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Political Research Quarterly 2014 67: 603 originally published online 21 March 2014

DOI: 10.1177/1065912914527798

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Political Research Quarterly
2014, Vol. 67(3) 603–614
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DOI: 10.1177/1065912914527798
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Abstract

Information transparency is frequently heralded as a positive regime feature. However, does information transparency produce negative side effects such as increased terrorist activity? We theorize that freer transmission of information creates opportunities for radical dissidents to employ political violence to draw attention to their agendas. We build a theoretical argument connecting external (international) transparency to increases in transnational terrorism, and internal (domestic) transparency to increases in domestic terrorism. We find empirical support for our theory by analyzing the effects of measures of transparency on counts of terrorist attacks in as many as 144 countries for time periods as long as 1970 to 2006.

Keywords

terrorism, transparency

Does state control of information affect patterns of terrorism? The long-standing assumption that terrorist activity is tactically designed to communicate political information—it is “propaganda by deed” according to nineteenth century Italian anarchist Carlo Pisane—rather than to score traditional military accomplishments, such as capturing territory or militarily defeating an enemy army, suggests that control over the transmission of information in society is key to predicting patterns of domestic and transnational terrorism. Indeed, the role that media coverage of terrorist activity plays in incentivizing terrorist movements to commit more, and more audacious, attacks is a hotly debated topic within terrorism studies.¹ Empirical studies demonstrating that democratic regimes experience more terrorism frequently explain these findings by arguing that, among other things, democracies provide terrorist movements better opportunities to draw public attention to their political agendas than do regimes in which information is more closely controlled by the state (Eubank and Weinberg 1994, 2001; Piazza 2008a; Savun and Philips 2009). However, while existing empirical research has sought to examine how particular components, or co-attributes, of democratic regimes affect terrorist activity, such as unencumbered political participation, constraints on executive power (Li 2005), rule of law (Choi 2010), human rights protections (Walsh and Piazza 2010), and tolerance for minority rights (Piazza 2011), the link between transparency and free information flows, and terrorism has been theorized but not

tested. An important motivator of this study, therefore, is to fill this gap, and thereby gain a more complete understanding of the impact of regime qualities on terrorism.

As the existing research demonstrates, democracy is a multidimensional concept, and to disentangle the various pathways for just how democracy relates to terrorism, it is necessary to examine the role of transparency independently. As existing work has sought to examine how particular components of democracy inhibit and spur on terrorism, there has been a paucity of work to examine the informational dimension of democracy (Chenoweth 2010; Li 2005), despite the fact that many scholars regard transparency as a definitional feature of democratic governance itself. (see Shapiro 2003). However, despite the default assumption that democratic regimes are characterized by transparent leadership, institutions, processes, and policymaking, other scholars observe that democracy and transparency do not always go hand in hand, with some democratic states being less transparent than other democratic states, and some autocracies actually

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demonstrating some elements of transparency (Bell 2013; Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland 2011). If this is possible, disentangling transparency from democracy becomes even more important.

Like democracy, transparency is also a multidimensional concept. Here, we argue that if we are to capture the ways in which transparency and democracy actually diverge from each other, we need to think about both domestic (internal) and international (external) elements of transparency. Considering these two different types of transparency gives us greater leverage on understanding how transparency relates to both domestic and transnational incidence of terrorism. This distinction is particularly important given the different rate at which we observe transnational and domestic attacks and the likelihood that the causes of domestic and transnational terrorism are different (Young and Findley 2011, 418).

In this study we more closely examine the relationship between transparency and the likelihood that states experience domestic and transnational terrorist attacks. This helps to expand our understanding of the role that domestic political factors play in this type of political violence. In addition, this research informs long-standing debates over the tradeoff between liberty and security. In the next section, we lay out our theoretical expectations and the resulting hypotheses, and in the following section, we execute empirical tests finding that countries with higher levels of internal and external transparency are more likely to experience both domestic and transnational terrorist attacks. We subject this finding to robustness checks, including controlling for media coverage of events within countries, and still find transparency to be a significant predictor of increased attacks. We conclude with a brief discussion of the theoretical implications of the findings.

Publicity, Transparency, and Terrorism

In order for terrorist attacks to have their intended political and social effect on both targeted populations and potential supporters of the organizations, a certain level of publicity is necessary.² In fact, Crenshaw (1981) observes that securing publicity, so that public attention can be drawn to the political grievances of the terrorists, is the primary objective of terrorist activity. Nacos (2007, 20) explicitly presents “four media centered goals” of terrorist organizations. She argues that (1) terrorist organizations seek attention from both domestic and international audiences to influence their targets, (2) “that they want recognition of their motives,” (3) they “want respect and sympathy of those in whose interest they claim to act,” and (4) they “want quasi-legitimate status” (Nacos 2007, 20). These goals are explicitly accomplished through greater media

attention and publicity. Schaffert (1992) demonstrates with a quantitative analysis that greater media coverage produces an increased probability that a government gives concessions to terrorist demands. This work highlights the extent to which governments are more likely to respond to attacks that receive a great deal of media attention and publicity. We argue here that without transparency, this crucial publicity is less likely to arise. B. Hoffman and McCormick (2004) describe “signaling” and political and strategic messaging as an important component and objective of terrorism. For them, terrorist groups plan and launch attacks in a way that best communicates the political and strategic goals and capabilities of the group to a wider audience including state authorities, other political actors, and the wider public.

Policy makers have long recognized the importance of publicity to the functioning of a terrorist organization. Margaret Thatcher, in a response to the hijacking of a TWA flight “was prompted in a speech, to propose journalistic self-discipline as one means of starving future terrorists of what she termed ‘the oxygen of publicity on which they depend.’” (Apple 1985). Tan (1988) more systematically demonstrates the usefulness and importance of publicity for terrorist organizations like the IRA. A. Hoffman (2010) suggests that there is some variation in the extent to which terrorist organizations seek publicity in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, but that this is primarily determined by whether there are any other competing terrorist organizations.³

Because of this need for publicity, terrorist movements differ significantly from other armed insurgencies and from state actors capable of wielding force. Terrorist movements are militarily weak, and often do not enjoy popular support (Crenshaw 1981). They populate the margins of politics and society (Li 2005). Therefore, they cannot mobilize mass support and cannot wage traditional battlefield insurgencies focused on the capture and control of territory. Accordingly, terrorist organizations tend to be relegated to using violence to influence an audience and rely on the opportunities to do so. Getting their message to an audience requires that the act receive at least some publicity. Thus, the overall ability for information to diffuse within and across borders is an important determinant of whether these organizations can have the publicity necessary to claim credit for attacks and attach a political message to that attack.

This reliance on publicity has important implications for the types of states that are likely to experience both domestic and transnational terrorist attacks. Most existing work on state institutions and terrorism focuses on regime type, or on specific regime political institutions or institutional configurations (Chenoweth 2010; Eyerman 1998; Li 2005; Pape 2003; Piazza 2008a). However, the importance of publicity suggests that transparency and

the ease with which information diffuses within and across borders of a state is an important independent factor for determining which states are most likely to be targeted by terrorist tactics. Although democracy is a concept that is routinely linked with information sharing properties, it is necessary to separate out the effects of transparency. This is especially important given the existing theoretical work and empirical findings that relate democracy to terrorism for reasons separate from its information revealing properties.

Given that publicity is important for terrorist organizations trying to achieve certain political and social goals, how do groups secure publicity? And what are the target audiences for that publicity? Answering both of these questions moves us toward a better understanding of how transparency and the ability for information to diffuse within and across borders influence whether groups and individuals resort to terrorism. The need for publicity is not unique to domestic or transnational terrorist organizations, and as a result, we consider the effects of attacks on both domestic and international audiences.

Transparency is defined in this project as the inability of a government to hide information about government processes and events within the state from both domestic and international audiences (Bell 2009).⁴ Starting from the premise that terrorist organizations seek to accomplish two goals from an attack—(1) to produce fear among a population, leading to policy change in the state attacked, and (2) to reveal the goals and capabilities of an organization to domestic and international audiences from which the organization can recruit (Kydd and Walter 2006)⁵—it becomes clear why more transparent regimes make attractive targets. It is in more transparent regimes that the information and fear from an attack can spread in a way that leads to pressure for policy changes. The same is true for generating support and recruitment. If the government can prevent information about attempted terror attacks or even actual attacks, it becomes harder for an organization to signal their credibility as an organization and policy motivations to potential recruits.

An example of this might be the suppression of media coverage of violent conflict by ethnic minorities in Western China. China experiences relatively low levels of terrorist attacks, given its geographic area and population size, compared with other countries facing ethnic minority conflict. However, its state-run media might fail to report on all attacks launched by ethnic Uighurs—propelled by the Islamist, East Turkestan Liberation Front embedded in the Uighur ethnic minority community in the Xinjiang autonomous region—thereby producing disincentives for terrorists to launch attacks. It is also important to add that even if a government cannot suppress information about an attack or attempted attack, governments can suppress

information about who perpetrated an attack and the political motivations of the attacker.

This is evidenced by the political challenges to the Obama administration over the deadly U.S. consulate attacks in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012 (Shane 2012, A16). The fact that these attacks occurred was immediately reported by the news media. In contrast, there was some ambiguity over who carried out the attack and the motivation for doing so. At the time of this writing, there is still much political debate over the nature of the attacks. What is important from this example, though, is that regardless of whether the administration obfuscated information about who carried out the attacks, and the motivation behind the attack, much political hay was made by the Republican Party about whether the administration was forthcoming regarding information about it. The 2102 Republican nominee for president, Mitt Romney (among other Republicans), charged that the administration, in particular UN Ambassador Susan Rice, hesitated to attribute the attack to terrorists and whether they were motivated by the release of a controversial movie or broader political goals (Shane 2012, A16). This all occurred in the context of the November 2012 elections. Former official in the George W. Bush administration, Peter Feaver, commented to *The New York Times* about the administration, “faced with a range of possibilities, they went with the one that was politically convenient” (Kirkpatrick 2012, A6). The accusation was that the administration was intentionally trying to hide the fact these were terrorist attacks because it could be politically costly.

We are agnostic about whether there was an intentional attempt to obfuscate in this example. What is important here is that there was the accusation of obfuscation, suggesting that there is an incentive for leaders to hide whether attacks come from terrorists and what the motivation for an attack is. This also demonstrates the ability, at least in the short term in this case, for there to be ambiguity about the specifics of an attack. The extent to which a state is transparent will likely determine just how long that ambiguity remains. In a relatively transparent state like the United States, reliable information is more likely to come to the surface. In a more opaque state like China, it is easier to obfuscate this information for longer periods of time.

In general, we expect that political institutions and conditions that foster transparency and the diffusion of information will foster more attractive targets for terrorism because information about that attack is more likely to become public. Although we expect that both domestic and transnational terror attacks will tend to occur in more transparent regimes, it is helpful to consider the different motivations for these sources of attacks. Domestic terrorist organizations are primarily concerned with the extent to which information flows are suppressed internally,

whereas transnational organizations are more concerned with the extent to which information can flow across state borders. This is because domestic organizations are more reliant on recruiting and applying pressure to domestic populations, while transnational organizations are recruiting from and trying to apply pressure to a broader audience. Although it is possible that domestic groups seek to attract foreign sources of support and have broader international goals, it is more likely that they are driven by a desire to change a domestic policy and to recruit from the domestic population. The same is true of transnational organizations. Although they might be willing to recruit from the target state, they are more likely to recruit from their home populations and populations other than the targeted state (Kydd and Walter 2006).⁶

Keeping in mind the importance that terrorist organizations place on publicizing their attacks, we can identify a number of state factors that are more likely to make a regime transparent, thus making it more likely that the population receives reliable information about attacks and understands the domestic aims of an organization. State characteristics such as freedom of speech and media, freedom of movement, and freedom of association increase the likelihood that information about an attack spreads throughout a territory, and that the targeted audience understands the motivations of the attack. In a state lacking freedom of speech, it is less likely that the media can accurately report on the scale of an attack. If a government wants to mute the effects of a political attack, it can simply use state-run media or restrictions on free speech to prevent the dissemination of information related to the attack. Domestic recruiting will be hampered by an inability to convey policy positions to the population. Restricting movement prevents those who experienced an attack from moving throughout a territory and spreading information. It will also limit the ability of an organization to mobilize throughout a territory and engage in recruitment. Finally, restrictions on freedom of association and assembly will also limit the likelihood that an attack and the motivations behind an attack receive widespread attention within a country.

Limits on all of these components of transparency reduce the likelihood that attacks generate the necessary level of domestic fear to alter policies. In addition, limits on these state characteristics make it less likely that terrorist organizations can control information about their motives, which allows the government to define them, and thus limits the ability to recruit from the domestic population. Combined, these elements of domestic or internal transparency suggest the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The level of domestic (internal) transparency is positively related to the incidence of domestically based terror attacks.

The motivation for transnational terrorist organizations is likely based more on an external component of transparency. Although it is possible that states will be both internally and externally transparent, governments can restrict the dissemination of information domestically while being more open externally. The prototypical case of this is contemporary China, which routinely restricts freedom of information domestically but allows information to disseminate outside of its borders. Transnational organizations are likely attracted to states where information easily exits the borders. One factor that determines the extent to which information flows across a state's borders is the relative presence of foreign media in a state. The more access that foreign media has inside a state, the more likely it is that outside observers, whether it is other governments or citizens of other countries, will receive reliable information about the events occurring within that state.

Transnational organizations are more likely to target externally transparent regimes, for reasons similar to those explaining why domestic organizations target internally transparent regimes. The core difference between the domestic and transnational organization is that the audience for the transnational organization is not limited to, and is explicitly broader than, the domestic population of the state it is targeting. The goal of the transnational terrorist is not just to spread fear within a state but to spread fear in other states. The external component of transparency is even more important when considering the recruiting motivations of the transnational organization. The primary recruiting base for a transnational organization is unlikely to live inside the state being attacked. Therefore, it is imperative that the result of an attack is publicized outside the borders of the state in which it occurs and that the motives of the attack are clear. Without this information flowing outside the borders of the attacked state, an organization is less able to signal its credibility and its political goals to its potential recruits. A government allowing the presence of foreign media within its borders is likely to increase the accuracy of reporting about the impact of an attack and the motivation behind an attack. This implies the following:

Hypothesis 2: The level of external transparency is positively related to the incidence of transnational terrorism.

It is important to note that a set of counter-expectations to these hypotheses might also be reasonably put forward. That is, it is possible that terrorist attacks might be motivated by a lack of transparency, rather than the opportunities afforded to extremist movements by a transparent society. A case example helps to illustrate this

expectation. In 1969, the radical leftist terrorist movement MR-8 (Revolutionary Movement of October 8) of Brazil kidnapped U.S. Ambassador Charles Elbrick in Rio de Janeiro to protest human rights abuses and lack of democratic rights under the 1964–1985 military dictatorship. One of the stated motivations for the strategic decision to kidnap a foreign ambassador—which would be classified in our analysis as a foreign terrorist incident as the perpetrators and the victim are of different nationalities—was to break through the wall of media censorship on political dissent erected by the military government. The Elbrick kidnapping did indeed garner significant international press coverage, culminating in concessions by the ruling Brazilian junta including allowing an MR-8 statement to be read over state radio (Skidmore 1990). In this example, however, it is important to note that some level of transparency was demanded by the terrorists needing publicity after the attack, consistent with our theoretical argument outlined above. Nonetheless, we remain cognizant of the idea that demands for increased transparency in nontransparent regimes could influence terrorism. Thus, we also test the following (counter) hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: The level of external transparency is negatively related to the incidence of transnational terrorism.

Research Design

To assess the validity of our three hypotheses, we constructed a time series cross national dataset of all countries in the world during the different time periods depending on the combination of independent and dependent variables. Any model with the CIRI (Cingranelli and Richards) variables, discussed in more detail below, covers the years 1981 to 2006. Any model with *The New York Times* constructed external transparency measure covers the years 1982 to 1999 (Bell 2013). Finally, any model using the Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland (2011) measure covers the years 1970 to 2006. Below, we discuss our dependent variables and modeling decisions, our key independent variables, and necessary controls. Our model results and substantive effects follow this discussion.

Dependent Variables

Our hypotheses focus on two separate types of terrorism: hypothesis 1 focuses on domestic terrorism, while hypotheses 2 and 3 focus on transnational terrorism. For hypothesis 1, we use a measure of domestic terrorism events per country year derived from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD),⁷ via a decomposition method employed

by Enders, Sandler, and Gaibullov (2011). This measure counts all domestic terrorism attacks where the target, perpetrator(s), and victim(s) of the attack are from the same state, and where attacks do not span national borders (Enders, Sandler, and Gaibullov 2011). The variable ranges from 0 accounts for a country year to 524 attacks for Peru in 1989.

To test hypotheses 2 and 3, we use a measure of transnational terrorism from the International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events (ITERATE) database. This variable captures the number of transnational terrorist attacks—or attacks across national borders or involving perpetrators and victims from different nationalities—within a country year (Mickolus et al. 2011). It varies from 0 to 181 attacks for Germany in 1993.⁸ Given the dispersed count nature of the dependent variables, and the fact that counts of terrorist attacks tend to be spatially clustered and temporally clustered within countries, we use a negative binomial regression model with constant dispersion and standard errors clustered by country (Cameron and Trivedi 1998).

Key Independent Variables

To evaluate the hypotheses that we present above, it is necessary that we identify elements of transparency that capture the extent that actors inside a state and outside a state can observe the consequences and motivations behind terrorist attacks. Since separating out these elements of transparency can be quite challenging, we utilize three different measures in our analyses.

First, we construct an indicator from the CIRI Human Rights Dataset (Cingranelli, Richards, and Clay 2013) that captures the extent to which information is controlled within a state. This measure utilizes the CIRI variables for freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and association, and freedom of domestic movement. For the reasons discussed above in the theoretical section, each of these components sheds some light on the extent to which information is controlled by governments domestically. These components are combined into an additive index and provide the most direct test of hypothesis 1. A Mokken scale analysis demonstrates that this measure is hierarchical and that states are unlikely to receive a high score on one component while receiving a low score on another (Bell 2009).

The second measure that we implement measures the extent to which *The New York Times* has a presence within the borders of a state (Bell 2013). This is measured by first counting the number of times that a state is mentioned in the headline of *The New York Times* stories in a year. Second, the number of times that those stories are filed from within the borders of the identified state is counted. This is identified by the dateline of the story.

From these two counts, a ratio is produced by dividing the dateline count by the headline count. What this provides is a percentage of stories about a state that are filed from within the borders of that country. The greater this percentage is, the more access *The New York Times* has within the borders of a foreign state. Low levels on this variable suggest that foreign media does not have access within the borders of state. It is important to note that this is not a measure of the volume of coverage but is a measure of the amount of a state's coverage that is reported on from within that state. One of the nice characteristics of using *The New York Times* is that it does not only publish stories that are reported by its own reporters. It routinely publishes stories from the Associated Press, Reuters, and l'Agence France-Presse. This means that even if *The New York Times* is prevented from entering a state, this measure still captures whether one of these other major news sources is allowed inside the borders of state. The final measure that is implemented is a five-year moving average of this percentage. This is computed to reduce the instability in the measure for states that have fewer reports and produces values in years where the dateline count is zero. This measure is used in models testing hypotheses 2 and 3.⁹

Finally, we use a measure generated in Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland (2011). In examining the relationship between democracy and transparency, they rely on the extent to which states report economic data to the World Bank's World Development Indicators. They identify 172 economic variables that are routinely measured during the time period of their analysis. From this set of variables, they produce a measure of the percentage of indicators that are reported. The idea here is that governments provide this information to the World Bank, and the provision of this information suggests greater transparency. This measure likely captures both international and domestic elements of transparency. Hollyer et al. use this measure to examine the relationship between democracy and domestic levels of transparency, but it is also quite possible that this captures the external component of transparency as well. The data used is specifically gathered by an international organization. As a result, this variable is used to test all hypotheses.

Controls

Consistent with the extant literature, we include a variety of control variables (Chenoweth 2010; Piazza 2008a; Savun and Philips 2009). First, from the UN Statistical Division, we include a basic control for the natural log of gross national income per capita in constant 2000 prices (UNDATA 2010). We also include basic controls for the natural log of population and the natural log of the geographic size of the country. Both of these measures come

from the U.S. Census Bureau, International Database 2010. We also include a control for whether the observation occurred during the Cold War.

From the Polity IV project, we include controls for constraints on the chief executive, regulation of participation, and regime durability (Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr 2010). The variable chief executive constraint captures whether other branches of government act separate from executive authority; a higher score equates to more constraints. Participation regulation captures whether there are regularized rules relating to the expression of political preferences; countries with stable and lasting regulations are given higher scores on this scale. Polity durability measures the length of time since the last political transition or disruption.

Finally, we add controls for both the intensity of civil and international war from the Major Episodes of Political Violence (MEPV) project (Marshall 2010). A higher score on these indicators equates to more intense violence.¹⁰

Results

Table 1 shows the results of three negative binomial regressions, predicting the number of domestic terrorist events that occurred per country year, as measured by Enders, Sandler, and Gaibulloev (2011).

To provide several tests of hypothesis 1, each model utilizes a different measure of transparency, with Model 1 utilizing the Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland (2011; hereafter, HRV) measure, Model 2 utilizing *The New York Times*-based measure (Bell 2013), and Model 3 utilizing the CIRI (Cingranelli and Richards 2012) measure. As laid out above, we expect the CIRI measure and, to a lesser extent, the HRV measure to be positively associated with the number of domestic terrorist events in a country year, as domestic groups see the utility of engaging in terrorist activities that can be easily publicized to their domestic target audience. The results of Models 1 and 3 largely support the expectations presented in hypothesis 1, as the coefficients of both the HRV and CIRI measures are positive and statistically significant, at the .01 and .05 levels, respectively.

Furthermore, *The New York Times*-based measure, which is primarily intended to capture external transparency, is also positively and significantly associated with the count of domestic terrorist events.¹¹ At first glance, this would seem to be a counterintuitive result. However, it is possible that the opportunity to communicate with a wider audience provided by greater external media transparency might also stimulate domestic terrorism. Terrorist groups that primarily engage in domestic attacks within a country can benefit from international coverage of their activities by influencing audiences in other states, such as members of diaspora communities or networks of

Table 1. Negative Binomial Regression: GTD Domestic.

	(1) HRV transparency	(2) <i>The New York Times</i> transparency	(3) CIRI transparency
HRV trans	1.350*** (0.356)		
<i>The New York Times</i> trans		1.162*** (0.306)	
CIRI trans			0.110** (0.0460)
Log GNI per capita	0.150*** (0.0563)	0.0689 (0.0728)	-0.00333 (0.0665)
Log population	0.488*** (0.0730)	0.469*** (0.0737)	0.527*** (0.0798)
Geo area	-0.0992* (0.0600)	-0.0873 (0.0602)	-0.118* (0.0604)
Executive constraint	0.0670 (0.0539)	0.214*** (0.0672)	0.0993 (0.0763)
Regulation of participation	-0.172** (0.0811)	-0.146* (0.0803)	-0.169** (0.0763)
Regime durability	-0.00207 (0.00349)	-0.00642* (0.00334)	-0.00303 (0.00325)
Cold War	-0.0575 (0.123)	-0.172* (0.0948)	0.0969 (0.102)
Civil war intensity	0.278*** (0.0537)	0.221*** (0.0534)	0.242*** (0.0623)
Interstate war intensity	0.0965 (0.0907)	0.0823 (0.0875)	0.0872 (0.0787)
CINC	-4.780 (5.984)	-6.738 (4.749)	-2.888 (5.053)
Constant	0.207 (0.869)	1.106 (0.861)	2.140** (0.847)
Δ	4.307*** (0.192)	4.349*** (0.245)	4.300*** (0.213)
N	4,397	2,191	3,208
Log pseudo-likelihood	-8,243.51	-5,036.93	-6,806.95

Standard errors in parentheses. GTD = Global Terrorism Database; HRV = Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland (2011); CIRI = Cingranelli and Richards.

* $p < .1$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

supporters and sympathizers. This dynamic can be observed in the case of the Tamil LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) movement in Sri Lanka, which concentrated the bulk of its attacks domestically over its history, but skillfully used international media coverage of its activities to secure financial and other support from Tamil diaspora communities in the Western Hemisphere. A similar pattern can be found for domestic-oriented terrorist movements in the Peru, the Philippines, and Spain. Moreover, Evans (2005) provides a historical supporting anecdote. In 1979, Lord Mountbatten was killed by the Provisional IRA in a boat bombing in Ireland. As Evans (2005, 175) tells it, “the day of the assassination, a journalist from New Zealand called the office of the IRA’s political wing (the Sinn Fein) in Dublin and demanded, ‘Why did you kill that harmless old man?’ The individual answering the phone replied, ‘Why are you calling me from New Zealand?’”¹² We think this anecdote helps illustrate that terrorist organizations that are largely domestic (Sánchez-Cuenca and Calle 2009) can still rely on international transparency to get its message across.

Across the three models, our statistically significant control variables are largely in the expected directions, indicating that domestic terrorism is more likely in countries with greater populations, with more intense civil conflicts, and with less regulated political participation (Piazza 2011). It is important to point out that the transparency variables are positive and statistically significant when we include variables that capture elements of democratic institutions.

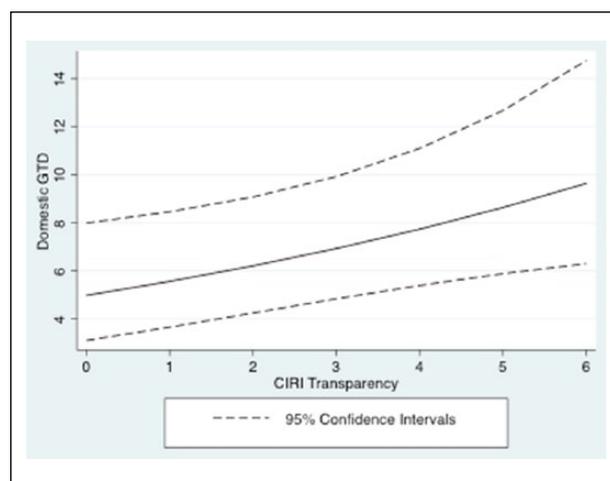


Figure 1. Domestic transparency (CIRI) and domestic terror. CIRI = Cingranelli and Richards.

Figure 1 demonstrates the effect of our primary measure of domestic transparency, that is, CIRI, on the predicted count of domestic terror events, as estimated using the results of Model 3 in Table 1.

With all other variables set to their respective means and modes, an increase in transparency from the minimum level observed in our data to the maximum is estimated to result in nearly five more acts of domestic terrorism in a given country year.¹³ Even based on the lower bound of the 95 percent confidence interval, one would project that such an increase from the minimum to

Table 2. Negative Binomial Regression: Iterate Transnational.

	(1) HRV transparency	(2) <i>The New York Times</i> transparency	(3) CIRI transparency
HRV trans	0.421 (0.278)		
<i>The New York Times</i> trans		0.731** (0.310)	
CIRI trans			0.00906 (0.0488)
Log GNI per capita	0.248*** (0.0532)	0.202*** (0.0622)	0.197*** (0.0558)
Log population	0.435*** (0.0852)	0.486*** (0.0796)	0.461*** (0.0838)
Geo area	-0.0792* (0.0480)	-0.0821* (0.0470)	-0.0804 (0.0489)
Executive constraint	0.0625 (0.0592)	0.187*** (0.0690)	0.110 (0.0955)
Regulation of participation	-0.184** (0.0736)	-0.166** (0.0736)	-0.189*** (0.0712)
Regime durability	-0.00200 (0.00346)	-0.00681 (0.00427)	-0.00449 (0.00362)
Cold war	0.778*** (0.108)	0.455*** (0.100)	0.795*** (0.0960)
Civil war intensity	0.205*** (0.0361)	0.216*** (0.0368)	0.186*** (0.0451)
Interstate war intensity	0.106 (0.0789)	0.107 (0.0692)	0.107 (0.0688)
CINC	-3.990 (6.898)	-9.404** (4.635)	-3.650 (5.504)
Constant	-1.594** (0.723)	-1.527** (0.728)	-1.175* (0.680)
Δ	2.161*** (0.132)	1.919*** (0.158)	1.931*** (0.140)
N	4,330	2,155	3,155
Log pseudo-likelihood	-6,688.51	-3,647.117	-4,732.54

Standard errors in parentheses. HRV = Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland (2011); CIRI = Cingranelli and Richards.

* $p < 0.1$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

the maximum on the CIRI measure would result in more than three more acts of domestic terrorism; the upper bound projects an increase of nearly seven events.

To test hypotheses 2 and 3, we also conducted three negative binomial regressions predicting the number of transnational terror attacks that occurred per country year, as recorded in the ITERATE database. The results of these regressions are recorded in Table 2.

As Models 1 and 3 demonstrate, neither our primary measure of internal transparency, the CIRI measure, nor the HRV measure, which was expected to capture a combination of both internal and external transparency, is reliably associated with the number of transnational terrorist attacks in a year. However, hypothesis 2 receives support from Model 2. That is, our primary measure of external transparency, *The New York Times*-based measure, is positively associated with the number of transnational terrorist attacks that occur in a year. Further, the coefficients on all three transparency measures are positive, indicating very little support for hypothesis 3; on average, it appears that external transparency motivates more transnational terrorist acts than it deters.¹⁴ Again, across the three models, the statistically significant control variables are largely in the expected directions, indicating that more transnational terrorist attacks are likely as population and wealth increase, in states with more intense civil conflicts, during the Cold War, and when political participation is less regulated (Piazza 2008b).

The effect of external transparency on the estimated count of transnational terror events is displayed in Figure 2.

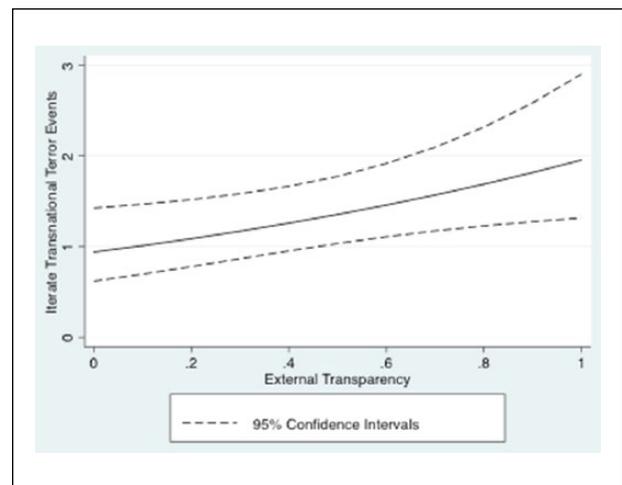


Figure 2. External transparency (*The New York Times*) and transnational terrorism events.

According to Model 2 in Table 2, when all other independent variables are set to their respective means and modes, an increase in external transparency from the minimum score on the external transparency measure to the maximum is estimated to result in approximately one additional transnational terror attack in a year, which is quite a large effect given that approximately 90 percent of the cases in our dataset experience four or fewer such attacks. Overall, then, our results are largely supportive of hypotheses 1 and 2; however,

hypothesis 3 receives no support in any of the models presented here, nor does it receive any such support in the robustness tests displayed in the online appendix (<http://prq.sagepub.com/supplemental/>).

Conclusion

Does transparency encourage terrorists to commit acts as they attempt to publicize their message? The results of this study suggest that it does. Internal transparency appears to motivate domestically based terrorists to commit attacks to gain the attention of the population of their home state, while transnational terrorists appear to be attracted to states with a high level of external transparency, likely in the hope that such transparency will result in a greater degree of international publicity for their activities. The results imply that transparency, generally thought of as a positive regime quality, may actually work to encourage terrorism by providing the publicity that terrorist groups desire. Theoretically, this work conceptually disentangles democracy from transparency in its influence on terrorism, providing an argument for why transparency itself, as distinct from overall qualities of participation or executive constraints, matters for a terrorist group's calculus for violence. Further, this highlights the differences between internal and external transparency, and theoretically connects these distinct types of transparency to either domestic or transnational terrorism, respectively. We utilize novel measures that reflect these conceptual differences in our empirical analysis.

Our study makes several contributions to scholarship on terrorism. First, our findings—that multiple measures of media and information transparency predict domestic and transnational terrorism—lend empirical support to a central component of the definition of terrorism. As previously stated, unlike other forms of political violence, such as interstate military confrontations or rebel group attacks, terrorism is distinguished as a tactic for gaining attention and communicating with a wider audience beyond those affected in the actual attack. This is why it is a tactic frequently adopted by weak and unpopular non-state actors. In finding that terrorism is significantly more likely to occur under conditions favorable to the unimpeded flow of media information, the study highlights the “communicative” element that is part and parcel of terrorism.

Second, the results shed light on an element long theorized to be an important mediator of the relationship between regime type and terrorism. As noted, a large number of previous studies have identified democratic regimes as more prone to terrorism, and some empirical investigation of specific elements of democratic rule, such as executive constraints, have been shown to statistically predict terrorist attacks. Our study contributes to

this genre by showing that another democratic feature—information transparency—is also a significant predictor, giving scholars a more complete view of the relationship between democracy and terrorism. However, this second implication of the study provides some direction for future research. Preliminary tests comparing the marginal effects of covariates in the models used in the study show that, relative to democratic regime indicators such as political participation and executive constraints, the measures of transparency have a stronger effect on counts of terrorism.¹⁵ Subsequent empirical studies might expand on this to fully evaluate the relative impact of political regime components, or co-elements, on the incidence of domestic and transnational terrorism.

Finally, this study has some important philosophical and policy implications. Debates about the tradeoff between security and liberty can be traced back to Hobbes ([1651] 1982) and Locke ([1690] 1980). This tradeoff is something that societies have grappled with throughout history. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, these debates were renewed. More contemporary political philosophers like Waldron (2003, 210) call for “care and caution” in finding the right balance between security and liberty.

In addition, survey research has asked respondents about their preferences over this tradeoff between security and liberty, with some research showing that perceived threat makes individuals more likely to prioritize security over liberty (Davis and Silver 2004) and other research finding that the general public is pretty wary to prioritize security concerns over liberty (Lewis 2005). We do not think that the findings here suggest that a specific policy action should be taken.¹⁶ Instead, we believe that the results here simply affirm that this tradeoff does in fact exist and draw attention to the need for further research on policies and institutions that could potentially ameliorate the tradeoff. These are questions that populations within many countries of the world grapple with, and the findings here can serve as a foundation for academic studies that could inform the thinking of both the average citizen and government leadership on the possibility of overcoming the tradeoff between security and transparency.

Authors' Note

Supplemental materials for this article can be found at <http://prq.sagepub.com>

Acknowledgment

The authors wish to thank the participants of the Kansas State University Political Science Department Brownbag, Carla Martinez Machain, and Jesse Johnson for their helpful comments on previous drafts.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. See, for example, Nacos 2007; Pape 2003; Wilkinson 1997; Weimann and Winn 1994; Nelson and Scott 1992; Crenshaw 1991; Martin 1986; Picard 1986; Schmid and Graaf 1982..
2. Like Abrahms (2008) and Enders and Sandler (2012), we view terrorism as both a political and social phenomenon. Groups may conduct attacks to “develop strong affective ties” among a population and to influence a political agenda (Abrahms 2008, 96).
3. This study follows this literature in assuming that terrorist groups use attacks to gain the attention of the public to communicate their political agendas and, thereby, affect policy. However, we acknowledge that this is not the only tactical objective of terrorist attacks. Attacks may also be launched to directly influence government actors. However, given our focus on the impact of transparency in this study, we rely more heavily on the mediating role of public attention.
4. Some state characteristics will increase the revelation of information domestically, some internationally, and some both. This is further discussed in greater detail.
5. Kydd and Walter (2006) point to a number of strategies of terrorist organizations: attrition, intimidation, provocation, spoiling, and outbidding.
6. By “home” population, we mean the “individuals on the terrorists’ own side whose support or obedience they seek to gain” (Kydd and Walter 2006, 58).
7. The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) is a free database made available to researchers by the START Center, a Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence, at the University of Maryland (www.start.umd.edu). It is important to note that terrorist events in the GTD are derived from a variety of sources, including free media reports. It is possible that government suppression of media reporting could insert bias into the count of events. However, three points assuage our concerns about this. First, the diversity of sources used by GTD helps to minimize the impact of this potential bias. Second, it is the practice of GTD coders to retroactively add and edit events in the data as new information becomes available, further reducing counting biases over time when researchers use a long-time series as we do. However, to test for potential selection biases produced by systematic exclusion of terrorist events due to media suppression, we also conduct a series of robustness checks controlling separately for freedom of speech (CIRI [Cingranelli and Richards]) and domestic press freedom (Van Belle 1997), and find that these produce the same results. In addition, the results are consistent across both the GTD and ITERATE datasets, providing greater confidence in the results.
8. We used two other counts of terrorism incorporating transnational attacks: counts of all terrorist attacks—domestic and transnational—from the GTD and counts of GTD transnational terrorist attacks only, decomposed by Enders, Sandler, and Gaibullov (2011). Results using these alternate dependent variables are similar in sign and statistical significance, making us confident in the robustness of our main results. These results are available in Tables 3 to 6 of our online appendix.
9. Because of the obvious abundance of U.S. stories covered in *The New York Times*, we exclude the United States from these models. In addition, *The New York Times* does not provide a measure of foreign access to the United States.
10. In a series of robustness checks in the online appendix, we include models with an additional control for the number of times the country was mentioned in a headline of *The New York Times* in a given year. This is to control for any potential press bias in places where events are more likely to be covered (Drakos and Gofas 2006). Findings as to all key independent variables remain consistent when the dependent variable is GTD domestic terrorism (Table 1 of the online appendix). Results remain consistent using the Bell (2013) measure when ITERATE transnational terrorism is used as the dependent variable (Table 2 of the online appendix). Results also remain consistent with both the HRV (Hollyer, Rosendorff, and Vreeland 2011) and Bell (2013) measures when using a measure of all terrorism in GTD as the dependent variable (Table 4 of the online appendix). Finally, results are consistent using the measure of GTD transnational terrorism (Table 6 of the online appendix)
11. This finding holds when a measure of the number of times a state was mentioned in *The New York Times* headline in a given year, that is, coverage, is added to the model. The results of this robustness test can be seen in Table 1 of the online appendix.
12. We thank a colleague for bringing this case to our attention.
13. The minimum and maximum values on the CIRI measure are not rare in our dataset. More than 9 percent of our cases demonstrate the lowest level of domestic transparency as measured by CIRI, that is, a code of “0,” while more than 22 percent of our cases demonstrate the highest level, that is, a code of “6.”
14. Once again, this finding holds when a measure of total coverage is added to the model, as can be seen in Table 2 of the online appendix.
15. Results available from authors.
16. Indeed, we would point out that our estimation technique is not a forecasting model and is therefore not intended to provide predictions about future terrorist attacks, which would be more useful in advising policymakers (see Brandt, Freeman, and Schrodt 2011 for a full discussion of the application of forecasting techniques to violent political conflict). Our study, instead, seeks to produce a better understanding of the relationships between state and society features, and terrorism.

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