

The Challenge of combatting terrorism and upholding democratic foundations

‘It is our role, as citizens, to scrutinise measures taken in the name of our security and ask ... for evidence-based policies: there are no such things as depoliticised and neutral counter-terrorism strategies.’

Scherrer and Bigo 2015

.....

Debating Development, Tuesday 22 November 2016

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How did we get to where we are? How do we navigate the future?



Structure of Presentation

- **Overview: an exploration of the Nature of Terrorism**
- **Key Points from the 2005 argument 'The Impact of the Anti'**
- **Developments since 2005 and the Importance of Context**
- **Contradictions inherent in the discourse on democracy and terror**
- **Reclaiming democratic principles: Navigating a rough sea**

Defining Terrorism:

‘the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation’.

This definition recognises that terrorism is not only the physical act of an attack, but also the psychological impact it has on a society for many years after.

Can we juxtapose 'terror' and 'democracy'?

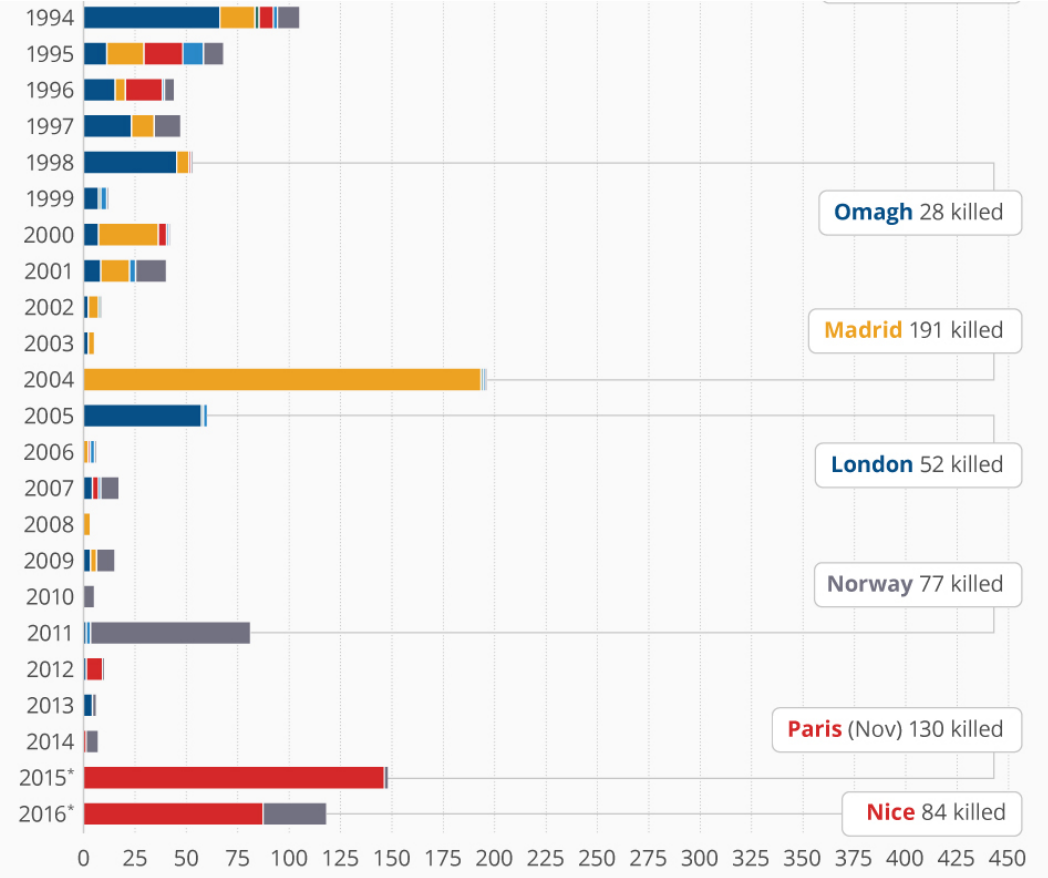
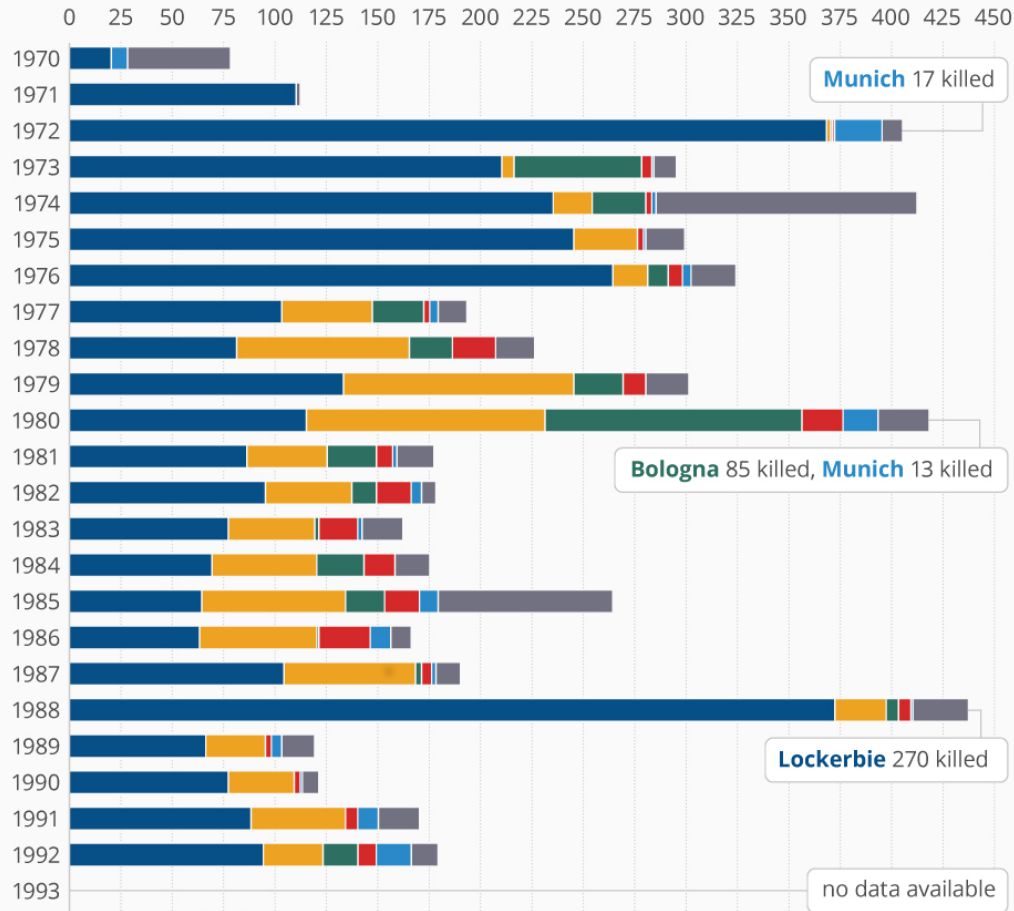
- History tells us this is complex...
...the word 'terror' entered the political vocabulary after the violent overthrow of monarchy in France...
- The photo here is from Paris 2016
- **Definitions hinge on political violence for whom and for what**



Terrorist attack victims in Western Europe

Number of persons killed by terrorist attacks 1970 to July 28, 2016

■ United Kingdom
 ■ Spain
 ■ Italy
 ■ France
 ■ Germany
 ■ Other



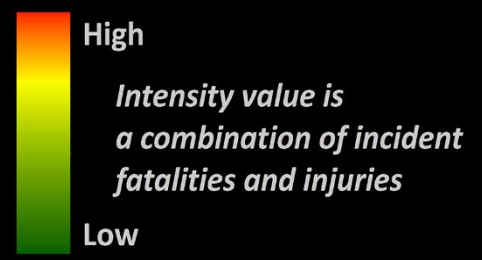
* News Reports
 @StatistaCharts Source: Global Terrorism Database

History, Images and familiar Words: **Terrorism, Armed Struggle and Martyrs.** (Mirror images from opposing sides in Northern Ireland)



45 Years of Terrorism

Terrorist Attacks, 1970-2015
Concentration and Intensity



Source: Global Terrorism Database



Statistical analysis has identified two factors which are very closely associated with terrorist activity:

- political violence committed by the state
- existence of a broader armed conflict.

Research data indicates that:

- 92 per cent of all terrorist attacks over the past 25 years occurred in countries where state sponsored political violence was widespread
- **88 per cent of attacks occurred in countries that were involved in violent conflicts. 78% of deaths occurred in only five countries: Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria**

Source Global Terrorism Index 2015

<http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf>

'Democracy and Terrorism: the Impact of the Anti' (2005)

- The post 9/11 re-militarized international security framework threatens democratic approaches to conflict management
- The need for risk and incident management which upholds principles of accountability, rights, checks and balances, rule of law
- Concern for the impact of global counter-terrorism on development assistance
- New demands on national and domestic frameworks in a global system
- Concern that 'normalizing exception' will undermine democratic process

Speaking up: One view on the abuse of Power and Compromise of Democratic Principles (Feinstein 2012)

- The War on Terror has severely undermined American democracy.
- Key features of the US constitutional dispensation have been rewritten, discarded or ignored.
- Power has been further centralized in the executive, the military has been largely privatized, but is if anything more wasteful and inefficient.
- Oversight mechanisms have been purposefully weakened or marginalized. Black sites, extraordinary rendition and redefinitions of torture have torn up the international legal rule book, placing enemies of the US in legal black holes that defy international monitoring and allow for mass violations of human rights.
- Individual freedoms in the US too, have suffered as the Patriot Act drastically empowers the US government to pry into the lives of ordinary Americans.

Since 2005 dominant trends include:

- 1) Counter radicalisation (or extremism) measures, and
- 2) The rise of asymmetrical warfare with resulting mass migration flows

Contradictions inherent in the practice and discourse on democracy and terror

- One sided radicalisation measures created new problems and led to other reactive radicalisms and violence
- Compromises abound in terms of rule of law: in the UK 'secret courts'
- Agency of the citizen is compromised to privilege the power of the state (mass surveillance, bulk data and use of detention orders)
- Double standards alienate citizens and observers, i.e. UK/Saudi weapons sales

Reclaiming democratic principles: Navigating a rough sea

- Social Inclusion and fundamental rights: identify and act on sources of insecurity
- Criminal justice system for arrest, detention, interrogation and prosecution: Inter-agency cooperation on intelligence gathering: Due process and the Rule of Law
- Spaces for debate and national discourse
- Accountability measures and judicial oversight
- Keep threat in perspective, curb hate speech and intimidation
- Accept that 100% security is not possible and that defeating terrorism means understanding its origins, domestic and international
- Understanding that Islamic State has a strategy and not falling for it
- Educating for equality, for rights and diversity in action
- Collective response-ability (responsibility)

Balancing critical democratic challenges: the example of free speech

Ensure the right to free speech while guarding against hate speech and incitement

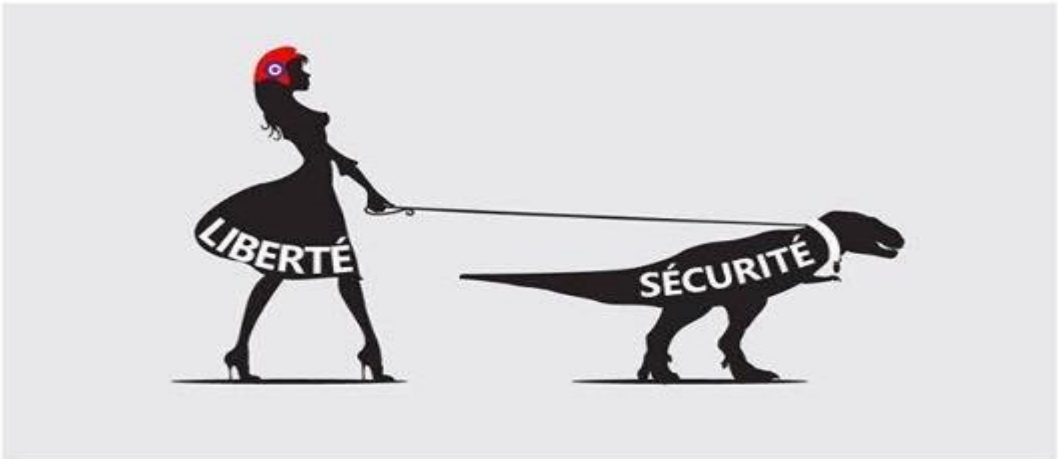
A prominent UK police chief has said government plans targeting alleged extremists are so flawed they risk creating a “thought police” in Britain.

Simon Cole, the police lead for the government’s own Prevent anti-radicalisation programme, said that the plans may not be enforceable and risk making police officers judges of “what people can and can not say”.



In a democratic society governments must be held to account; free speech is essential for naming unlawful acts and protesting injustice. Below a small portion of a quilt made by women activists in England and Scotland in memory of civilian victims (many of them children) of US drone attacks overseas.





References

Banksy (UK street artist)

Andrew Feinstein (2012) *The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade* (London: Penguin Books).

Aurelie Garbay (2014) 'Democracies' Fight against Radicalisation in the European Union: from Self Protection to Self-Destruction', *The European Review of Organised Crime*

Anthony Oberschall (2008) 'How democracies fight insurgents and terrorists' from *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* I: no. 2

Amandine Scherrer and Didier Bigo ' Will the democratic debate over counterterrorism gain the edge in battle?' <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/amandine-scherrer-didier-bigo/will-democratic-debate-over-counterterrorism-gain-edge>

Sarah Teich (2016) 'Islamic Radicalisation in Belgium', International Institute for Counter-Terrorism

Ancilla van de Leest, 'Securite' Twitter of 15 November 2016 @ncilla

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<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/may/24/antiradicalisation-chief-says-ministers-plans-risk-creating-thought-police>