
Why Respecting Physical Integrity Rights Reduces Terrorism

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Abstract

Does respect for human rights check or promote terrorism? This question is hotly debated within policy circles. Some hold that restricting human rights is a necessary if unfortunate cost of preventing terrorism. Others conclude that such abuses aggravate political grievances that contribute to terror. The authors demonstrate that theory and data support the latter position. They hypothesize that abuse of the subset of rights known as physical integrity rights fuels terrorism by making it more difficult for government authorities to collect intelligence on terrorists and by undermining domestic and international support for their counterterrorism efforts. They test this hypothesis using a data set that includes measures of both domestic and transnational terrorist attacks and find that respect for physical integrity rights is consistently associated with fewer terrorist attacks. This suggests that those interested in curtailing terrorism should press governments to more carefully respect physical integrity rights.

Keywords

terrorism, human rights, physical integrity rights

What is the relationship between respect for human rights and the incidence of terrorism? One line of thinking holds that there is an inverse relationship between these variables. Governments must restrict rights if they wish to

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reduce terrorist attacks (Dreher et al., in press; Gearty, 2007; Hoffman, 2004). States that seek to preserve human rights and political freedoms are limited in their ability to monitor and detain terrorism suspects, are prohibited from making broad police sweeps to catch terrorist perpetrators and their sympathizers, limit coercive interrogation of suspects, and must afford suspected terrorists access to a lawyer and a public trial. Freedom of assembly and of the press allows terrorists and their supporters to publicize their grievances. Sometimes law enforcement and intelligence agencies are legally prohibited from sharing information on terrorist activity (Pape, 2003; Schmid, 1992). The implication is that states that protect human rights are more vulnerable to terrorist attacks. This seems to be borne out by studies indicating that democracies experience more terrorism (Eubank & Weinberg, 2001; Piazza, 2008; Schmid, 1992; Wade & Reiter, 2007) and more nuanced studies that find that new democracies (Eyerman, 1998) and states with constrained executives (Li, 2005) are more frequently targeted by terrorists.

An alternative line of thinking holds that abuse of human rights actually encourages terrorism. This view is outlined in a statement by U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown to a summer 2007 meeting of the Labour Party: "We cannot win this [war on terror] militarily or by policing or intelligence alone. We need to engage people so that we can win the battle of hearts and minds" (Branigan, 2007, p. 1). The statement suggests that governments that respect human rights can outmaneuver terrorists by winning the support of the population, depriving the terrorists of the logistical support they require. If this is the case, then respect for human rights is a "win-win" scenario—governments that secure such rights not only comply with their normative obligations but also experience fewer terrorist attacks.

This article explores the argument that protecting human rights reduces terrorism. We first develop the theoretical underpinnings of the argument that violation of human rights promotes terrorism. We focus on a critical subclass of human rights, physical integrity rights, which protect individuals from extrajudicial murder, disappearance, torture, or political imprisonment by the authorities. We describe physical integrity rights as critical because their violation offends the most widely shared norms of appropriate government conduct. Abuse of physical integrity rights increases terrorism, we hypothesize, through three mechanisms—by alienating the government from members of the population that could provide it with intelligence about terrorist groups, by causing conflicts with other political forces in the country thereby damaging the efficacy of government counterterrorism policy, and by reducing international willingness to cooperate with the government. In our analysis, we subject our hypothesis to a series of tests using a sample of 195 countries

over a multiyear period. Although much research in this area uses data only on transnational terrorism, we develop a new data set that also includes information on attacks by domestic terrorist groups. Our findings consistently show that respect for physical integrity rights does substantially reduce terrorism. This conclusion is consistent across specifications using different measures of terrorism and diverse model specifications and including numerous control variables.

The findings have important implications for scholarship and for counterterrorism policy that we briefly discuss in the conclusion. The contention that human rights violations increase terrorism has not been empirically substantiated in previous studies, nor has it been theoretically articulated in the terrorism literature. The relevant literature has instead focused on how democratic institutions influence the probability that a state will experience terrorist attacks. This focus on institutional arrangements has produced valuable insights but overlooks how government behavior in the form of respect for human rights might be related to vulnerability to terrorism. Furthermore, the empirical terrorism literature tests only predictors of transnational terrorism, failing to also consider domestic terrorism, as our article does. Finally, our results suggest that rather than centering global counterterrorism policy on democracy promotion, priority should be given to promoting respect for physical integrity rights abroad as a means of reducing terrorist attacks.

Human Rights and Terrorism

Does government respect for human rights increase or reduce terrorism? Three bodies of work address this question directly or indirectly. A handful of recent articles directly investigate the effects of rights on terrorist attacks. They reach different conclusions. Abadie (2006) and Kurrild-Klitgaard, Justesen, and Klemmensen (2006) find a curvilinear relationship between terrorism and rights that allow individuals to participate in the political process. Abrahms (2007) concludes that civil liberties that permit freedom of expression, association, and personal autonomy reduce terrorism. Kurrild-Klitgaard et al. find no relationship at all between this measure and transnational terrorist attacks. These works differ from each other and from the present article in their measurement of terrorism and expectations about which rights influence terrorism. Kurrild-Klitgaard et al. utilize the International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Attacks (ITERATE) terrorism data set, which includes only transnational attacks but covers a rather long time series. Abadie and Abrahms use measures that include both transnational and domestic terrorism, but only for a single year. In our empirical analysis, we utilize a new, more

comprehensive data set that allows us to assess the causal influence of human rights on terrorist attacks by both transnational and domestic groups over a number of years. We also develop the argument that a different type of human rights—those to physical integrity—are more closely tied to terrorism than are rights protecting civil liberties and political participation, the rights examined in previous studies.

There is also a substantial literature exploring if and how democracy influences terrorism. Democratic regimes allow individuals rights of speech, movement, legal protection, and organization. This literature may thus be said to indirectly address the connection between rights and terrorism. Most of this work concludes that democracies experience more terrorism than do nondemocracies (Eubank & Weinberg, 2001; Ivanova & Sandler, 2006; Li & Schaub, 2004; Piazza, 2008; Schmid, 1992; Wade & Reiter, 2007). The rights necessary for democratic participation also provide terrorist groups with more freedom to publicize their grievances, recruit members and supporters, and plan attacks. Other work has added nuance to these general findings by analyzing how different features of democracy encourage or retard transnational terrorism. Eyerman (1998), for example, finds that newly established democracies are more likely to experience terrorism than are nondemocracies or older democracies. The most sophisticated study in this vein is Li (2005), which makes two important advances. First, Li disaggregates democracy into two basic characteristics—democratic participation and constraints on the actions of the executive. He argues that these characteristics should influence terrorism in different ways. Political groups are less likely to resort to terrorism when participation is greater because this allows them to redress their grievances through legitimate political channels. More constraints on the executive branch increase attacks by limiting the government's ability to take aggressive action against terrorist groups. Second, he argues that any relationship between human rights and terrorism is spurious, and the true causal factor is the extent to which the executive is constrained by other branches of government. Such institutional checks on an elected government keep it from engaging in systematic human rights violations. These checks and balances preserve human rights and civil liberties, which in turn promotes terrorist activity.

All of these studies, including Li's, draw attention to the relationship between terrorism and democratic institutions, or the quality of these institutions, rather than considering the role played by the behavior of governments. Separating the influence of institutional structures from the government's behavior is a promising research avenue for two reasons. First, other research demonstrates that democracies vary in their respect for human rights. B. Bueno

de Mesquita, Cherif, Downs, and Smith (2005) and Davenport and Armstrong (2004) show that only countries with the highest levels of democratic rule consistently protect a wide range of human rights. This would seem to call into question the assumption of Li (2005) that protection of human rights is solely a consequence of constraints on the executive. Second, Li's article suggests that institutional constraints prevent the government from abusing rights that allow wide participation in the political process. He does not analyze the effect of conceptually distinct physical integrity rights. Below we make the case that it is these rights that have most substantial influence on terrorism.

A third body of work finds that abuses of these physical integrity rights are significant predictors of political dissent and of insurgency, though sometimes in a curvilinear manner in which states employing intermediate levels of repression experienced the most acute violence. We draw on this research in developing our theory of how abuse fuels terrorism. A great deal of theoretical and historical work suggests that repressing human rights promotes large-scale, organized insurgency. Joes (2004) summarizes and extends this line of analysis, arguing that the key difference between successful and failed counterinsurgency campaigns is a policy of "rectitude" rather than repression. In cases where state and military officials offered rectitude—for example, generous treatment of civilian populations in which insurgents are lodged and humane treatment of captured insurgents—counterinsurgency efforts were successful. Counterinsurgency failed where officials employed harsh repression and in particular collective punishment of civilians. State brutality assists insurgents in recruitment efforts and eases their campaigns to maintain and even widen their popular support within society (Joes, 2004, pp. 156-170; Rice, 1988). Hashim (2006, pp. 299-318) underscores the need of states confronting insurgencies to create and support "legitimate coercive state apparatuses" to delegitimize, and eventually disarm, nongovernment groups and to foster support within the local population for counterinsurgency activities. Legitimacy is built on respect for rule of law, proper treatment of local populations, and use of restraint when engaged in military and policing efforts. Merom (2003) argues that more powerful democracies lose counterinsurgency campaigns when the educated middle classes become alienated by the government's use of violence. This forces the government into crisis as it attempts to both defeat militants and quell metropolitan dissent. Others analyze the relationships between dissent and repression. This literature addresses a broad set of important questions including the sources of popular and elite dissent, how and why governments engage in repression, and the relationships between these two causal processes. The branch of this research that is most

relevant for our purposes examines how repression leads to subsequent dissent and has produced inconsistent findings. Different authors argue that repression effectively quells dissent (Hibbs, 1973), that it prompts dissent (Francisco, 1996), that the relationship is curvilinear (Mueller & Weede, 1990), or that there is no relationship between these variables (Gurr & Moore, 1997). One reason for these varied findings may be that the sheer breadth of the scope of inquiry has led to inconsistent operationalization of key concepts such as dissent and repression. This adds further support to our decision to limit our study to the subset of repressive policies that involve threats to physical integrity and the subset of dissent that qualifies as terrorism. In the next section, though, we hold that many of the theoretical expectations regarding the influence of repression on dissent are quite likely to hold for terrorism and physical integrity rights.

Why Respect for Physical Integrity Rights Reduces Terrorism

Our central hypothesis is that government violations of a certain class of human rights, those to physical integrity, promote terrorism. Governments violate physical integrity rights when they inflict arbitrary physical harm on individuals. Specific actions that constitute physical integrity violations are extrajudicial killings, torture, disappearances, and political imprisonment (Cingranelli & Richards, 1999). One can imagine a wide range of government counterterrorism actions that might promote terrorism, but we expect that violations of physical integrity rights should have a particularly powerful influence on terrorism because those rights resonate with universal ideas about human dignity. Keck and Sikkink (1998) argue that norms about protecting the bodily integrity of members of vulnerable or innocent groups are among the most widely shared across countries and cultures. Cultures and politics vary widely in the respect they accord other types of human rights, such as those allowing political expression and participation or economic and social equality, but nearly all include norms against violations of the physical integrity of innocents (also see Cingranelli & Richards, 1999). We take this observation as the starting point for our analysis. Governments require support from the population, domestic political movements, and from the international community to mount an effective counterterrorism policy. Violating the widely shared norms of protecting physical integrity rights, we argue, alienates at least some members of all three of these groups. The precise mechanism through which human rights abuses reduce political support for or otherwise hinder the government's counterterrorism efforts varies across these audiences in ways we detail below.

Garnering Community Support

Countries experience less terrorism when the government has the support, or at least the passive acceptance, of the constituent communities of the terrorist groups. Governments derive their legitimacy in part from the perception that they treat individuals similarly and equitably (Dahl, 1971). Widespread violations of physical integrity rights undermine this legitimacy in the eyes of the public, making them less willing to support the authorities' counterterror efforts and more willing to support those of the terrorists (Abrahms, 2007). Public support is critical to the survival of terrorist groups. These groups have fewer political, economic, and military resources than the states they oppose. Terrorists rely instead on political, financial, and logistical support from networks of noncombatant supporters drawn from the populations in which they operate or on whose behalf they claim to launch attacks. The success of terrorist groups thus depends, in large part, on their ability to maintain the loyalty and support of some fraction of the constituent population. States that are able to win the support of all or a critical segment of that constituent population can deprive terrorists of important capabilities. This is why competitions between a government and terrorists are often described as a "battle for the hearts and minds" of the populace. Abuse of physical integrity rights makes it more difficult for the government to win this battle for two reasons.

As Hoffman and McCormick (2004) explain, an important goal of most terrorist organizations is to draw attention to their grievances. They plan attacks in ways that maximize popular and media attention. State violation of human rights augments these grievances and makes terrorist appeals for support more effective. Abuse of the physical integrity rights of members of the constituency on whose behalf the terrorists claim to act will alienate at least some from the authorities enough to either actively support or turn a blind eye to terrorist activities. Under some conditions, such abuses may increase the number and quality of potential recruits and allow terrorist groups to grow in size and in terms of the education and abilities of their members (E. Bueno de Mesquita, 2005). Terrorist propaganda can undercut the government by drawing attention to how such abuses violate global norms of rights to physical integrity (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 32) as well as norms particular to the local culture that reflect this concern. Brutal treatment of noncombatants by the state can facilitate communitarian mobilization efforts of militants, assisting them in radicalizing formerly passive populations (Holsti, 2000). State repression can foster conditions under which ethnic, religious, or social groups experience communal discrimination, constructing what is referred to in the internal conflict literature as "collective grievances" against the state or political status quo. These collective grievances are ripe for exploitation by terrorist

groups, thus enhancing popular support for antisystem political violence (Wimmer, 1997). Security forces may seek to avoid this political reaction by directing their use of force against only suspected terrorists and argue that such targeted violence does not violate the norm of protecting the bodily integrity of noncombatants. But the authorities typically find it very difficult to restrict the infliction of such violence on known terrorists. It is expensive and time-consuming to obtain the information needed to reliably distinguish terrorists from nonterrorists. Indiscriminate violence is much cheaper and easier to implement. But it will also victimize many nonterrorists and turn some of them against the government, especially when there is an active and organized group that can provide them with some promise of retribution against the government's actions (Kalyvas, 2004).

Abusing physical integrity rights thus drives at least some to support terrorists. As important, it drives others to refrain from supporting the government. Informants in the civilian population can provide the authorities with important information about terrorist groups' activities. Terrorist groups rely on gaps in intelligence and law enforcement information and their ability to blend into local populations to evade capture by state authorities. Governments respond by seeking information about terrorist groups' activities from members of the constituent population. States that commit human rights abuses alienate civilians who might be willing to provide the authorities with such intelligence. Governments also seek to cultivate moderate political forces among the noncombatants in the terrorist groups' constituent population. Government abuse of physical integrity rights marginalizes and delegitimizes these moderates, who can be described by the terrorists as stooges of the authorities and as ineffective in preventing or moderating repression.

Because government abuse of physical integrity rights encourages the population to tilt toward the terrorists, might they not act in ways that deliberately provoke such repression? It is not difficult to find examples of such behavior (see, e.g., Neumann, Lawrence, & Smith, 2007, pp. 66-68), but we suspect it does not characterize all or even most terrorist groups. Although we lack systematic studies of the issue, few works identify the desire to *deliberately* provoke repression as a key motive for terrorist groups to launch attacks. There is not much evidence pointing in the direction of the conclusion that it is clearly more important than objectives such as publicizing grievances, attracting supporters, and impressing those who already back the terrorist movement (Crenshaw, 1991). Nonetheless, we take seriously the possibility that there is an endogenous relationship between terrorist attacks and the protection of rights and seek to control for such a possibility in the empirical analysis below.

Maintaining Domestic Political Support

Counterterrorism is also more effective, and terrorist attacks are reduced, when the government maintains its support among powerful political actors. Governments that abuse physical integrity rights expose themselves to criticism by rival domestic political actors such as political parties in democracies or internal factions and dissidents in nondemocracies. Governments facing such challenges need to spend political capital defending their policies, which reduces the resources they can devote to counterterrorism. This type of political pressure may also lead the authorities to change policies midstream with the objective of dampening criticism, which may also reduce the effectiveness of their counterterror efforts. Many counterterrorism policies, such as the monitoring of communications and financial exchanges or the surveillance or secret detention of suspected terrorists, are less effective if the targets of these measures are aware of their use. Investigations of physical integrity rights violations may lead to the deliberate or inadvertent publication of information about these measures. All of these distract governments from the issue at hand and jeopardize the consistency and coherence of counterterrorism programs, leaving terrorists freer to organize and to commit attacks.

Two historical cases and one contemporary one guide our thinking on this point. In each case, physical integrity violations committed in campaigns against terrorists bred political opposition that placed the government on the defensive, provoked scrutiny of counterterrorism policy, and eventually propelled the government into political crisis, damaging the coherence of its counterterrorism policy and, often, its very ability to maintain power. Use of torture and extrajudicial killings by French security forces in Algeria to combat FLN terrorists during the 1956 Battle of Algiers, when publicized by journalists and public intellectuals, provided political fodder for leftist politicians seeking to weaken the governing coalition of the Fourth Republic while also provoking a backlash, and coup attempt, by right-wing politicians and members of the military. The crisis in Algeria, and the revelation of French counterterrorism actions in the face of the FLN campaign, forced the already unstable government of Edgar Faure on the defensive in the face of contradictory demands by the French Left and Right to abandon repression in Algeria versus adopting a harder line on Algerian terrorists. Between 1956 and 1958, the consistency of French counterterrorism policy deteriorated as France experienced five governments before being forced to allow Algerian independence and witnessing the collapse of the Fourth Republic itself (Horne, 1979). A similar phenomenon occurred in Israel in the wake of its 1982 invasion of Lebanon to root out PLO terrorists. Although the incursion initially enjoyed

widespread support among the political parties in Israel, extrajudicial killings in Palestinian refugee camps out of which the PLO operated in southern Lebanon sparked public protest in Israel and eventually led to the withdrawal of the Israeli Labor Party's support for government counterterrorism efforts in Lebanon and an official inquiry. Opposition tied the hands of Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin, leading him to scale back efforts to pursue PLO leaders. Outrage over abuses eventually forced Begin into retirement from political life in 1983 while compelling Israeli forces to withdraw to a narrow security perimeter in on the southern border of Lebanon, allowing new terrorist movements such as Amal and Hezbollah to further develop (Merom, 2003).

Maintaining International Support

Finally, governments that resort to physical integrity violations when fighting terrorism risk losing international support for their efforts. Because terrorism is frequently a transnational phenomenon—meaning that terrorist groups often cross borders to commit attacks, attack foreign targets either at home or abroad, or maintain fund-raising, recruiting, training, and communications capacities in more than one country—it requires international cooperation to successfully combat it. Foreign governments can provide intelligence on the activities of terrorist groups within their territory and use their law enforcement and security agencies to restrict the actions of these groups. Governments and international organizations can forge multinational policing regimes and monitoring and information sharing agreements and can cooperate to track down and neutralize financial assets of terrorist groups. However, flagrant human rights abuses by countries fighting terrorism can damage international cooperation and assistance (Hoffman, 2004). Governments and international organizations that attach importance to respect for human rights, or are bound by international human rights treaties, may become less willing to provide support for the counterterrorism programs of states that violate human rights, fearing the domestic and international consequences of collaborating with a notorious regime (Abrahms, 2007, p. 244; Cingranelli & Richards, 1999).

Perhaps the most clear-cut example of this pitfall can be found in the contemporary strain placed on transatlantic counterterrorism cooperation by allegations of detainee abuse and the practice of rendering terror suspects to “black sites” by U.S. security officials where they are subject to torture. Revelations of abuse of prisoners and terrorist suspects in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in the spring of 2004 and of the rendition of suspects by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, possibly with the

clandestine assistance of European governments, to secret detention centers in Europe and the Middle East for torture inflamed European public opinion, leading to demands for independent investigations. In 2007, German and Italian courts issued warrants for the arrest of CIA personnel believed to have been involved in the rendition and subsequent torture of Khalid al-Masri, a German citizen of Lebanese descent erroneously linked to Islamic terrorist networks, and Hasan Mustapha Osama Nasr, an Egyptian-born Muslim cleric residing in Milan. Though these cases have not progressed because the U.S. Justice Department refuses to honor demands by Interpol that the agents, now pulled from field operations, be surrendered to European authorities, they did prompt the Council of Europe to issue a resolution in June 2007 demanding a review of all U.S.-EU bilateral military basing agreements with an eye to instituting human rights clauses. These cases also spurred the European Parliament in February of the same year to call for the closure of Guantanamo Bay and all European terrorism detention sites used by the Americans, a call for investigations by individual European governments of CIA use of stopover sites in Europe, and an immediate ban on all CIA officials or aircraft suspected to have been involved in rendition operations in Europe. Perceptions that the United States has permitted human rights violations to creep into its counterterrorism efforts have raised the ire of European politicians, human rights organizations, and publics, whereas allegations that European governments have been complicit in abuses have made them wary of further cooperation with U.S. intelligence agencies (Walsh, 2010, p. 129).

Method and Data

In our analysis we examine whether or not countries with poor records of protecting physical integrity rights experience more terrorism than those that preserve such rights. We measure our dependent variable, the incidence of terrorism, as the number of terrorist attacks recorded for each country in our data set for each year for which data are available. We draw on two sources of data. The first is the ITERATE data set, compiled and coded by Edward Mickolus (2006). This data set is used in many of the studies of terrorism cited earlier (i.e., Eyerman, 1998; Li, 2005; Li & Schaub, 2004) and in our analysis is examined for the period from 1981—when the time series on our key independent variable, physical integrity rights, begins—until 2003. ITERATE includes information only on transnational attacks; attacks where the perpetrator and victims are of different nationalities. Because we have no reason to believe that respect for physical integrity rights should influence only transnational terrorism, we also coded attacks from the RAND-MIPT

(Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism) Terrorism Knowledge Base, a database of terrorist incidents built using open-source materials.¹ The MIPT database includes *both* domestic and transnational terrorist attacks for the period from 1998 to 2004, the last year for which we have data for many of our independent variables. We used the MIPT database to determine for each country-year the number of (a) domestic terrorist attacks, (b) transnational terrorist attacks, and (c) total terrorist attacks, where total attacks is the sum of domestic and transnational attacks. All four of these dependent variables are event counts, making negative binomial regression the most appropriate statistical technique (Brandt, Williams, Fordham, & Pollins, 2000). We use robust standard errors clustered on countries to control for correlations in the error terms across observations.

We examine independent variables that fall into three categories: the government's respect for physical integrity rights, measures of democracy, and the state's counterterrorism capacity. The Cingranelli and Richards (CIRI) Human Rights data set's physical integrity index is our key independent variable. This covers 195 countries from 1981 to 2004 (Cingranelli & Richards, 2004). The CIRI data set measures government respect for four physical integrity rights: the extent to which the government engages in disappearances, extrajudicial killings, holding political prisoners, and torture. Each of these measures ranges in value from 0, indicating the least respect for the right in question, to a maximum value of 2. The physical integrity index combines these evaluations of individual rights into an overall measure of the authorities' respect for physical integrity rights. Therefore, the index itself ranges in value from 0, indicating least respect for these rights, to a maximum value of 8.

As discussed earlier, scholars have used three measures of democracy in the study of transnational terrorism: constraints on the executive, participation, and the durability of the regime. Following Li (2005), our measure of institutional constraints on the executive is the "executive constraints" measure from the Polity IV project (Marshall & Jaggers, 2002). These constraints are typically a strong legislature and/or an independent judiciary. This measure of institutional constraints ranges from 1, in which the executive is not regularly limited by other actors, to 7, in which the authority of the executive is equal to or subordinate to that of other institutions. We also mirror Li (2005) by operationalizing participation as the percentage of the population voting in the most recent national election in democratic polities. We define a democracy as a state with a score of at least 6 on the Polity IV democracy index. This variable is recentered on its mean. Data on election turnout through 2002 are from Vanhanen (2002), which we updated through 2004. Recall that studies of transnational terrorism (including Eubank & Weinberg,

1998; Eyerman, 1998) find that recent changes in the political regime are associated with more transnational terrorist attacks. We therefore include a measure of the durability of the regime to determine if this finding holds for domestic terrorist attacks. Our measure, calculated from data in the Polity IV project, is a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if the country has been a democracy for more than 15 years and a value of 0 otherwise (Eyerman, 1998, suggests this 15-year period).

A number of articles find that the government's capacity to implement an effective counterterrorist policy reduces attacks (Lai, 2007; Li, 2005; Li & Schaub, 2004). The logic here is straightforward. Terrorism is a risky business for the perpetrators because terrorist groups are weaker than the states they target. Governments that can identify the members, supporters, and plans of a group can neutralize terrorists quickly and deter the formation of new terrorist groups. The leaders of terrorist groups realize that they face the risk of interdiction and disruption and consider the targeted state's capacity to mount an effective counterterrorist policy when deciding if they should launch attacks. Our operationalization follows Lai's (2007) study, which has the most extended discussion of this issue. Lai operationalizes state capacity with four variables: government involvement in an international war, government involvement in a civil war, the natural log of the state's population, and the number of telephone lines per 1,000 residents. We use the first three of these measures and drop the measure of telephone lines, which Lai did not find to be statistically significant in most of his models. International war is a dichotomously variable coded as 1 if the country participated in an armed conflict with another state that resulted in at least 1,000 battle-related deaths. The source for this variable is Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg, and Strand (2002). An internal conflict is a civil war when it produces at least 1,000 battle deaths over its entire duration and the national government is involved as a combatant facing an effective resistance movement that is able to inflict at least 5% of the fatalities it receives. We chose this threshold for a civil war to reduce the possibility that we would accidentally code the activities of a terrorist organization as a civil war. Terrorist organizations lack the resources to be able to operate an effective military campaign and frequently do not choose as their principal target government military forces, preferring to strike "soft targets." As Sambanis (in press) demonstrates, many terrorist attacks occur in countries experiencing civil war, but the fundamental sources of terrorist violence and civil war are quite different, and many countries without civil war do experience substantial numbers of terrorist attacks. It is thus important to control for the influence of civil war on terrorism by including measures of civil conflict widely used

in the existing literature. This definition of and coding of civil wars through 1999 is from Sambanis (2000), which we have updated for subsequent years from the PRIO/Uppsala Armed Conflict data set described in Gleditsch et al. (2002). We also include logged gross domestic product (GDP) per capita as a control variable, as some studies have found that wealthier countries experience less terrorism. Data for GDP per capita and population are from World Bank (2006).

Results

Table 1 summarizes the main results. Table 1 reports the results for four regression models. The models all include the same independent variables. The key independent variable of interest, government respect for physical integrity rights, is lagged one period to account for possible endogeneity with terrorist attacks, an issue we also address in greater detail below. The four models in Table 1 have different dependent variables—the number of domestic attacks according to MIPT, the number of transnational attacks according to MIPT, the total number of terrorist attacks according to MIPT, and the number of transnational attacks recorded in the ITERATE data set.

Government respect for physical integrity rights is statistically significant at the 5% level or less and signed in the expected negative direction in all four models. Greater respect for physical integrity rights consistently reduces the number of terrorist attacks regardless of the type of terrorism—domestic or transnational—and the source of the measure of terrorism (MIPT or ITERATE). Of the measures of democratic political institutions, only durable is consistently statistically significant across the models, reaching the 1% level of significance in the three models based on MIPT data. Participation and executive constraints are not significant in any of the models.² This is an important difference from the results reported in Li (2005) and other articles that analyze the relationship between democratic rule and terrorist attacks. Recall that Li finds that both of these variables are statistically significant and signed in the expected directions across specifications. Li does not include a measure of physical integrity rights or a dependent variable that counts domestic terrorist attacks, which might account for this difference.³ Among the control variables, population is significant in three of the models and GDP per capita is significant in two. Civil war is significant in all of the models. This is broadly consistent with the findings of Lai (2007). However, and in contrast to Lai's findings, international war is a statistically significant independent variable only in the model using ITERATE to measure terrorism.

Table 1. Physical Integrity Rights and Terrorism

Dependent Variable	MIPT Domestic Attacks	MIPT Transnational Attacks	MIPT All Attacks	Iterate Attacks
Physical Integrity	-0.227** (-2.79)	-0.271* (-2.41)	-0.228** (-3.04)	-0.116*** (-3.80)
Participation	0.003 (0.35)	0.006 (0.67)	-0.001 (-0.09)	0.005 (1.04)
Executive Constraints	0.163 (1.6)	-0.039 (-0.42)	0.129 (1.52)	0.026 (0.52)
Durable	0.646** (2.74)	0.870*** (3.62)	0.724*** (3.57)	-0.133 (-0.58)
International War	-0.239 (-0.50)	-0.332 (-0.79)	-0.309 (-0.68)	0.458** (3.02)
Civil War	0.733* (2.28)	0.871** (3.09)	0.833** (3.14)	0.721*** (4.34)
Population (ln)	0.296** (3.04)	0.124 (0.91)	0.255** (2.9)	0.222*** (4.96)
GDP per capita (ln)	0.148 (0.95)	0.524* (2.19)	0.274 (1.93)	0.285*** (5.83)
Constant	-2.349* (-2.14)	-5.018*** (-3.51)	-2.658** (-2.64)	-1.812*** (-4.30)
Delta (ln)	4.246***	1.755***	4.075***	1.986***
Log likelihood	-1334	-771	-1526	-4166
Countries	153	153	153	142
Observations	774	774	774	2,547
Years	1998-2004	1998-2004	1998-2004	1981-2003

Note: Robust z statistics clustered on countries in parentheses.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1 reports simulation results from the CLARIFY utility developed by King et al. (2000) to evaluate the substantive influence of changes in the value of respect for physical integrity rights on levels of change of the dependent variables. For these simulations, we set all of the other independent variables to their mean except for the dummy variables civil war and international war (both set to 0, indicating the absence of such conflicts) and the dummy variable durable (set to 0, indicating that the country is not a democracy or has been a democracy for less than 15 years).⁴ Figure 1 depicts the percentage decrease in the expected number of terrorist attacks a country will

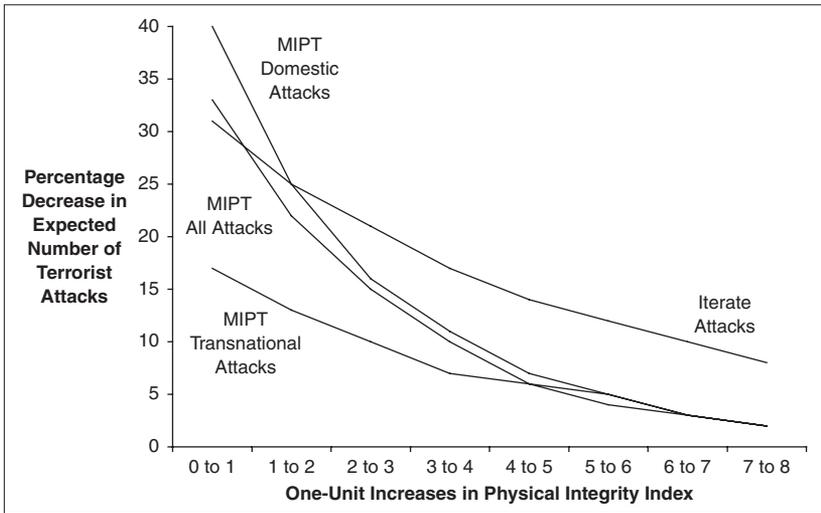


Figure 1. Percentage decrease in expected number of terrorist attacks for one-unit increases in physical integrity index

experience when government respect for physical integrity rights is increased by one unit. Changes in government respect for physical integrity rights have a noticeable negative influence on all the measures of terrorism. The effect is particularly large for improvements in physical integrity rights from low levels. Raising respect for physical integrity rights from its lowest level of 0 by only one unit reduces the expected number of terrorist attacks by between 17% and 40%, depending on the measure of terrorism. Smaller but still substantial reductions in terrorism result from further improvements in physical integrity rights. These marginal changes diminish in size at higher levels of initial government respect for physical integrity.

The conclusion we draw from these baseline models is that physical integrity rights have a statistically significant and substantively large influence on the number of terrorist attacks. We ran additional regressions to investigate how robust this conclusion is to different model specifications and the inclusion of different combinations of independent variables. We summarize these results here; details are available from the authors. An important issue that the results presented here raise is the possibility of an endogenous relationship between repression and terrorism. Although we have argued that repression of physical integrity rights leads to more terrorism, it is possible that terrorist

attacks lead governments to repress physical integrity rights. Perhaps the best way to evaluate this proposition would be through the use of instrumental variable or two-stage least squares techniques that allow estimation of the reciprocal relationship between variables. This requires finding a variable that is correlated with human rights performance or with terrorism but not with the other variable. After testing dozens of possibilities, we were unable to identify a variable with these characteristics. We thus adopted second-best specifications that the data do permit and that are commonly used to address concerns about endogeneity and temporal persistence in comparative politics. First, as discussed above, we report results from models that lag the key dependent variable, physical integrity rights, by one period to ensure that the measure of repression precedes any terrorist attacks. We also replicated the regressions in Table 1 but lagged all of the independent variables by one period. The concern here is that it may take some time for changes in these variables to influence terrorism. A sudden increase in repression, for example, might not translate into more terrorist attacks because the perpetrators need time to organize, recruit for, and plan their use of violence. Lagging all the independent variables leads to few changes in the statistical relationships reported in Table 1. Finally, in a related article (Piazza & Walsh, 2009) we used different statistical techniques—ordered logistic regression—to determine if terrorist attacks drive governments to engage in more repression. We found little evidence that this is the case. Terrorist attacks were not significantly related to subsequent values of the physical integrity index. We did find that terrorism caused a deterioration in two of the specific rights that make up the physical integrity index—extrajudicial killings and disappearances—but that the substantive size of these effects was very small. This provides little support for the contention that there is an endogenous relationship between terrorism and physical integrity rights. We recognize, though, that the data we use in this article make it difficult to definitively address this issue. The conditions under which rights and terrorism are and are not endogenous is an important area for future research.

We also estimated the models reported in Table 1 but included as an additional independent variable the dependent variable lagged by one period. This specification addresses three concerns. First, it mirrors to modeling decisions used in earlier studies (i.e., Li & Schaub, 2004). Second, there may be reasons to expect temporal persistence in the number of terrorist attacks. Once a terrorist group has developed an ideology that justifies the use of terrorism, enlisted recruits, and obtained financing, it is easier for it to continue to mount attacks, all other things equal. Third, including the lagged dependent variable on the right-hand side of the regression equation is one way to

estimate the dynamic relationship between (lagged) abuses of physical integrity rights and changes in, rather than the raw number of, terrorist attacks. Including the lagged dependent variable did not change the results reported in Table 1 a great deal. The coefficient on physical integrity rights remained negative, statistically significant at the 5% or 1% level, and had about the same substantive influence in all of the models. The stability in the findings on this variable is important evidence that the effect is real, as inclusion of a lagged dependent variable often suppresses the statistical significance of other independent variables. The lagged dependent variable is highly significant at the 0.1% level. Neither participation nor executive constraints were statistically significant at the 5% level in these models. Mirroring the results reported in Table 1, the civil war, population, and durable variables all remained statistically significant.

An additional robustness check added a measure of press freedom as an independent variable to each of the models reported in Table 1. The dependent variable, the number of terrorist attacks, is based on open sources such as media reports. This may lead to an underreporting of attacks in countries where the government influences the media (see Sandler, 1995). In other words, the freedom of the media from government control may influence the reported number of terrorist attacks that we seek to explain here. To evaluate this proposition, we follow the lead of Li (2005) by adding to the model a measure of press freedom. This measure is from Freedom House, which ranks government influence over the media from least (assigned a score of 0) to most (assigned a score of 100). These are then collapsed into three categories—a free, partly free, or not free press. We used these data to construct a dummy variable assigned a value of 1 for countries with a free press and a value of 0 otherwise.⁵ The coefficient on this variable is not statistically significant, indicating that there is little evidence of reporting bias because of government control of the media. Including this measure of press freedom does not consistently alter the other substantive results of interest to us, other than the fact that the level of statistical significance on physical integrity rights drops from the 1% to the 5% level in two of the models.

One might argue that our inclusion of a measure of physical integrity rights up to this point has been too narrow a conceptualization of human rights. Recall that a substantial literature argues that democracies experience *more* terrorist attacks precisely because they provide individuals with greater freedom to plan, recruit, and raise funds to engage in terrorist attacks. But the human rights that this literature discusses are different from physical integrity rights. Instead, this literature draws attention to rights such as freedom of movement, assembly, and speech. Perhaps including a measure of these rights

would change the results we have reported to this point. To evaluate this proposition, we added to the regressions reported in Table 1 the “empowerment” rights index from the CIRI human rights data set. This index measures rights to freedom of the press, assembly, movement, and religion and is constructed in a manner similar to the physical integrity index. Adding the empowerment index did not change our basic findings. The empowerment index itself was not statistically significant in any of the models. Furthermore, the physical integrity index remained statistically significant when the empowerment index was included, and the size of its substantive influence on terrorist attacks did not change noticeably. We interpret this as consistent with our theoretical argument that physical integrity rights are the most important human rights influence on terrorism.

To this point, we have followed the existing literature (e.g., Li, 2005) by measuring the constraints on the executive branch using the “executive constraints” variable from the Polity IV data set. Some have criticized this measure on the grounds that it measures more accurately the extent to which the polity is governed in accordance with democratic principles than it does the extent to which the executive is constrained by other political institutions (Gleditsch et al., 2002). To address this concern, we reran the regressions in Table 1 but replaced the executive constraints variable from the Polity IV project with two measures of the number of veto players developed by Henisz (2000). The first, legislative veto players, ranges from 0 to 1. It first counts the number of institutional veto players in the legislature. It then takes into account the partisan alignment of each veto player. Institutional veto points controlled by players with similar partisan identifications reduces the measure; control of veto points by players with different partisan identifications increases the measure. The second measure, all veto players, adds independent judiciaries and subnational governments in federal polities as additional veto points. As was the case with the Polity IV measure, these alternatives were statistically significant in only some of the regression models. Our key variable of interest, government respect for physical integrity rights, remained statistically significant in all of the models at the 5% or 1% level.

A high percentage of country-years in our data sets experience no terrorist attacks. There may be two reasons for these zero values: those registered for countries in which terrorist attacks had a probability of occurring but for some reason did not in the country-years examined and those registered for countries in which, because of qualities of the country itself, there is no likelihood of them occurring at all. If the latter is the case, then a negative binomial model may produce distorted results because it treats all zero values as identical. This would indicate that a zero-inflated negative binomial model

might be more appropriate.⁶ To evaluate this proposition, we re-estimated the models reported in Table 1 using the zero-inflated negative binomial estimator. Results are substantively similar to those reported in Table 1. In particular, protection of physical integrity rights remained negative and statistically significant. Participation and executive constraints were significant in two and one of the four models, respectively. Durable, civil war, GDP per capita, and population were significant in all of the regressions.

Our final robustness check involves transforming the key independent variable, government respect for physical integrity rights. Recall that this variable ranges from 0, indicating the least respect, to 8, indicating the fullest respect for such rights. We theorized that this variable would have a linear relationship with terrorism. This robustness check investigates the possibility of a curvilinear relationship between these variables. One article finds such a relationship between civil liberties and terrorism (Kurrild-Klitgaard et al., 2006), and some work on insurgency posits a curvilinear relationship between respect for human rights and internal armed conflict (Mueller & Weede, 1990). It seems reasonable to test the possibility that the same relationship applies to the relationship of interest here between physical integrity rights and terrorist attacks. The logic is straightforward. Governments that more scrupulously respect these rights experience less terrorism for the reasons we lay out above. Governments that engage in the most abuses of these rights might also experience less terrorism because the deterrent effect of such abuses outweighs their influence on political grievances. Governments with intermediate levels of respect for physical integrity rights might therefore experience the most terrorism because their abuses aggravate political grievances but are not severe enough to deter attacks. To evaluate this hypothesis, we transformed the measure of physical integrity rights into a dichotomous variable that takes the value of 1 if the country-year has a value on the CIRI index of between 3 and 6 and a value of 0 otherwise. We reran out baseline models reported in Table 1 replacing the CIRI index with this dummy variable. The dichotomous measure was not statistically significant in any of the models, leading us to conclude that the linear specification more accurately captures the relationship between physical integrity and terrorism. The other political variables also were not significant in most models, consistent with the results, whereas durable, civil war, and population were significant in most models. This pattern is consistent with the results reported above.

Conclusions and Implications

The evidence presented here provides support for our hypothesis that abuse of physical integrity rights promotes terrorism. This relationship is robust

across a range of measures of terrorism and model specifications and the inclusion of control variables including civil war, democracy, other human rights, and measures of government counterterrorism capacity. This finding has important implications for how we study the origins of terrorism and for counterterrorism policy.

Our theory and findings differ from existing scholarly research on the causes of terrorism. Much of this work has drawn attention to the relationships between institutions of democratic governance and terrorism. Less attention has been paid to how the actual behavior of the government, such as its degree of respect for human rights, itself influences the incidence of terrorist attack the state exposes itself to. The relationships between institutional measures of democratic rule and terrorism largely disappear when one considers government behavior in the form of respect for physical integrity rights. It appears, then, that how governments exercise their power, rather than how they are structured, is the decisive political factor determining a society's vulnerability to terrorism. The fact that the empirical relationships between physical integrity rights and terrorism are quite robust suggests that human rights should be taken more seriously by those interested in understanding the causes of terrorism. Future research could seek to build on this insight in a number of ways. The release to researchers of more and better data on terrorism would allow future researchers to address the possibility of an endogenous relationship between terror and physical integrity rights with more sophisticated statistical techniques. Researchers might also use process tracing of carefully selected cases to address these concerns about endogeneity (for an example of this approach in a different context, see You, 2005). Other research could investigate how repression of physical integrity rights influences the decision making of specific terrorist groups. Is repression an important motive for the formation of terrorist groups? Do terrorist groups persuade potential supporters to join by drawing attention to government abuse of physical integrity rights? Does an increase in such abuse make terrorist groups more effective in enlisting recruits, raising funds, gathering intelligence on targets and on the government's counterterrorism efforts, and garnering shelter and logistical support from their constituent population? Our article suggests that the answers to all of these questions are yes, but the research design we employ does not allow us to investigate decision-making dynamics of terrorist groups and leaders or how important physical integrity abuses are compared to other factors. The basic hypothesis we advance here could be made considerably richer and more nuanced by sophisticated qualitative or case study research on how human rights abuses influence the activities of terrorist groups.

The findings of this article also lead to two suggestions about how governments might craft more effective counterterrorism policy. First, governments

that prioritize counterterrorism should carefully protect physical integrity rights. For example, our findings lend support to the contention that the American government's violation of physical integrity rights—in the form of extrajudicial detention, the use of “harsh interrogation techniques” by American personnel, and the rendering of suspected terrorists to countries that torture them—is counterproductive. Such abuses empower terrorists by giving them the opportunity to accuse the United States of brutality, to downplay the atrocity of the violence they themselves commit, to demonstrate their willingness to stand up to a powerful state, to seek the sympathy of potential supporters, to damage sympathy for the United States within the international community, and to discourage multinational cooperation in the war on terror. More scrupulous adherence to the rule of law and basic human rights standards would allow the United States to prevent its terrorist opponents from effectively deploying these arguments. This suggestion has particular force for regimes that engage in widespread abuses of physical integrity rights. Our results suggest that the governments that abuse the most have the most to gain in terms of counterterrorism from reducing repression by even small degrees. Recall from Figure 1 that countries with the lowest levels of respect for physical integrity rights see the largest drop in terrorism when their human rights records improve even slightly. We recognize that this advice to avoid physical integrity abuses may impose political costs on some governments. Some autocratic regimes engage in such abuses as a way to maintain their hold on power. Political forces in democracies may seek to weaken legal protections for human rights in a misguided attempt to counter terrorism or to demonstrate their “toughness” to constituents. Authorities who act on these pressures need to recognize that doing so likely will fuel rather than dampen support for terrorism.

Second, powerful states such as the United States use their diplomatic, military, and economic resources to counter terrorism that originates overseas. Our research suggests that the most effective way to achieve this objective over the long run is by promoting the protection of human rights in countries that experience much terrorism. Again, the gains from this would be, on average, largest in countries that engage in widespread abuses of human rights. It is often argued that powerful countries can best reduce terrorism in the rest of the world by promoting democracy or by encouraging economic development. These are certainly worthwhile goals. But our data analysis leads us to conclude that their influence on terrorism is at best uncertain. We found little evidence that democratic institutions or economic development alone reduce terrorism when one also accounts for the government's human rights behavior. This suggests that the United States and the European Union might find

that a more effective way to reduce terrorism would be to use their political and economic leverage to convince other governments to refrain from abusing physical integrity rights. An additional advantage of this proposal is that small or moderate changes in physical integrity rights are easier to achieve than is full-scale democratization or economic development. Successful democratization, for example, requires wide-ranging changes to political institutions, including the conduct of free and fair elections, the creation of multiple political parties, the effective separation of powers among the executive and legislative, and a legal system able to institute the rule of law in a least minimal ways. Improvements in physical integrity rights involve fewer changes to the structure of the political system and thus are easier for even authoritarian governments to implement while still retaining power.

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Notes

1. When the analysis was conducted, the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) database was made available to the public online. Since the end of 2007, MIPT has been removed and is in the process of being integrated into the Global Terrorism Database compiled by the National Consortium for Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (<http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>).
2. Multicollinearity among independent variables does not appear to be a problem in these models. We calculated the mean variance inflation factor for the models reported in Table 1 using the `collin` command in Stata. The mean variance inflation factor for the International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Attacks (ITERATE) model was 1.76, and those for the MIPT models were all under 2.5.
3. We re-estimated the model using ITERATE data as the dependent variable but did not include the physical integrity measure as an independent variable. This specification is similar to that reported in Li (2005). All of the independent variables except durable and participation were statistically significant at the 1% level and signed in the expected direction. Participation had a p score of .19. We suspect that this last difference from the results reported in Li is because of the fact that our data cover only the period since 1981, whereas Li's data begin in 1968.

4. Results were similar to those reported in this paragraph when the value of durable was set to 1.
5. These data are available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org>. Note that Li (2005) uses a similar operationalization but a different data source. We decided to use the Freedom House data because they are available for most the countries and years in our data set.
6. We are not confident, however, that the fundamental justifications for using a zero-inflated negative binomial model suggest its use here. Much of the terrorism data we use has significant temporal limitations, particularly the MIPT data which only includes observations for seven years. It is therefore difficult to determine whether or not countries with zero values across all yearly observations either happened not to experience an attack within a relatively narrow temporal window or whether or not they have some intrinsic feature that makes them unlikely to experience terrorism at all. That we use domestic, international and combined attacks as dependent variables across our models further complicates the case as countries may experience different likelihoods of experiencing terrorist attacks at all due to their different degrees of exposure to domestic versus transnational terrorism.

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