic so interdependent and overlapping that the rigid disciplinary boundaries between them have become obsolete. I will show that this separation is significantly undermined by the new form of global (or better: transnational) terrorism that emerged that day and the domestic and external policy responses to it. Four years on, so I assert, the foreign has protractedly transformed the domestic and, conversely, domestic factors have had significant implications for the 'outside'.

Breaking down the analytical barriers between the foreign and the domestic is not a new endeavour of course, neither theoretically nor empirically. The dichotomy has been attacked by scholars from various sub-disciplines including globalisation theory, international political economy (IPE) and foreign policy analysis, as well as IR theory itself. Yet, their underlying rationales for dispensing with the distinction were either not entirely convincing or their scope was limited to the economic realm.

Within IR theory itself, for example, it has been contended that realism displays a conceptually limited notion of state agency, in that it makes a series of implausible assumptions about the unity and rationality of the state. States do not pursue foreign policy, but groups, organisations and individuals do in their name. These actors are conscious and reflective subjects. They are therefore not subjected to structural constraints but have the ability to fashion and alter the environment – that is, the systemic structure – in which they find themselves (Moon, 1995; Wendt, 1992). Known as the 'structure-agency problem', it was to become a popular theme in the alternative IR school of neoliberalism. On this view, a unitary depoliticised state actor can be nothing more than a methodological convenience: it allows foreign policy to be studied as an autonomous domain, reduces the analytical scope of the research approach and, in the process, facilitates inter-temporal and cross-country comparisons that make for good 'scientific' reading and ostensible predictive potency. The prominence of the ensuing debate within IR induced Steven Smith (1995) to complain about the myopic and ethnocentric nature of the discipline. He demanded that IR theory distance itself from the 'self-image' it has given itself for many decades (which has allowed debates to be dominated accordingly) and the research approaches it has employed (which are not natural or given to the discipline, but historically constituted).

Proponents of globalisation theory, in turn, have argued that the modern world is characterised by 'supraterritoriality' (Scholte, 2000), temporal accelerations (Walker, 1993) and 'time-space distantiations' (Giddens, 1990). Hence, globalisation 'has rendered methodological territorialism obsolete', 'requires us substantially to rethink social theory' and provides 'ample cause for a paradigm shift in social

analysis' (Scholte, 2000, p. xiv). Yet, while globalisation has become a common term to describe perceived transformations in the modern world, its usefulness for political research has attracted considerable criticism. Justin Rosenberg (2000, pp. 1–19, 157–166), for example, points out that the logical structure of arguments employing the phenomenon of globalisation often proceeds in an incoherent circular way, confusing globalisation as an *explanandum* (a developing outcome of a process) with globalisation as an *explanans* (an occurrence that explains the changing character of the world). To what extent globalisation can be said to be unprecedented and what is logically entailed by claims for a new spatio-temporal problematic for social theory are therefore contestable.

IPE scholars have advanced empirical objections as well and, from the 1970s onwards, introduced terms such as 'interdependence' and 'decline of sovereignty' (Keohane and Nye, 1978, pp. 153–160; 1987). With the latter concept, scholars were eager to account for the (ostensibly unprecedented) economic processes at work within conditions of globalisation, whereby *domestic* welfare retrenchments were attributed to economic competition with *foreign* rival states (Almond, 1989; Gourevitch, 1978). Naturally, however, the analysis did not move much beyond the economic realm.

The final array of concerns against the domestic/foreign divide has been voiced by scholars engaged in 'foreign policy analysis'. Authors such as Ethan B. Kapstein (1995) elucidated that the domestic does not only pose constraints or limits to the foreign policy of states, but that it constituted a proactive input into those processes, through factors such as the media, interest groups and public opinion. Andrew Moravcsik (1993), in turn, held the view that it is not sufficient to give priority to international causations and employ theories of domestic politics only as needed to explain anomalies, because the growing collective weight of these empirical anomalies exposes the limits of said theories. Others still drew attention to the domestic regime type that may account for the level of aggression in a state's foreign policy (Doyle, 1986) or to the fact that the logic of international system theory and the autonomy of the executive are more pronounced in cases involving national security, whereas pressures by domestic constituents become more salient in issues affecting the domestic economy or trade (Evans, 1993). Yet, not only did all these efforts concentrate on the domestic sources of foreign policy (rather than the opposite direction of causation), but much of the research on, for example, the influence of domestic regime types has also remained inconclusive (Light, 1999, p. 95).

Given the limitations of the aforementioned approaches, the intention of this article is threefold. First, I will add to foreign policy analysis by pursuing the opposite analytical process and examine the foreign influences on domestic policy. Second, I will substantiate existing research output in IPE and some sections in IR, by extending the notions of 'interdependence' and 'loss of sovereignty' to policy domains other than the economic realm and by including in the analysis the impact of transnational terrorist networks as an emerging type of non-state actor. By highlighting four different sets of issues (sections 1 to 4 below), I will provide further evidence to corroborate the tight linkages between the domestic and the foreign to which all of the research approaches mentioned above have already alluded.

Finally, given that no mainstream scholarly consensus attaches to any of these research approaches, I will indicate some preliminary avenues for research.

(1) Civil liberty

Firstly, the legislative measures introduced to a foreign threat have curtailed civil liberties domestically beyond that which is usually possible in cases of domestic terrorism. Scope reasons prevent us from assessing their full reach (for a detailed account on the US, see Cohen and Wells, 2004; Leone and Anrig, 2003; for a selection of European states, see Haubrich, 2003), but it is worth pointing out certain trends that are found across all cases. The countries' domestic laws are being stretched by anti-terrorism legislation in two directions: an upstream dissolution of the line between crimes and acts of war, and a downstream dissolution of the line between crimes and minor public order disturbances.

An upstream conflation occurs because crimes are usually dealt with by civil agencies whereas acts of war are countered by military agencies. Once the events of September 11th were, particularly in the United States, no longer described as 'terrorist attacks' but as 'acts of war' and stateless terrorists were equated with 'terrorist states', the so-called 'war on terrorism' became a matter for both police and the military. Once such a shift occurs, previously distinct areas of responsibility for internal and external security become blurred, with the latter commanding much less rigid levels of democratic scrutiny and investigative constraints.

In the US, for example, the PATRIOT Act erodes the longstanding distinction between domestic law enforcement and foreign intelligence collection, by permitting the sharing of information between agencies serving distinct purposes. Information gathering on American soil – including credit card purchases, travel tickets, library loan records, e-mail communications, etc. – can now be pursued by US foreign intelligence services also, which can then be used in grand jury proceedings. And, they are subjected neither to Fourth Amendment principles nor the Electronic Communications Privacy Act. Procedural safeguards, too, are often suspended – such as the principle of 'innocent until proven guilty'. In the UK, too, police powers were expanded to the British secret services. Under the country's 2001 Anti-Terrorism Act, judgment on what constitutes subversive action that would require the involvement of those services is no longer subjected to the kind of scrutiny typically associated with British democracy such as select committees.

The downstream conflation occurs between crimes and public order disturbances. Traditionally, a public order disturbance is deviant behaviour that is not a criminal offence, such as those caused by graffiti writers, beggars, troublesome tenants or protesters. What constitutes deviant behaviour, however, is contingent upon a society's perception of public order and security. Security is compromised by fear, which is a product of an individual's subjective interpretation. Any law-abiding citizen wishing, for example, to send money to relatives in a state where terrorist groups are active can be accused of sponsoring terrorism. The same applies to activists who chain themselves in front of trains transporting nuclear waste, or farmers protesting against agricultural policies by blocking motorways with trac-

tors. Any form of political pressure exerted on governments that is not channelled through parliamentary processes may be regarded as unduly compelling a government into a course of action that it would not have taken otherwise.

(2) Political equality and the rule of law

Secondly, legislation has been shown to infringe much more upon the civil rights of individuals whose national or religious affiliation is deemed suspicious. Clouds of suspicion were generated over whole communities of US citizens of Muslim, Arab and South Asian origin. They have been targeted as suspects based on a broad set of criteria that casts suspicion on an entire class of people without any individualised suspicion of the particular person being stopped, a process known as 'racial profiling'. Aliens, too, have been affected. In the US, for example, more than 1,000 individuals were taken into custody and detained for long periods in the months after the terrorist attacks, for no apparent reason other than nationality or religion. Their names were kept secret, on the grounds that disclosing them would give terrorists clues to the effectiveness of US intelligence. All deportation hearings involving allegations of terrorist connections were held in secret.

The internationally most visible single instance of this encroachment of civil liberties has been the preventive detention in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, of, presently, 562 individuals of both American as well as foreign nationality. The US Department of Justice chose the former US naval base contending that it is foreign territory and therefore beyond the jurisdiction of any US court. The interrogation of these detainees is therefore left to secret military activities. Of the 562 individuals, only 97 have been charged and even fewer, 14, have been convicted of a crime. While 180 have been released, the remaining 250 have been in detention for several years without being charged with any offence (BBC, 2004).

Although not as far-reaching, the UK has raised similar civil-libertarian concerns. Britain proclaimed a case of 'public emergency' following the attacks, so that the government was able to derogate from Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which prohibits imprisonment without a fair trial. The opt-out was necessary to prevent one of the new Anti-Terrorism Act's provisions – the detention of suspected terrorist refugees without trial – from violating the Convention (Council of Europe, 1994, p. 83; HMSO, 2001, s. 33). In applying such newly granted powers, British enforcement agencies had made 110 arrests in 2003 alone, without specifying any charges. Some have been incarcerated for up to two and a half years without trial, without access to lawyers and without charges being filed.

Addressing American national security issues by relocating the legal assessment of suspects outside domestic democratic jurisdiction violates the fundamental principle of the rule of law and political equality on which modern societies have been built (Haubrich, 2006). The British case differs from the USA in that the emergency law that allows detention without trial actually applies to the British homeland, not to an offshore naval base. These are powers unprecedented in peacetime Britain. In the second half of 2004, the judiciaries of Supreme Court and Law Lords

respectively have ruled in both countries that detention without trial is illegal. Yet, in both cases the executives have so far refrained from acting on these verdicts, indicating another unprecedented occurrence in liberal democracies: a stand-off between the executive and the judiciary.

(3) The domestic opportunity costs of security investments

Thirdly, a vast amount of resources is being spent on the fight against transnational terrorism. Although that threat has no single geographical source and the opponents have no nation-state base, the terrorist attacks have been rebranded as 'acts of war' and stateless terrorists have been equated with 'terrorist states' that justify a 'war on terrorism'. The approach of the US administration, for example, is to regard 'any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism ... as a hostile regime' (George W. Bush in MSNBC, 2001), effectively conflating all terrorist organisations or 'rogue states' into a general undifferentiated, monolithic terrorist threat. Yet, most terrorist organisations around the world have distinctly local agendas and pose no immediate threat to Western or American security interests.

Threat discrimination is an essential component to a sound anti-terrorism strategy, which is about making intelligent choices within the constraints of limited financial and personnel resources. Failure to discriminate between greater and lesser threats has invited miscalculation and may lead to strategic and financial exhaustion. In the United States, US\$399 billion were dedicated to overall national defence for the year 2004 alone, a budget that will rise to \$500bn by the end of the decade. The military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan alone have so far cost the country more than 1,700 lives and \$110 billion in financial costs. Another \$5.5 billion are added to the bill for every month that the US administration decides to keep its soldiers in the country. Domestically, the newly created US Department of Homeland Security earmarked another US\$30 billion for anti-terrorism measures in 2004. For the same year, an additional \$4.5 billion was spent on aviation security. Additional costs are incurred through the re-nationalisation of the previously private airport security sector. The sector's cost-cutting approach – which included the hiring of former convicts at minimum wages – has been identified as one of the failures to prevent the attacks (Seidenstat, 2004). In other parts of the world, investments were momentous, too, albeit less clearly discernible for analytical purposes. The United Kingdom, as the second biggest contributor to the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, has invested \$10 billion on anti-terrorism measures since 2001, 80 per cent of which was spent on wars abroad, with the remainder spent on domestic measures (Global Security, 2003). The attacks in London on 7 July 2005 are likely to result in further increases in domestic security investment, in line with the vanishing resistance to be expected by both parliamentary opposition and public opinion.

These patterns of resource allocation are significant, for investments in military operations abroad and domestic security at home have severe repercussions for domestic societies. They carry enormous opportunity costs in terms of alternative life-saving measures that could have been pursued instead. When resources are

spent on interventions that save lives at high cost, we forgo the opportunity to spend those same resources on interventions that save lives at lower cost. Although the death count of 3,000 fatalities from the 9/11 attacks is significant, more Americans die from firearms (3,000 deaths), alcohol (8,500) or from the effects of cigarette smoking (35,000) every year. If the \$30 billion budget of the Department for Homeland Security were to be spent, for example, on regular mammograms for women over 50, an intervention that costs \$17,000 per year of life saved (Teng and Graham, 1996), a total of 1.76 million years of life could be saved. It cannot be shown empirically how many lives the investments in anti-terror measures will save, but it is unlikely that these expenditures provide equal alternative life-saving opportunities – that is, will save as many or more lives.

Macroeconomic consequences of the financing of the anti-terrorism measures are looming on the horizon as well, as the burgeoning domestic public deficits and currency devaluation in the USA illustrate. They ‘crowd out’ domestic manufacturers in favour of increasingly cheaper foreign suppliers, undermine the domestic dictum of economic neoliberalism and financial austerity, and may contribute to significant instability in world financial markets. After all, given the country’s burgeoning balance account deficit it is quite appropriate to contend that the US fights its ‘war on terrorism’ predominantly with money borrowed from the rest of the world.

(4) National security in an interdependent world

Fourthly, national security is no longer national security. After September 11th the planning and organisation of the attacks has been traced back to Hamburg, Germany, and many other places outside the United States. The success (or not) of German domestic policy to bring potential ‘sleepers’ to court and prevent similar developments in the future has now become an important part of US foreign and domestic policy. Similar assessments can be made for the domestic policies of Great Britain, Russia, France, Pakistan and India.

The logic may proceed in the opposite direction as well. Factors domestic to the USA, such as the shift in political opinion and leadership in the USA towards a neo-conservative administration, have had significant implications on the ‘outside’, in the form of a more ‘hard-line’ stance in the country’s foreign policy towards Iraq and Afghanistan and other ‘terrorist states’ (Haubrich, 2002). Although governments tend to deny a direct causal link, those states that joined the US-led military alliance were first to become targets of terrorist attacks after the events on September 11th. The bombings in Madrid and London in March 2004 and July 2005 respectively laid bare the impossibility of making public transport systems secure as they are used by a high number of passengers, are open and fully accessible, have no access control or seat assignment, and are spread over large geographical areas with numerous options for access, gateways and interchanges. Although indirectly, the Madrid bombing also brought down the Spanish government in the process. In a world of global migration, travel, economic activity and culture, transnational terrorism undermines democracies’ capacity not only to protect their citizens, but also to keep processes such as domestic democratic leadership succession shielded from such external influences.

Conclusion: a new agenda for research

Five years into these processes, then, we have to acknowledge that the security-related dichotomies that have traditionally characterised the nation state as the *locus* of modern politics – the borders that divide the domestic from the international, crime from war, the police from the military and even war from peace – are significantly undermined by both transnational terrorism and the domestic and external policy responses to it. The international has protractedly transformed the domestic. Conversely, domestic factors have had significant implications on the ‘outside’. In the foreseeable future, this mutually reinforcing and circular process is set to continue. The interplay between the domestic and the foreign has become perpetual to the point that the direction of causation cannot be entirely extricated with conventional research approaches. The mutually reinforcing processes have blurred the distinction between domestic and international politics. Structuring societal and political action according to the principle of national boundaries is no longer appropriate if the new phenomena are to be tackled.

What may be required instead is some sort of circular linkage approach that, for example, investigates the transmission belts between the two spheres. A similar approach was already popularised in the 1960s by James Rosenau (1969): rather than seeing these linkages as outcomes of the functioning of national and/or international processes (and thus as a dependent variable), the linkages and the actors per se may constitute an independent variable that accounts for changes in the two spheres. The very short evidence provided here suggests that, in the post-September 11th era, these transmission belts may turn out to be just as short, intense, frequent and mutually reinforcing as policy network analysis usually uncovers for the domestic sphere.

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