

Are Home Grown Islamic Terrorists Different?
Some UK Evidence*

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Are Home Grown Islamic Terrorists Different? Some UK Evidence

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Introduction

- Shift in emphasis in terrorism literature from focus on poverty and lack of education as drivers of terrorist supply
- Reflects results from survey-based and econometric studies of terrorism participation
- This paper:
 - Focuses on UK homegrown Islamic terrorists
 - Uses a new dataset comparing UK Islamic terrorists with UK Muslims
 - Includes many demographic predictors of engaging in terrorism

UK Islamic Terrorist Acts

- ‘Homegrown terrorist’ concept broadly defined--wide range of convictions
 - 2004 fertilizer plot
 - 2006 transatlantic aircraft terrorist plot
 - July 7, 2005 London Terrorist attacks
 - July 21 2005 London bombing
 - Planning Multiple bomb attacks
 - Conspiring to commit murder and launch radioactive or chemical attack
 - Conspiracy to cause explosions
 - Withholding necessary information

UK Islamic Terrorist Acts (continued)

- Attempting to blow up a restaurant
- Attempting to blow up a plane
- Recruiting for terrorism
- Inciting terrorism
- Possessing bomb making equipment
- Fundraising for terrorism
- Supplying military equipment to al-Qaeda training camps
- Incitement to murder for terrorist purposes using the internet
- Possessing details of how to fire mortar bombs and secret codes to facilitate terror attacks



Conventional Views on the Drivers of Terrorism

- Poverty and lack of education are main drivers
 - Increased aid and educational assistance to end terrorism: former VP Gore (2002), President Bush (2002), Tyson (2001), Sokolsky and McMillan (2002)
 - Economics of crime (e.g. Becker, 1968); low wage/education may lead to property crime (Freeman, 1996; Piehl, 1998) but not violent crime (Piehl, 1998; Ruhm, 2000)

Empirical Evidence on the Drivers of Terrorism

- Evidence from 2 sources:
 - *Survey-based profiles* of terrorists: Russell and Miller (1983); Hudson and Majeska (1999); Sageman (2004); Bakker (2008); Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman (2009)
 - *Econometric-based studies*: Krueger and Maleckova (2003); Berrebi (2007); Benmelech and Berrebi (2007); Krueger (2008)
 - Common finding: Terrorists with higher educational attainment and higher living standards are *more likely* to participate in terrorist activity
 - Exceptions: IRA-related studies by Hudson (1999); Paxson (2002); and leaked MI5 (Travis, 2008)

The Drivers of Terrorism Revised—Recent Theory

- Seeks to explain terrorists coming from relatively privileged backgrounds in terms of a *market for terror attacks* (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita, 2005; Benmelech, Berrebi, and Klor, 2009; Iannaccone, 2006).
 - Supply function is the terrorists; demand function is organizations that select terrorists to commit attacks
 - Terrorist organizations want to succeed so they select the most educated terrorists
 - Poverty can play role—supply increases when economic conditions are poor
- *Summary*: much survey-based and all econometric-based literature suggests terrorists not typically characterized by lack of education and poverty

Data on UK Homegrown Islamic Terrorists

- **Need predictors of individual Muslims participating in terrorism**
 - Compare key characteristics of homegrown UK Islamic terrorists to those of UK Muslims
- **Terrorist sample:** Muslims convicted in the UK for terrorist acts, or who died while participating in them during 2001-2009.
- **Sources:** Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman (2009); Simcox, Stuart & Ahmed, (2010); publicly available UK Home Office documents, Wikipedia links, Google searches, press reports
 - We find 77 convicted Muslim terrorists with partial information on education, recent employment status, age, citizenship, sex, ethnicity, and residence
 - Unable to track down all the information for all the terrorists

Data on UK Muslims

- **Sample of UK Muslims** (non-terrorists): Annual British Crime Survey (BCS)
 - Aims at measuring amount of crime in UK but contains information on religion, age, education level, citizenship, birthplace, employment, and marital status of those interviewed
 - Survey is designed to be representative of private households, and of adults aged 16 and over living in private households
- **Sample period:** BCS surveys for 2001/02 and 2006/07, providing responses of 80,207 of which 1,363 stated that they were Muslims.
- **Pooled sample comprises** the 1,363 Muslims that participated in the two surveys and the 77 terrorists (i.e homegrown terrorists are 5.3% of the pool)



Table 1
Sample averages for UK Muslims

	UK Muslims		UK Islamic	<i>p</i> - value
	All	Male	terrorists	
Education (years)	12.36 (3.46)	12.75 (3.60)	13.85 (2.33)	0.00
Employed (percent)	48.26	65.6	37.66	0.07
Age (years)	32.84 (9.71)	33.12 (10.36)	26.35 (6.26)	0.00
Male (percent)	49.65	100.0	96.1	0.00
Married (percent)	57.08	55.12	37.66	0.00
UK citizen (percent)	56.48	55.2	79.22	0.00
<i>Ethnic origin:</i>				
Africa	8.64	8.19	29.9	0.00
Mixed South Asia-White	2.31	2.78	23.4	0.00
India	11.50	11.26	3.9	0.00
Pakistan	56.48	55.85	27.3	0.00
Other	10.80	11.70	3.9	0.00

Notes: Sample size is 1,440 UK Muslims, of which 77 were convicted homegrown Islamic terrorists. *p* - value is for test of the independence of the characteristics of homegrown Islamic terrorists versus those of all UK Muslims. Figures in parenthesis are the standard deviations of the respective sample averages.

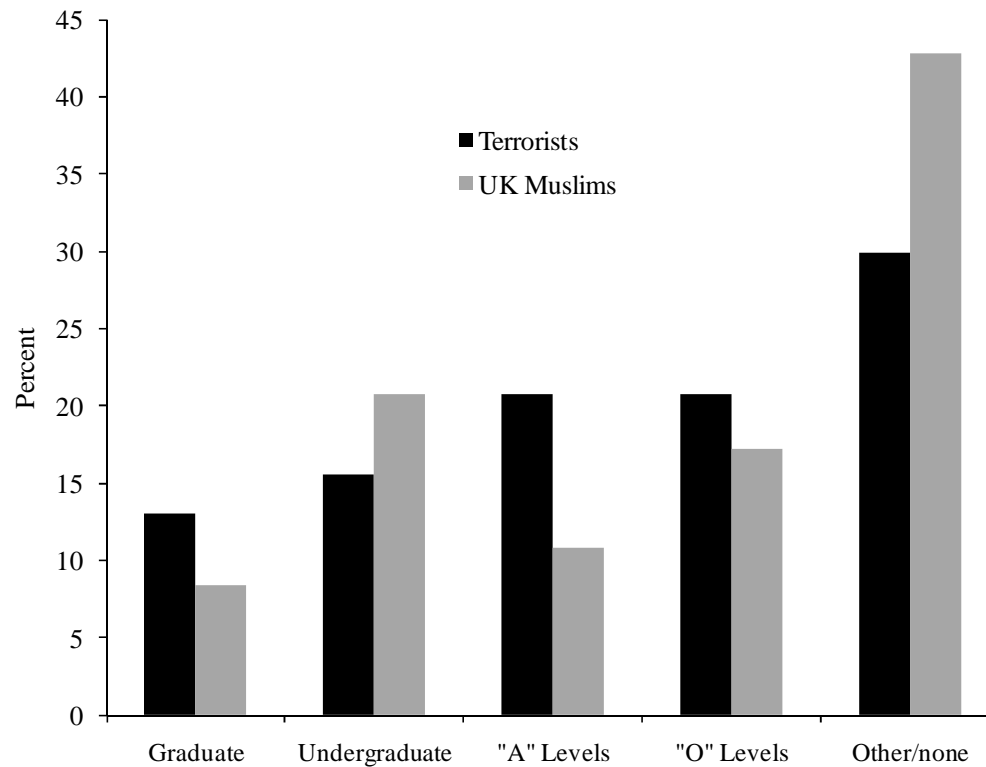


Figure 1. Educational attainment of homegrown Islamic terrorists versus UK Muslim population
Chi-square test of independence: 12.53; p -value=0.014



Table 2

Probit estimates for the likelihood of being a homegrown Islamic UK terrorist

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
				Males only	Mean values assigned to missing education observations	Weighted probit estimation
Constant	-1.4475*** (0.2641)	-1.1888*** (0.2837)	-0.1707 (0.6082)	1.4261** (0.5916)	-0.8866* (0.4840)	-0.3139 (0.5522)
Education	0.1270*** (0.0281)	0.1476*** (0.0296)	0.2009*** (0.0434)	0.2015*** (0.0449)	0.1265*** (0.0330)	0.2036*** (0.0404)
Employment		-0.4071** (0.1506)	-0.5794*** (0.1816)	-0.6501*** (0.1879)	-0.6722*** (0.1597)	-0.5172*** (0.1673)
Age			-0.0630*** (0.0144)	-0.0567*** (0.0144)	-0.0514*** (0.0106)	-0.0560*** (0.0131)
Male (1=yes)			1.6872*** (0.3317)		1.7589*** (0.2777)	1.5999*** (0.3063)
Married (1=yes)			0.1706 (0.2102)	0.1398 (0.2194)	0.3372* (0.1797)	0.1100 (0.1928)
UK citizen (1=yes)	0.5030*** (0.1664)	0.5413*** (0.1701)	0.5744** (0.2008)	0.5903*** (0.2077)	0.7192*** (0.1789)	0.5229** (0.1834)
<i>Ethnic origin</i>						
Africa	0.6014** (0.2556)	0.6161** (0.2586)	0.4179 (0.3096)	0.2436 (0.3290)	0.6823** (0.2637)	0.3157 (0.2818)
Mixed South Asia-White	0.9893*** (0.2841)	0.9528*** (0.2878)	0.5795* (0.3503)	0.6228* (0.3671)	0.7613** (0.3025)	0.5203* (0.3202)
India	-0.4332 (0.3106)	-0.4037 (0.3164)	-0.8711** (0.3897)	-0.8884** (0.3998)	-0.8771** (0.3561)	-0.9096** (0.3602)
Pakistan	-0.3762* (0.2251)	-0.4016* (0.2303)	-0.8795** (0.2954)	-0.8957** (0.3066)	-0.8215*** (0.2524)	-0.9119*** (0.2729)
Other	-0.4280 (0.3645)	-0.5021 (0.3762)	-0.6964 (0.4486)	-0.7564* (0.4602)	-0.6098* (0.3767)	-0.7489 (0.4126)
Pseudo R-square	0.199	0.215	0.421	0.338	0.418	0.390
Percent false negatives/positives	0.0/96.1	50.0/96.3	64.7/96.9	61.1/94.2	55.8/95.8	64.7/96.9
Chi-square	91.35	98.89	193.13	127.28	251.19	202.30
Sample size	1,416	1,416	1,416	734	1,439	1,416

Notes: Dependant variable equals 1 for convicted terrorists and 0 for others. Robust standard errors are in parenthesis.

***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels. The estimates reported in column 4 are for the pooled subsample of male Muslims. The estimates reported in column 5 assign the sample mean number of years of education to the terrorists for whom there are missing values. The estimates reported in column 6 scale the number of non-terrorists in the pool by assigning a weight to them that reflects the number of Muslims in England and Wales, as indicated in the British Crime Survey.



Table 3

Marginal effects of coefficients from the probit estimates reported in table 2

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Education	0.0502	0.0587	0.0766	0.0796	0.0335	0.0812
Employment		-0.1600	-0.1925	-0.2289	-0.1251	-0.1963
Age			-0.0240	-0.0224	-0.0136	-0.0223
Male (1=yes)			0.5352		0.6207	0.4515
Married (1=yes)			0.0664	0.0556	0.1022	0.0438
UK citizen (1=yes)	0.1973	0.2012	0.2260	0.2297	0.2433	0.2006
<i>Ethnic origin</i>						
Africa	0.2333	0.2252	0.1649	0.0969	0.2289	0.1243
Mixed South Asia-White	0.3576	0.3179	0.2280	0.2413	0.2599	0.1996
India			-0.3339	-0.3292	-0.3059	-0.3214
Pakistan	-0.1490	-0.1532	-0.3368	-0.3314	-0.2837	-0.3220
Other			-0.2720	-0.2873	-0.2010	-0.2752

Notes: Marginal effects are calculated around the average values of the explanatory variables.
Column numbers correspond to the probit estimates reported in table 2.



Conclusions

- Dealing with terrorism requires understanding the determinants of the supply of terrorists.
- Results consistent with survey-based & econometric based results of drivers of terrorist participation:
 - Muslims with higher educational attainment are *somewhat more likely* to participate in terrorist activities
- Reinforces the wisdom of shift in emphasis in the literature from poverty and lack of education to e.g. political objectives.
- Little reason to believe that additional financial/foreign aid or improving educational circumstances would help reduce the desire to participate in terrorism

Future research

- Same (updated) UK sample, more BCS waves, more explanatory variables (local area income, local politics, local hate crimes)
- Evidence from European countries
 - Pooling US & European data
- The quality of Islamic terror: relating terrorist characteristics to terrorist acts
- Economic impact of terrorist acts