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Correlates of Public Support for Terrorism in the Muslim World

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About This Report

This report, "Correlates of Public Support for Terrorism in the Muslim World," was commissioned by the United States Institute of Peace, Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention. Consistent with the center's commitment to conflict prevention, this report aims to inform the center's ongoing work to expand the understanding of the determinants of terrorism and its support base.

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ABSTRACT

Correlates of Public Support for Terrorism in the Muslim World

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This report examines the correlates of individual-level support for terrorism in fourteen Muslim countries. I identify a variety of factors that are correlated with support for terrorism. These factors can be divided into a several categories: attitudes toward Islam, attitudes toward the United States, attitudes toward politics and economics in the home countries, and demographic factors.

The analysis uses individual-level data collected by the Pew Research Center in their survey, *What the World Thinks 2002: How Global Publics View Their Lives, Their Countries, The World, America*. These data are augmented with national-level data on the economy, the size of the Muslim population, governance, and the level of terrorism.

I find that support for terrorism is positively correlated with anti-Americanism, the belief that Islam should play a significant role in politics, the belief that the United States poses a threat to Islam, and, surprisingly, the perception of free expression. Moreover, education, perceived state of the economy, and support for democracy are not found to have any significant relationship to support for terrorism.

The report proceeds as follows. First, I briefly discuss why understanding support for terrorism is important for understanding the politics of terrorism and counterterrorism. Second, I present some simple summary statistics of the Pew data set as it relates to the analysis in this report. Third, I analyze the individual-level data more rigorously, using an ordered logit model. Fourth, I offer interpretations of the results and discuss the problem of making strong inferences regarding causal relationships from this study. Finally, in an appendix, I explore the cross-country variation in the correlates of support for terrorism. In particular, I attempt to deduce whether economic, political, and religious factors might be correlated with this variation and discuss why this is not fully feasible with the current data.

1. Terrorism and Public Support

For a variety of reasons, public opinion and public support play a vital role in the politics of terrorism. First, many terrorist organizations depend on the support of a surrounding population. Without such support, the terrorists would be unable to raise funds, recruit volunteers, operate safe houses, or avoid infiltration and capture by a militarily stronger government. The symbiotic relationship between terrorists and the public they seek to represent is most clear in the operation separatist and nationalist terror movements, such as the IRA in Northern Ireland (English 2003), the FLQ in Algeria (Horne 1978), the ETA in Spain (Clark 1990), or Hamas in the Palestinian territories (Mishal and Sela 2000).

While public support is a strategic necessity for terrorists, changing public opinion is also one of the key goals of terrorist campaigns. Terrorism is, to borrow from the 19th century anarchists, "propaganda of the deed." That is, violent campaigns can, themselves, bring public opinion around to the terrorists' cause. Terrorism affects public opinion in a variety of ways. Terrorist factions use violence and credit claiming to compete for public support with rival factions (Bloom 2004, 2005). Successful campaigns of violence signal to governments and populations, alike, the dedication and power of terrorist groups (Lapan and Sandler 1993, Overgaard 1994). Terrorists often use violence to attract media attention and gain publicity for their ideological message (Wilkinson 1997). And terrorists also manipulate public opinion by engaging in violence in order to provoke counterterrorism responses that result in a backlash against the government by a population the terrorists claim to represent (Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2006, de Figueiredo and Weingast 2001). The historian, J. Bowyer Bell, describes the important relationship between terrorism, counterterrorism, and public opinion in his description of the aftermath of the famous Irish "Rising" of 1916:

> The Irish people, as the rebels had planned, were vitalized by the Rising and angered by the British repression. . . Although the Easter Republic of 1916 had been apparently buried in the smoking ruins of central Dublin, by 1918 the idea had been resurrected as 75 of the 103 newly elected members of the Westminster parliament pronounced themselves in Dublin the new Dail of an independent Irish Republic" (1971, page 64).

Clearly, then, understanding the sources of public support for terrorism is vital for understanding terrorism itself. Several scholars have studied the correlates of support for terrorism among various populations including Basques in Spain (Clark 1990) and Palestinians

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(Krueger and Maleckova 2004). Fair and Shepherd (2006) analyze the same cross-country data studied here. However, they exclude several variables that are included in this report and also make modeling choices that differ from those made here. Thus, this report revises and extends results that study.

2. The Data

2.1 Dependent Variable: Support for Terrorism

The purpose of the report is to explore what individual characteristics and opinions correlate with support for terrorism. As such, the primary dependent variable of interest in this report is individual support for terrorism.

In order to assess individual support for terrorism, I make use of the 2002 Pew Global Attitudes Survey. This survey was conducted in 44 countries and asked a broad array of questions about people's attitudes toward politics, economics, religion, globalization, the United States, the War on Terror, etc. In fourteen countries with large Muslim populations, Pew asked Muslim respondents the following question:

> Some people think that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that this kind of violence is often justified to defend Islam, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?

Individual answers to this question constitute the key dependent variable for this report. Answers are coded 1-4, where 1 represents an answer of "never justified" and 4 represents an answer of "often justified."

The question was asked in Bangladesh, Ghana, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan. Other countries with large Muslim populations either did not allow the question to be asked (Egypt) or were not included in the survey (e.g., Syria, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia).

The following table and figure show some summary statistics for this variable. These data make clear that there is significant variation in attitudes toward terrorism both across and within countries in the sample. Across countries in the sample, attitudes range from those in Lebanon,

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where the average person supports terror somewhere between often and sometimes, to those in Uzbekistan, where the average person supports terror somewhere between rarely and never.

I return to issues of interpretation and validity of this measure of support for terrorism in section 3.

Support for Terrorism by Country

Country	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number of Observations
Bangladesh	2.1	1.1	542
Ghana	1.9	1.0	85
Indonesia	1.9	1.0	910
Ivory Coast	2.5	1.1	89
Jordan	2.3	1.1	873
Lebanon	3.2	1.0	554
Nigeria	2.4	1.1	318
Pakistan	2.1	1.3	1592
Senegal	2.0	1.1	644
Tanzania	1.6	0.9	230
Turkey	1.4	0.9	848
Uganda	1.8	1.0	110
Uzbekistan	1.2	0.6	562
FULL SAMPLE	2.03	1.14	7952

Average support for terrorism by country
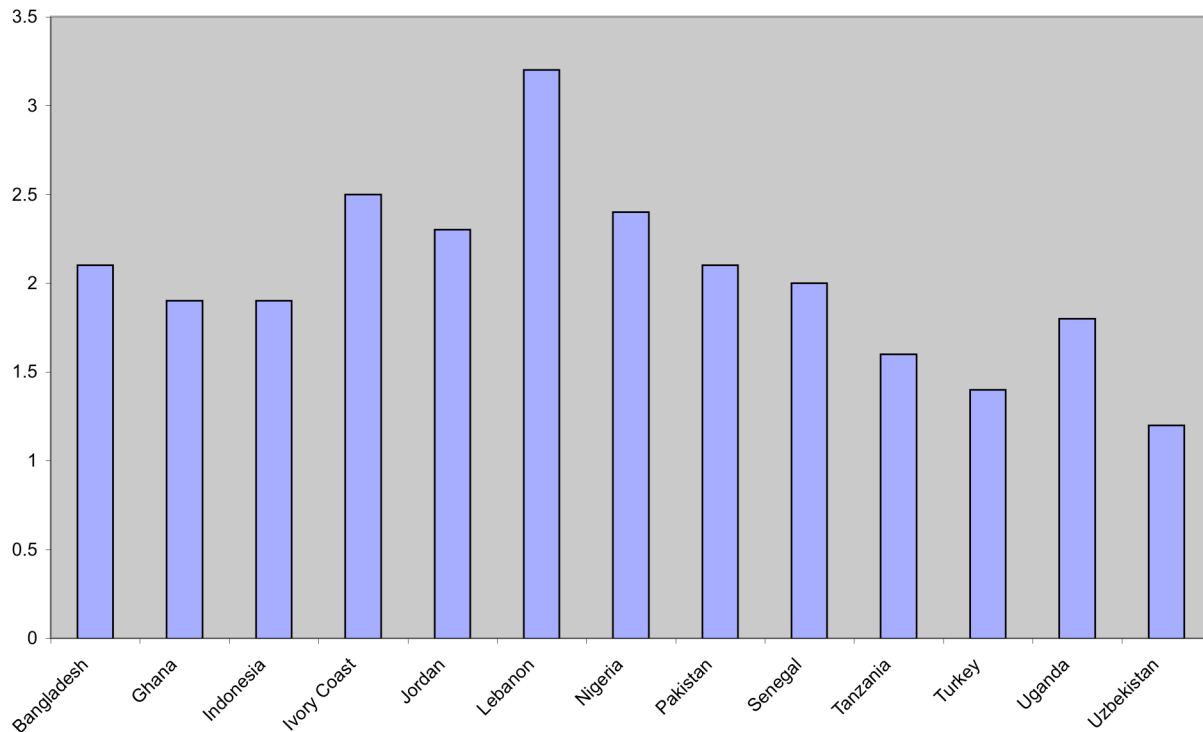
2.2 Independent Variables

I explore how a variety of independent variables correlate with support for terrorism. These independent variables are divided into several categories.

Attitudes toward Islam and Politics. A person's attitude toward Islam and its role in politics may be an important factor in willingness to support terrorism in defense of Islam. The first question I consider measures an individual's view of the appropriate role of Islam in politics. The question reads:

> And how much of a role do you think Islam SHOULD play in the political life of our country—a very large role, a fairly large role, a fairly small role, or a very small role?

Just as potentially important as a person's attitude toward the role Islam should play, is a person's perception of the role Islam does play. Another question captures this:

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How much of a role do you think Islam plays in the political life of our country—a very large role, a fairly large role, a fairly small role, or a very small role?

The next table shows the correlation between people's answers to these two questions and their support for terrorism. People who support a strong role for Islam in politics are more likely to also support terrorism. Perhaps more surprisingly, people who perceive Islam to play a large role in the politics of their home country are also more likely to support terrorism.

One might conjecture that this latter correlation is due to people from countries where Islam does play a strong role also supporting terrorism more. However, as we will see in the statistical model, even controlling for country, the perception that Islam plays a large role in politics is a positive correlate of support for terror.

Correlations Between Support for Terrorism and Views on Islam

	Role Islam Should Play	Role Islam Plays
Support for Terrorism	0.14	0.1

One might also think that dissatisfaction with Islam's role in politics would be correlated with support for terrorism. Consider a new variable constructed by subtracting a person's answer to the role Islam does play from that person's answer to the role Islam should play. A person with a high score on this new variable is a person who believes Islam should play a big role but does play a small role. A person with a low score is a person who believes Islam should play a small role but does play a big role. Call this new variable "Islamic Dissatisfaction." Interestingly, as shown in the next table, dissatisfaction with the role of Islam in one's own country's politics is much more weakly correlated with support for terrorism then raw attitudes toward to role of Islam.

Correlation Between Support for Terrorism and Dissatisfaction with the Role of Islam in Politics

	Islamic Dissatisfaction
Support for Terrorism	0.04

The question assessing a person's attitude toward terrorism specifically makes mention of the use of terrorism in defense of Islam. One might think that people are particularly likely to support this type of terrorism if they perceive Islam to be under threat and, thus, in need of defending.

In order to explore this possibility, I make use of the following question:

Turning to another subject, in your opinion, are there any serious threats to Islam today?

People who answered yes to this question were offered the chance to name three possible sources of threats to Islam. Of particular interest, for this report, are people who perceive the threat to Islam as coming from the United States and the West, other religions, or their home government.
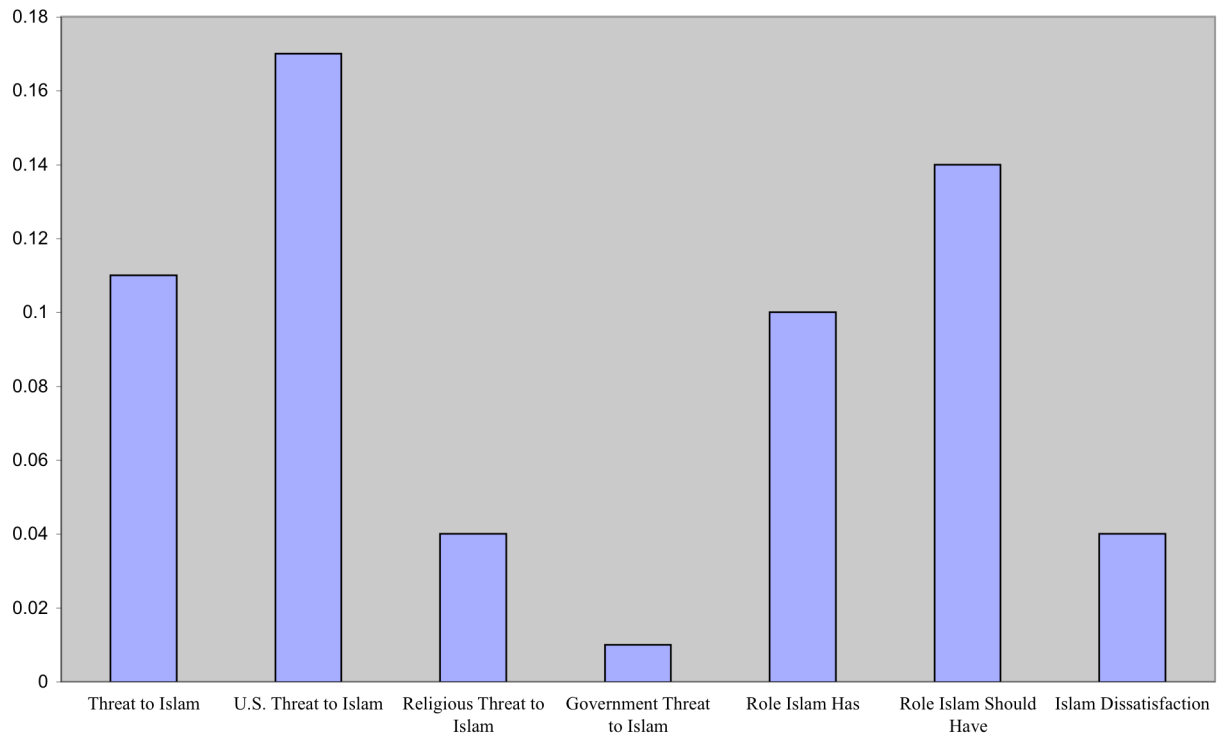
Correlations Between Support for Terrorism and Perceived Threats to Islam

	Threat to Islam	U.S. Threat	Religious Threat	Government Threat
Support for Terrorism	0.11	0.17	0.04	0.01

As can be seen in the table, a perceived threat to Islam is, in fact, a large positive correlate of support for terrorism. And, among those who perceive there to be significant threats to Islam, those who believe the United States and the West pose such a threat are particularly likely to support terrorism.

The following figure summarizes the descriptive statistics relating support for terrorism to attitudes toward Islam.

Correlation Between Support for Terrorism and Attitudes Toward Islam

Attitudes toward the United States. As the previous section showed, perceiving the United States as a threat to Islam is a large, positive correlate of support for terrorism. The question naturally arises, then, whether other attitudes toward the United States are also correlated with support for terrorism.

The Pew study explicitly asks respondents of their attitudes toward the United States in the following question:

> Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of the United States?

The survey also asks respondents whether they have ever visited the United States. As the following table shows, people with positive attitudes toward the United States are less likely to support terrorism. Surprisingly, the same is not true of people who have visited the United States. Such people are more likely to support terrorism. Further, among survey respondents,

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having a positive attitude toward the United States is essentially uncorrelated with having visited the United States.

*Correlations Between Support for Terrorism and Attitudes toward or Experience of the United States*

	Attitude Toward U.S.	Visited U.S.
Support for Terrorism	-0.09	0.05

Correlations Between Attitudes toward and Experience of the United States

	Attitude Toward U.S.
Visited U.S.	0.02

The following figure summarizes the descriptive statistics relating support for terrorism to attitudes toward the United States.

Correlations Between Support for Terrorism and Attitudes toward or Experience of the United States
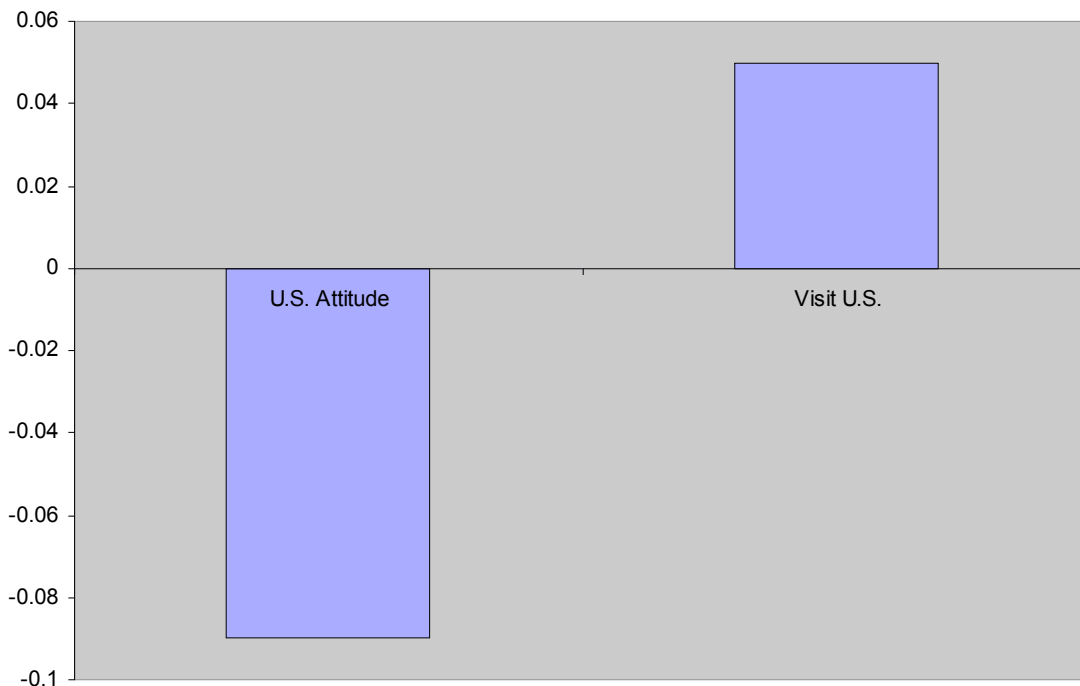
Attitudes toward Politics and Economics at Home. Although much terrorism is undertaken in opposition to America and the West, the politics and economics of a respondent's home country can also be an important correlate of support for terrorism. The Pew study makes it possible to examine the importance of a variety of attitudes toward and perceptions of political and economic life in a respondent's home country.

I first consider a question that attempts to determine whether a person considers his or her home government effective at governance.

Please tell me whether you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree or completely disagree with, "When something is run by the state/government, it is usually inefficient and wasteful."

The next question assesses the extent to which a person perceives him or herself to have freedom of speech:

Does "you can openly say what you think and can criticize the state/government" describe our country very well, somewhat well, not too well or not well at all?

The final question in this category considers a person's perception of the economy:

Now thinking about our economic situation, how would you describe the current economic situation in (survey country)—is it very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad or very bad?

Taken together, these questions present a rough overview of a person's view of politics and economics in his or her home country. Correlation data are presented in the following table.

Correlations Between Support for Terrorism and Perceptions of Politics and Economics in Home Country

	State Inefficient	Economic Perception	Free expression
Support for Terrorism	0.05	-0.01	0.08

Not surprisingly, people who view their government as inefficient are more likely to support terrorism. Perhaps less intuitive, though consistent with other survey evidence (Krueger and

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Maleckova 2003), a person's perception of the economy is essentially uncorrelated with his or her support for terrorism.

Most surprisingly, a person who perceives him or herself to have free expression is more likely to support terrorism. One possible explanation for this positive correlation is that people who perceive themselves to have free expression are more willing to voice support for terrorism, whereas those who do not perceive themselves to have free expression keep such views hidden. Interestingly, however, the correlation between the average perceived freedom of expression in this survey by country and an objective measure of political freedom by country (POLITY IV scores) is very low (0.08, see the figure).[1] Thus, the perception of freedom of expression is not highly correlated with other measures of political freedom.

Demographics and Personal Characteristics

Several demographic and other personal variables are also studied. The include age, gender, marital status, and educational attainment. Age ranges from 18 through 90. Marital status includes only two options: married or not. Education is broken into four categories: no education, primary education, high school, and more than high school.

Correlations Between Support for Terrorism and Perceptions of Politics and Economics in Home Country

	Age	Female	Married	Education
Support for Terrorism	-0.04	0.02	-0.07	0.00

Older people and married people are somewhat less likely to report that they support terrorism. Women appear to support terrorism slightly more than men. And, consistent with other surveys (e.g., Krueger and Maleckova 2003), education appears uncorrelated with support for terrorism.

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[1] Note that Lebanon and Ivory Coast are omitted. This is because they did not receive 2003 POLITY IV scored due to foreign occupation (Lebannon) or the collapse of central authority (Ivory Coast).

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3. Statistical Analysis

The correlations in the previous section provide an overview of the data and the relationship between support for terrorism and a variety of important covariates. However, they do not tell the whole story. These simple correlations fail to take into account the interrelationship among the independent variables, as they relate to support for terrorism.

For instance, support for terrorism is positively correlated with having a negative impression of the United States. Thus, it might be that general anti-American sentiment leads to greater support for terrorism. However, the perception that the United States is a threat to Islam is also positively correlated with support for terrorism. And there is a positive correlation between perceiving the United States to be a threat and having a negative attitude toward the United States (the correlation is 0.17). Thus, it might be that perceiving the United States to be a threat to Islam leads one both to support terror and to have a negative attitude toward the United States. To uncover this type of relationship, we need to examine the correlation between anti-American attitudes and support for terrorism, controlling for the perception of the United States as a threat to Islam.

In order to do this, we employ a statistical model that estimates the correlations between support for terrorism and each independent variable, controlling for all the other independent variables. The particular statistical model used is an ordered logit, which is an appropriate tool for dealing with the non-binary, ordered, discrete nature of the answers to the survey question on support for terrorism.

The results of the statistical analysis are reported in Appendix 2. However, the values in those tables are not, in and of themselves, very informative. To tease some substantive meaning out of the estimates, I provide a variety of simulations. Each simulation sets all of the independent variables equal to their means and then varies one independent variable. The output is the probability of an individual respondent giving each of the four possible answers to the "support terrorism" survey question. Thus, these simulations allow us to see what change in the probability a person supports terror is, on average, associated with, say, a change in a person's attitude toward the United States.

Role of Islam in Politics

In the simple correlations, support for terrorism was found to be positively correlated with two views on Islam and politics. Both people who believed Islam should play a large role in

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politics and people who believed that Islam does play a large role in the politics of their home country were more likely to support terrorism. This relationship continues to hold in the statistical model.

Simulated probabilities of attitudes toward terror as a function of attitude toward the proper role of Islam in politics
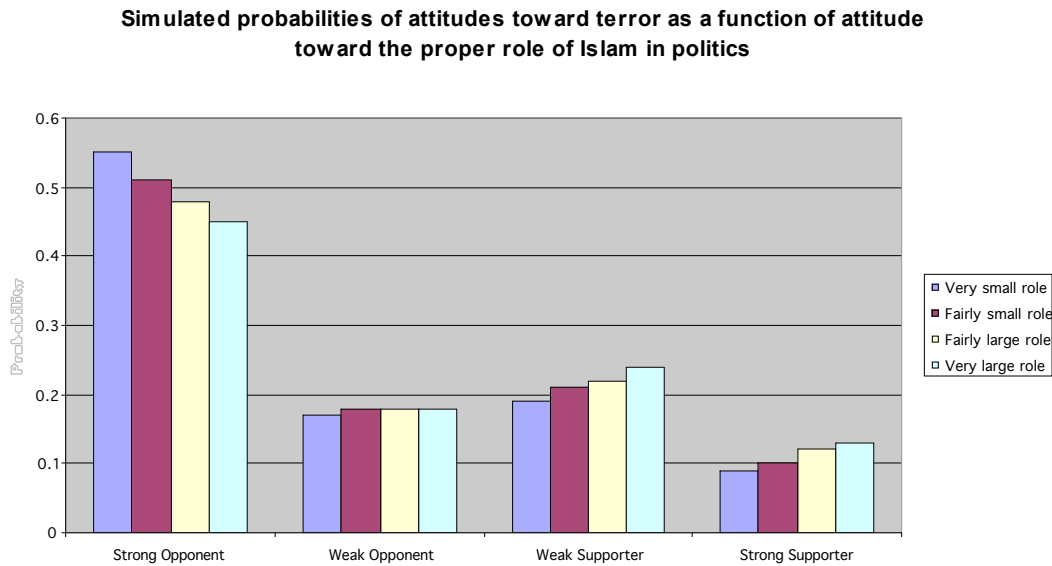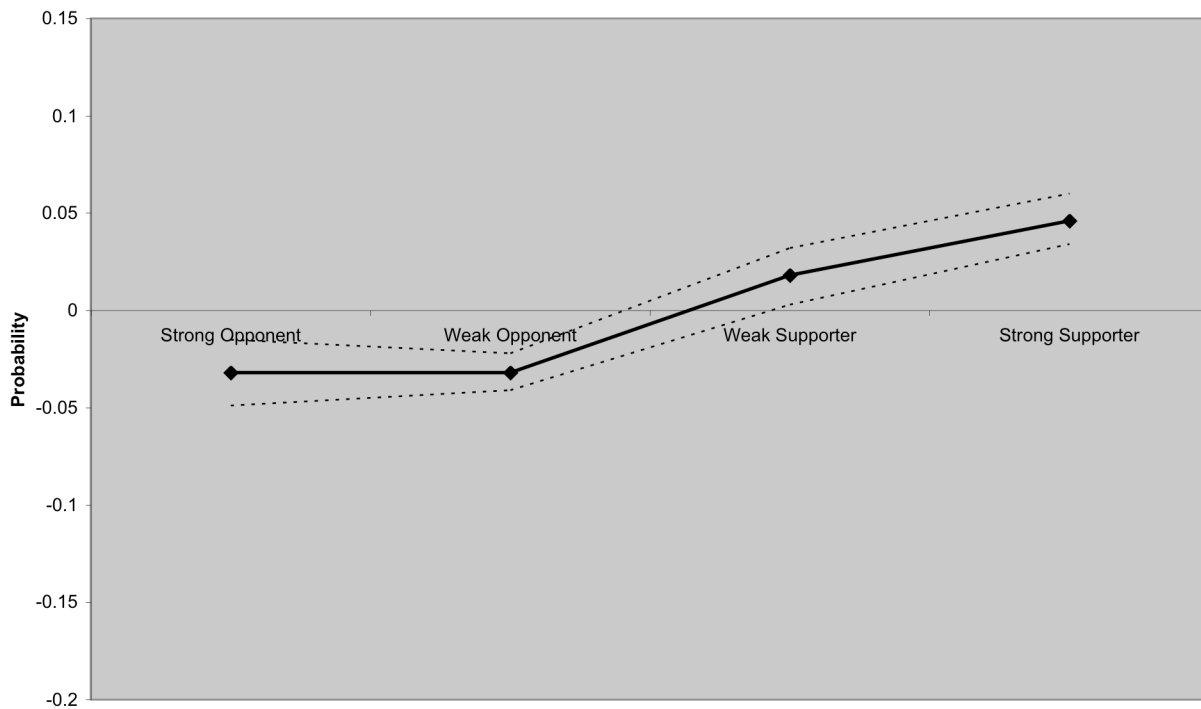

In this table (and all subsequent tables that are similar in appearance), the x-axis has four categories, representing the four possible levels of support for terrorism ("strong opponent", "weak opponent", "weak supporter", and "strong supporter"). Within each of these categories there are four bars, representing the four possible values of the independent variable in question (in this case, the respondent's view of the proper role of Islam in politics). The y-axis (i.e., the height of each bar), then represents the probability that a respondent with that attitude toward Islam (and mean values for all other independent variables) has that level of support for terrorism.

For instance, the figure shows that a person who believes that Islam should have a very small role in politics is a strong opponent of terrorism with probability of approximately 0.54, a weak opponent of terrorism with probability of approximately 0.23, a weak supporter of terrorism with probability of approximately 0.17, and a strong support for terrorism with probability of approximately 0.05.

One can see several facts in the figure. First, the majority of people in every category do not support terrorism (i.e., they are in one of the first two categories). However, people who believe that Islam should have a smaller role are more likely to be opponents of terrorism. We can see how strong this relationship in the following further figure.
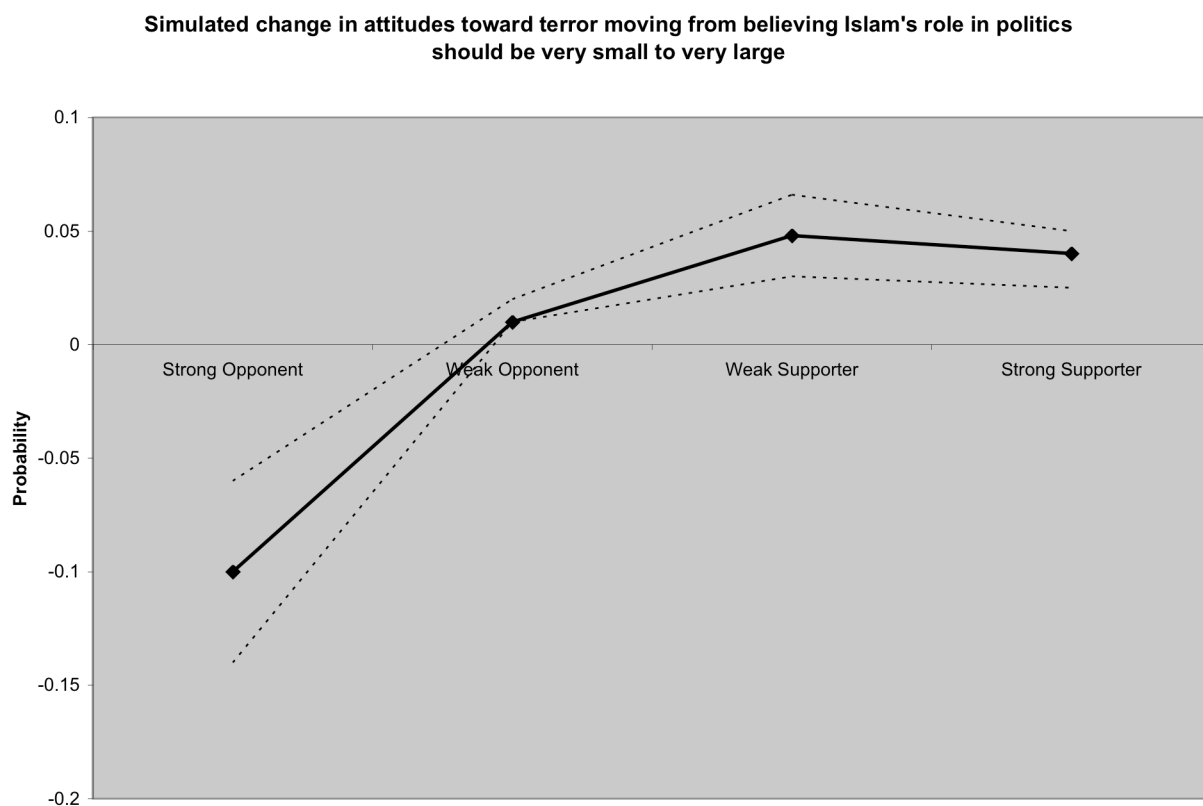
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This figure represents the change in a person's probability of being in each of the four categories of support for terror as their view of the role of Islam changes incrementally. Thus, a shift in a person's opinion of the proper role of Islam by one category (i.e., from believing it should be very small to fairly small, fairly small to fairly large, or fairly large to very large), is associated with a decrease in the likelihood that that person is in either of the "opponent of terrorism" categories and an increase in the likelihood that that person is in either of the supporter categories. Notice that while the relationships are, by and large, statistically significant (the dotted lines are 95% confidence intervals), the size of the effect is relatively small. Moving up one category in one's view of the proper role of Islam is associated with a decrease of approximately two percentage points in probability of being a strong opponent of terror and an increase of five percentage points in probability of being a strong supporter of terror.

Simulated change in attitudes toward terror associated with an incremental increase in beliefes about the proper role of Islam in politics


The final figure shows the effect of a more dramatic change in attitude toward the appropriate role of Islam. Moving from the view that Islam should play a very small role to the view that it should play a very large role is associated with a decrease in the probability of being a strong opponent of terrorism of approximately 10 percentage points and is associated with an

increase in the probability of being a strong supporter of terrorism of approximately 4 percentage points. Moreover, this change in beliefs about the proper role of Islam is also associated with a 5 percentage point increase in the probability of being a weak supporter of terror and a 1 percentage point increase in the probability of being a weak opponent of terror. Overall, then, moving from the view that Islam should play a very small role to the view that it should play a very large role is associated with a decrease in the probability of being an opponent of terrorism of approximately 9 percentage points and, therefore, is associated with an increase in the probability of being a supporter of terror of approximately 9 percentage points.

Simulated change in attitudes toward terror moving from believing Islam's role in politics should be very small to very large

It is worth noting that a similar, though slight weaker, relationship is found between support for terror and a respondent's view of the role Islam actually does play in society, as can be seen in the following figures. Moreover, and somewhat surprisingly, just as indicated by the correlation in the previous section, running the model with Islam Dissatisfaction (i.e., the role Islam should play minus the role Islam does play) yields no statistically significant relationship.

Simulated probabilities of attitudes toward terror as a function of perception of the actual role of Islam in politics
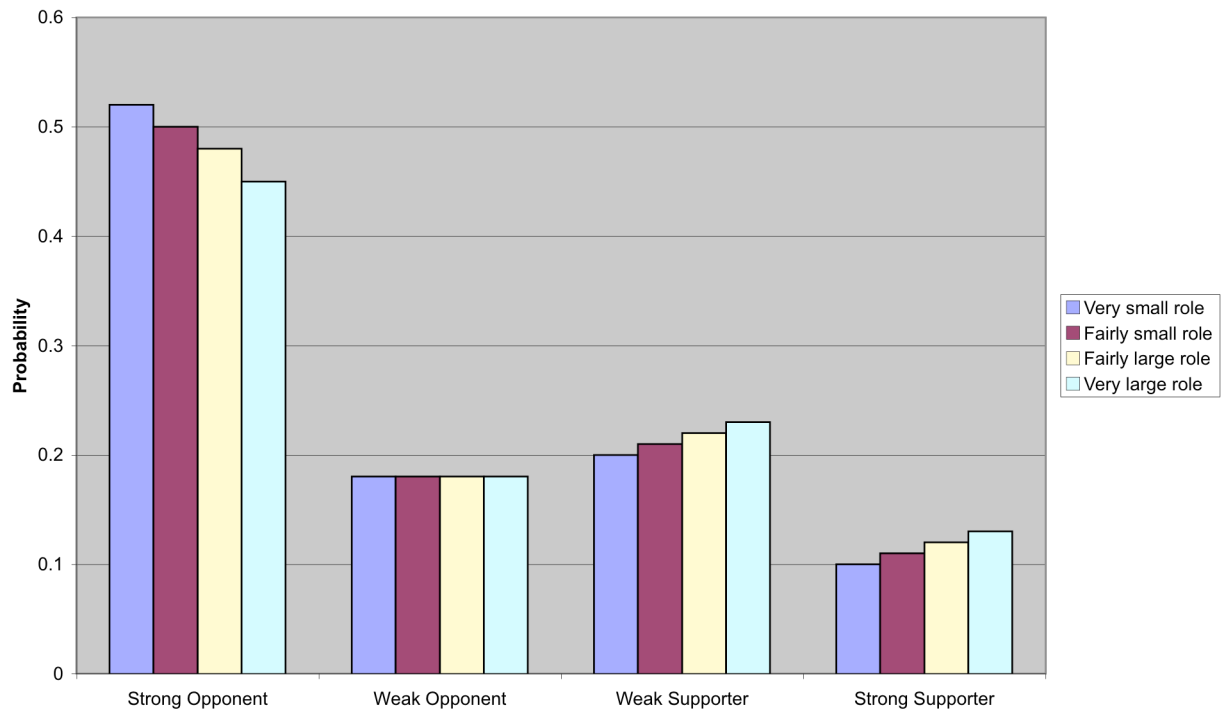
Simulated change in attitudes toward terror associated with an incremental increase in perceived role of Islam in politics
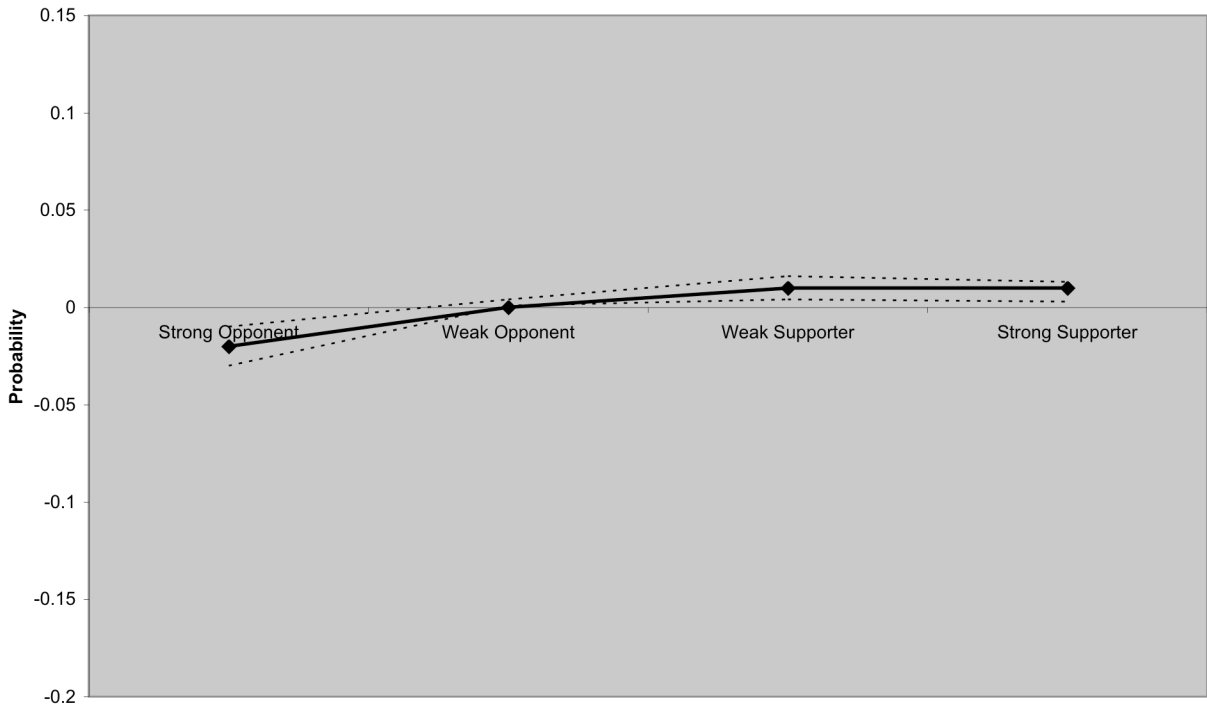
Simulated change in attitudes toward terror associated with an increase in Islam's perceived role in politics from very small to very large


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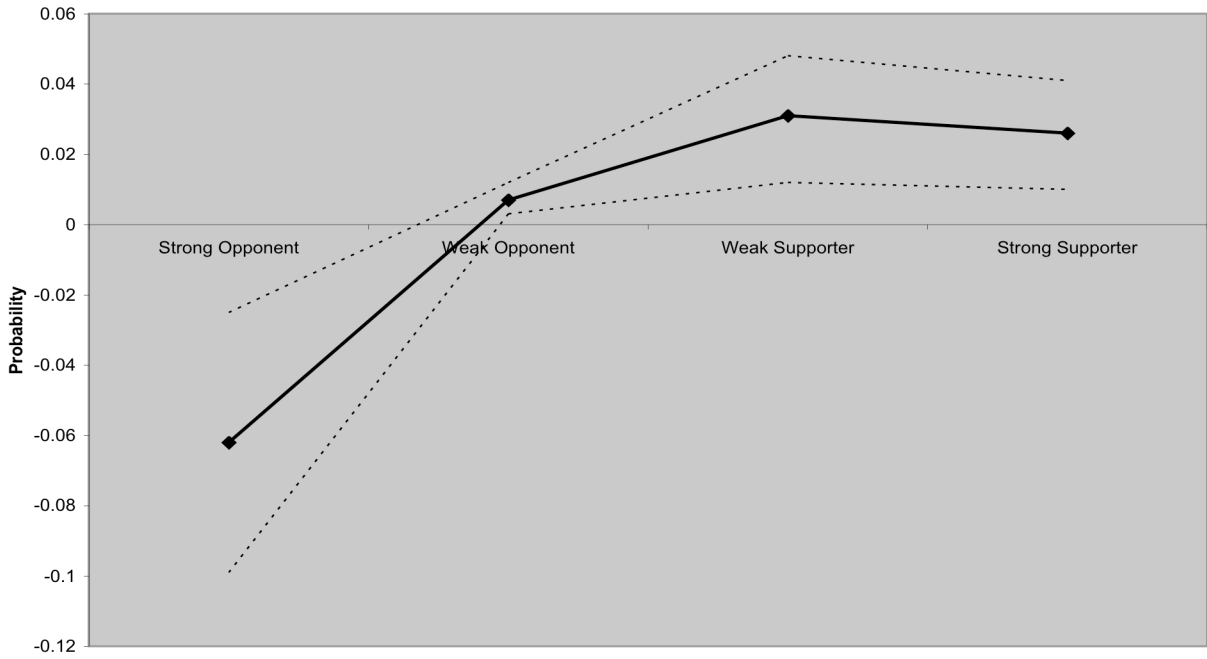
Threat to Islam

In the simple correlations from Section 2 one of the main correlates of support for terror was the perception of the existence of a threat to Islam. In particular, among the possible threats to Islam, the perception of the United States as a threat to Islam was particularly strong.

Fair and Shepherd (2006) report that a perceived threat to Islam is the largest correlate of support for terrorism. The analysis here broadly supports that conclusion, but adds some nuance. If one runs a statistical model only including threat perception as an independent variable, it is positively correlated with support for terrorism in a relatively strong way. However, if one also includes a variable specifically measuring whether a respondent perceives the United States as a threat to Islam, the general perception of a threat to Islam disappears as a statistically significant correlate of support for terrorism.

The following figure shows the predicted probability of being in each category of support for terrorism as a function of a general perception of a threat to Islam existing, controlling for perceiving the U.S. to be a threat. It is fairly clear from the figure that there is no statistically significant relationship.

Simulated probability of attitudes toward terror as a function of perceived threat to Islam
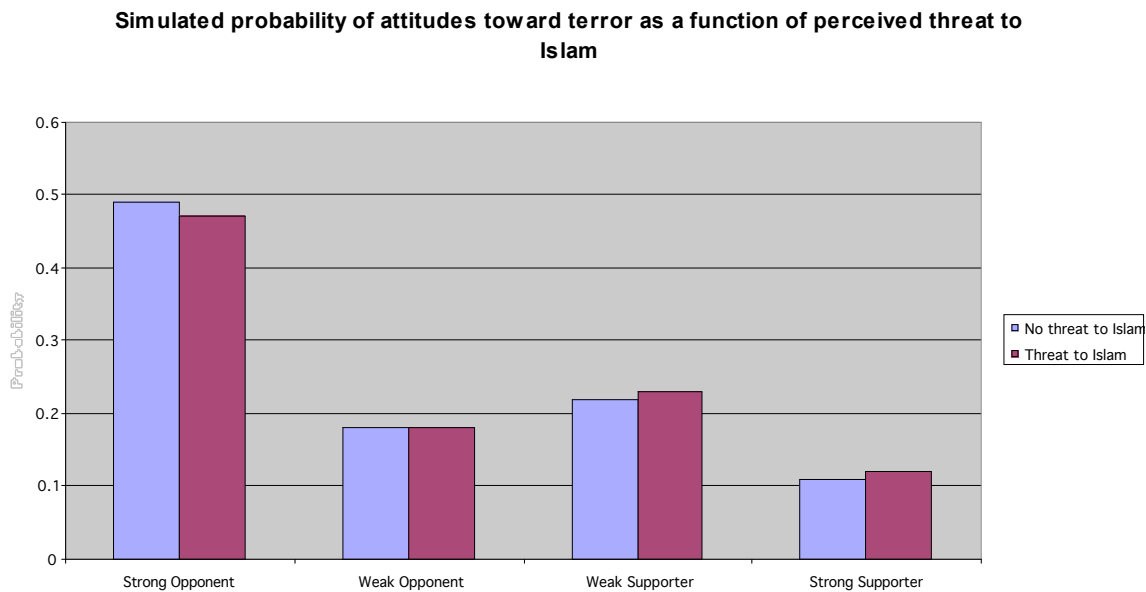
The following figure, showing the change in predicted probability moving from being a person who perceives no threat to a person who perceives a threat to Islam, further demonstrates that this variable is not a statistically significant correlate (all estimated changes have confidence intervals that include zero, except the change in probability of becoming a weak supporter, which is just barely positive).

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Simulated change in probabilities of attitudes toward terror moving from no perceived threat to a perceived threat to Islam
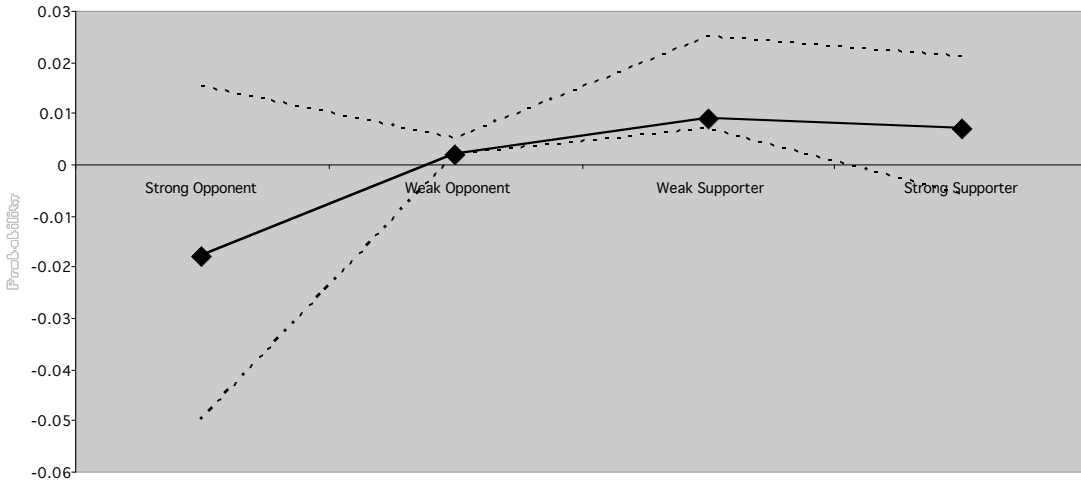
Although perception of a general threat to Islam is not a major correlate of support for terrorism in the statistical model, perceived threat to Islam does matter. The statistical analysis, however, highlights that it is the perception of a particular threat—one from the United States— that is most strongly correlated with support for terrorism.

The next figure shows the probability of being in various categories of support for terrorism as a function of whether or not a respondent perceives the United States to be a threat to Islam. Those who do not perceive the U.S. to be a threat are more likely to be weak opponents or weak supporters of terrorism. Those who view the United States as a threat are more likely to be strong supporters of terrorism.
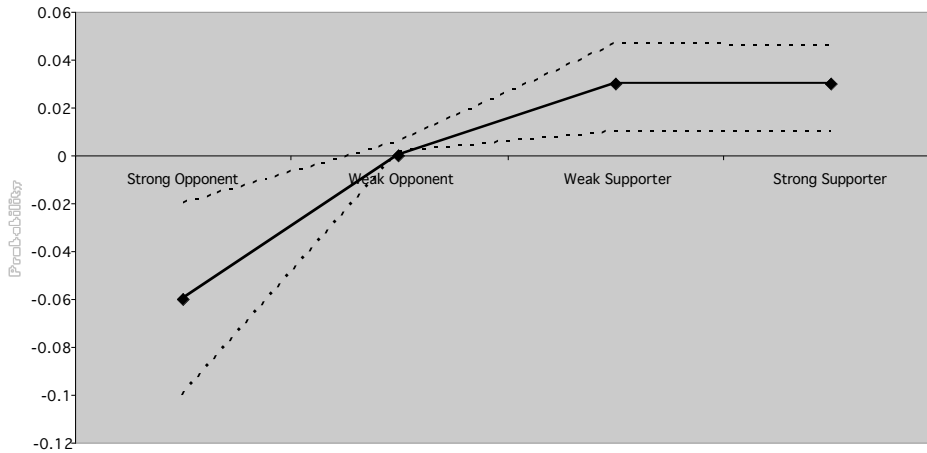
Simulated probabilities of attitudes toward terror as a function of preceived U.S. threat to Islam
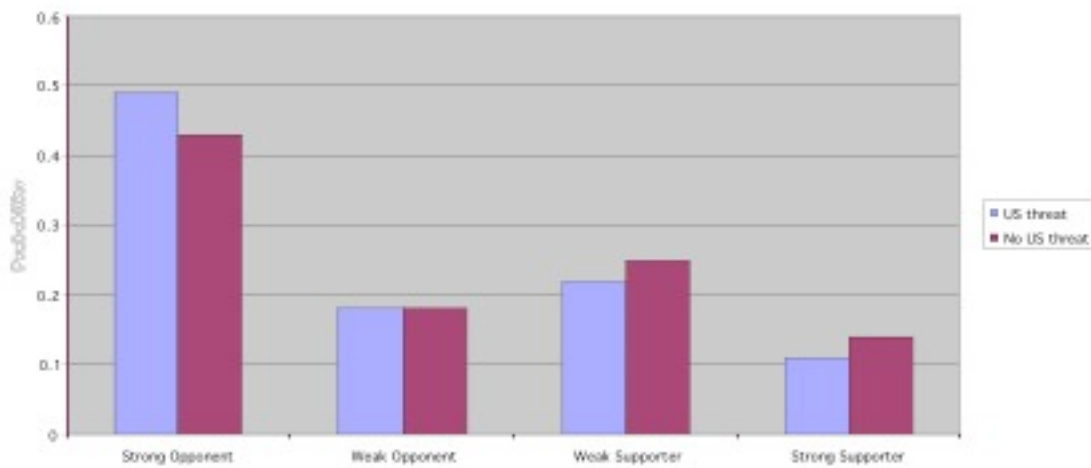
The strength of these relationships is further illustrated in the following figure. In particular, changing from a respondent who does not perceive the U.S. to be a threat to one who does perceive the U.S. to be a threat is associated with a statistically significant change in the probability of being in only one of the four categories of terror support. In particular, those who perceive the United States to be a threat to Islam are approximately 5 percentage points more likely to be supporters of terrorism than those who do not perceive the United States to be a threat to Islam, who are more likely to be strong opponents.
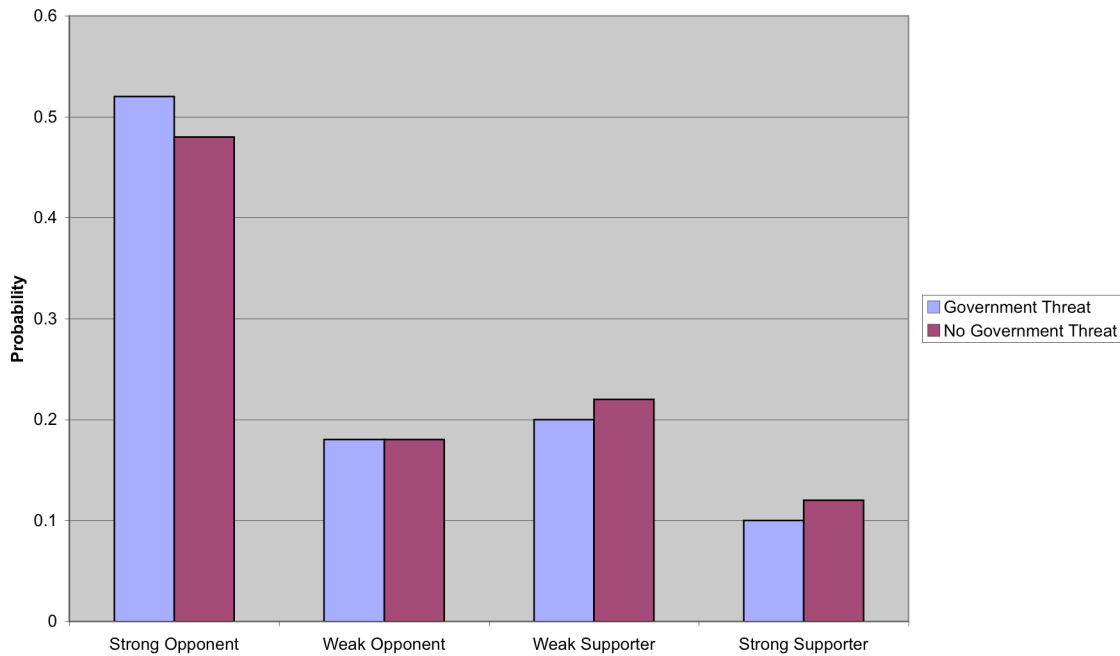
Simulated change in probability of attitudes toward terror moving from no perceived threat to Islam from the U.S. to a perceived threat to Islam from the U.S.

Surprisingly, as can be seen in the following figure, a respondent's perception that his or her home government is a threat to Islam is associated with a decrease in support for terrorism.

Simulated probabilities of attitudes toward terror as a function of preceived government threat to Islam

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The size and significance of this relationship can be seen in the following figure.

Simulated change in probability of attitudes toward terror moving from no perceived threat to Islam to a perceived threat to Islam from the home Government
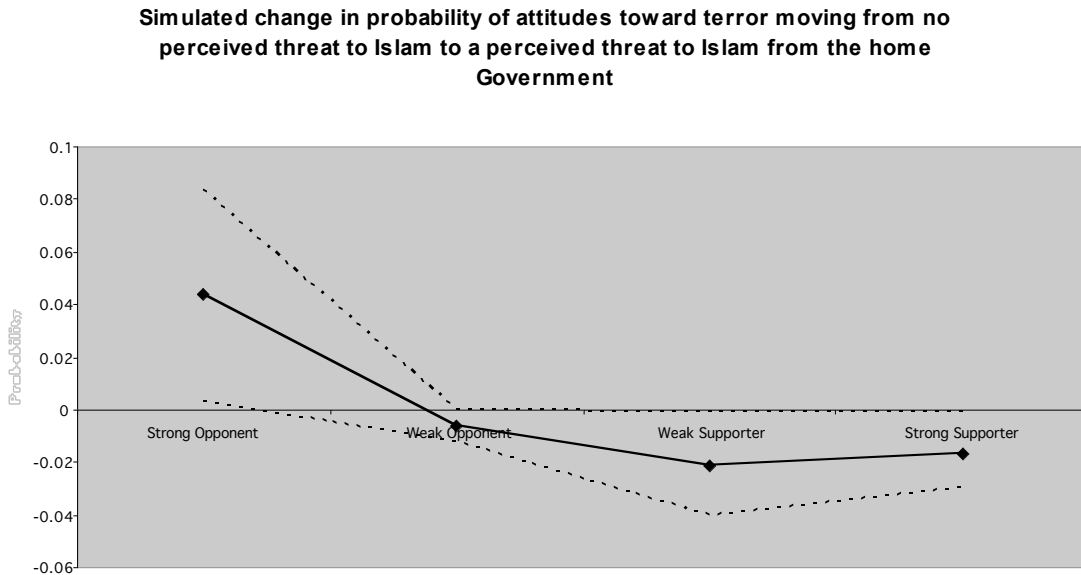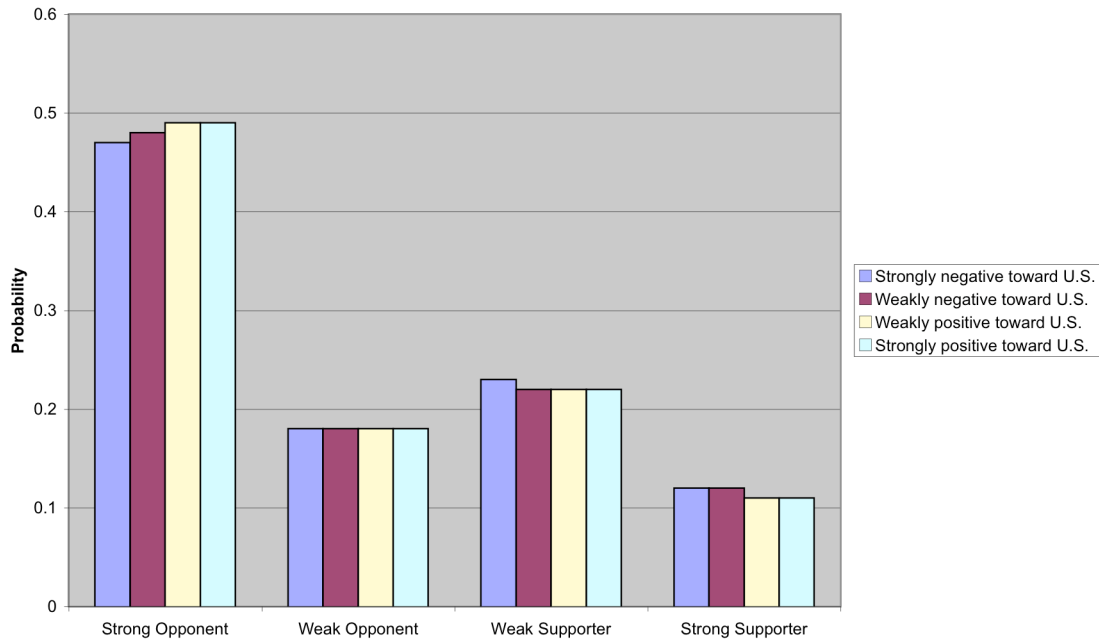

Attitudes toward the United States

Given that the perception of the United States as a threat to Islam is positively correlated with strong support for terrorism, it seems intuitive that a respondent's attitude toward the United States, more generally, would also be correlated with support for terrorism.

The next figure shows the intuitive relationship. Respondents who have a strongly positive attitude toward the United States are more likely than average to be strong opponents of terrorism and less likely than average to be strong supporters of terrorism. Respondents who have a strongly negative attitude toward the United States are more likely than average to be strong supporters of terrorism and less likely than average to be strong opponents. However, the relationship is very weak and is not statistically significant.

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Simulated probabilities of attitudes toward terror as a function of attitude toward the United States


The following figures demonstrate the size of the change in attitude toward terrorism associated with incremental changes in attitudes toward the United States. Such incremental changes in attitude toward the United States are associated with small, statistically insignificant changes in attitude toward terrorism.

Simulated change in attitudes toward terror moving from strongly negative to weakly negative attitude toward the United States
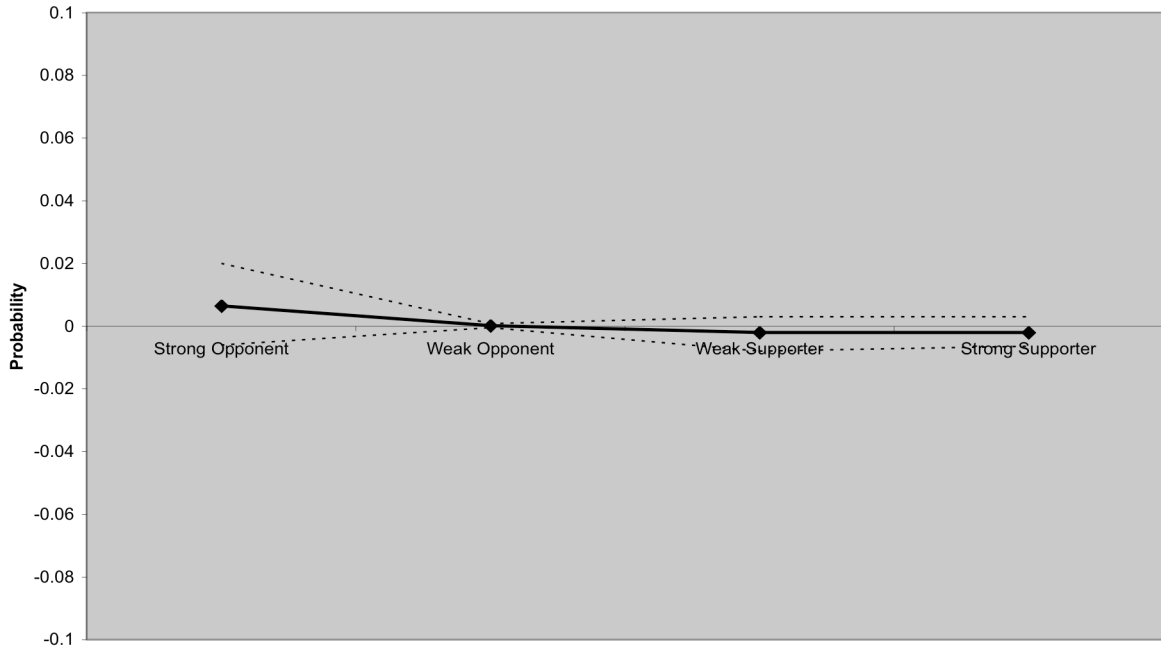
While the slope is in the intuitive direction (better attitudes toward the U.S. are correlated with less support for terrorism), even a larger change in attitude toward the United States is not associated with a statistically significant change in attitude toward terrorism, as can be seen in the following figure.
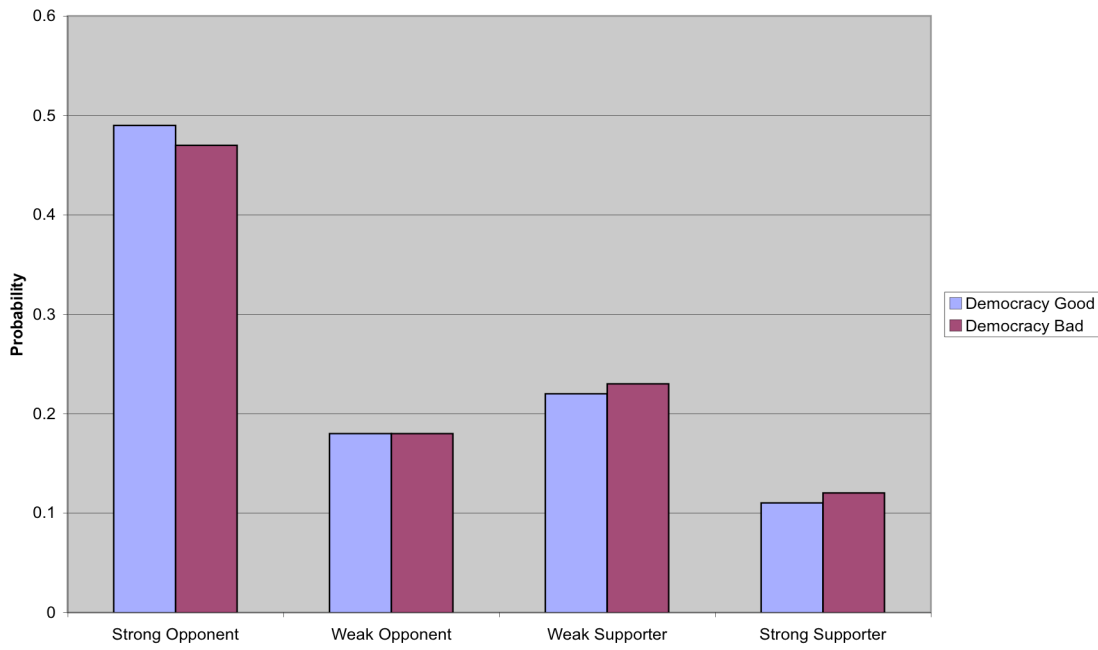
Simulated change in attitudes toward terror moving from a strongly negative to a strongly positive attitude toward the United States
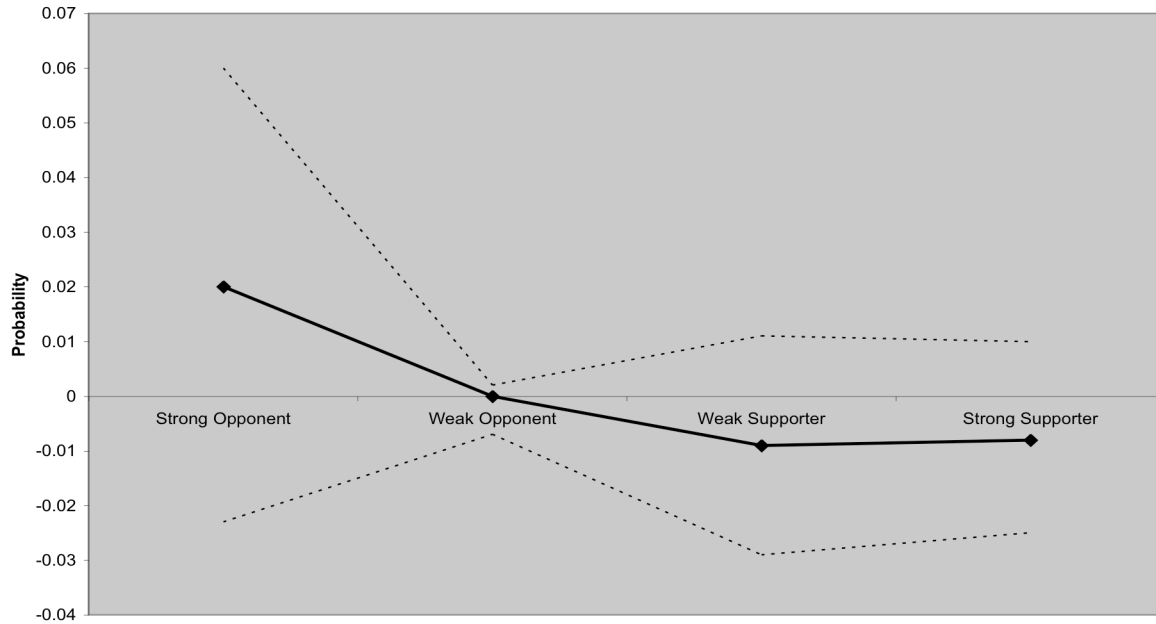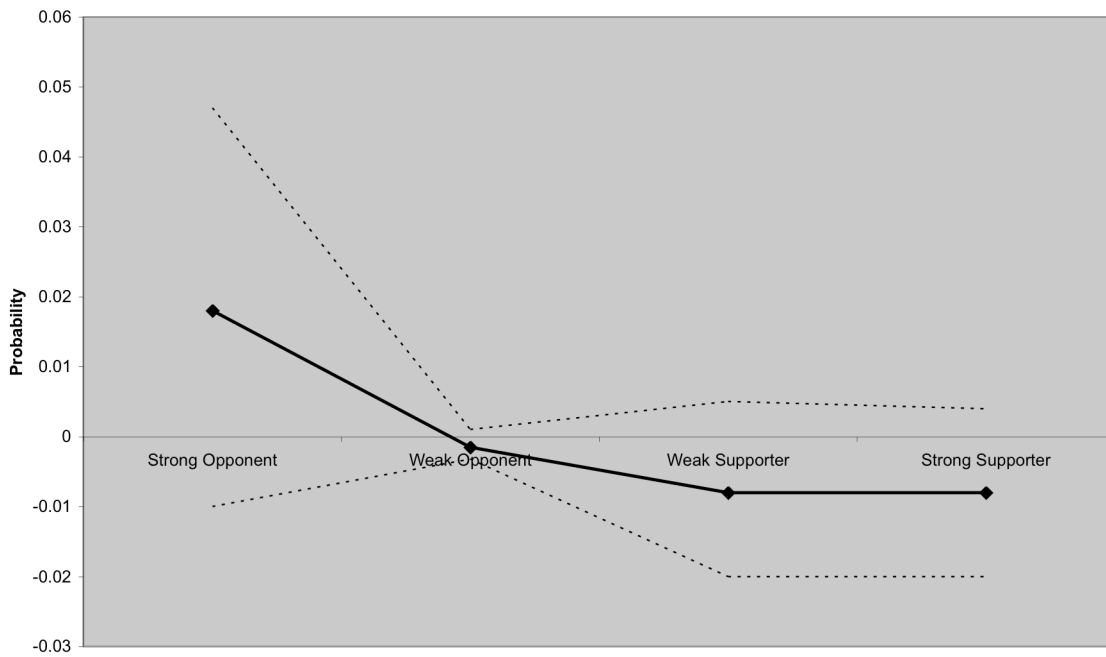

Democracy

As can be seen in the following figures, respondents with positive attitudes toward democracy seem to be slightly less supportive of terrorism. However, the relationship is weak and there is no statistically significant relationship. Overall, attitudes toward democracy as a system of governance for the respondent's home country, and support for terrorism are close to uncorrelated.

Simulated probabilities of attitudes toward terror as a function of attitude toward democracy


Simulated change in attitudes toward terror as attitude toward democracy changes from negative to positve

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Free Expression

Perhaps more surprising is the relationship between support for terrorism and the perception of free expression. As can be seen in the following figure, respondents who perceive themselves to have free expression are more likely to support terrorism.

Simulated probabilities of attitudes toward terrorism as a function of perceived level of free expression
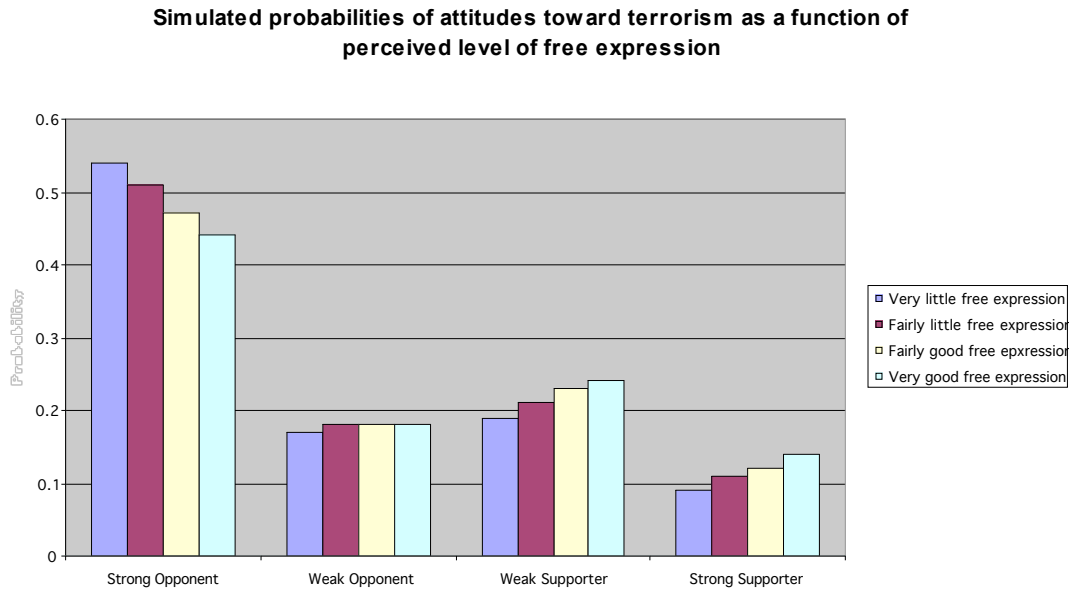
The strength of this relationship can be seen in the following figures. A one category change in perceived free expression (e.g., from very little to fairly little free expression) is associated with an approximately three percentage point increase in being a weak or strong supporter of terrorism and an approximately three and a half percentage point decrease in being a strong opponent of terrorism.

Simulated change in attitude toward terror associated with an incremental increase in perceived freedom of expression
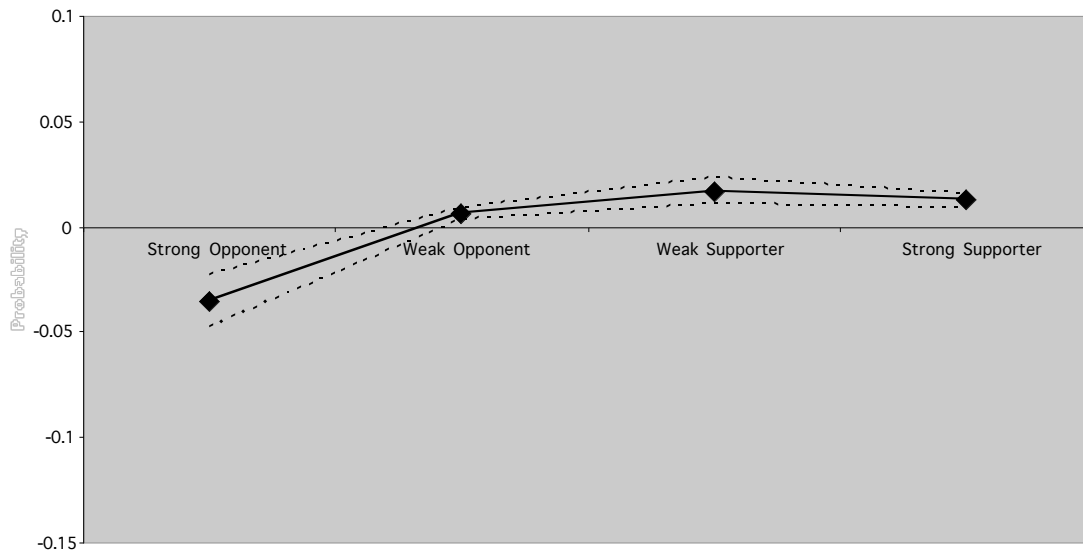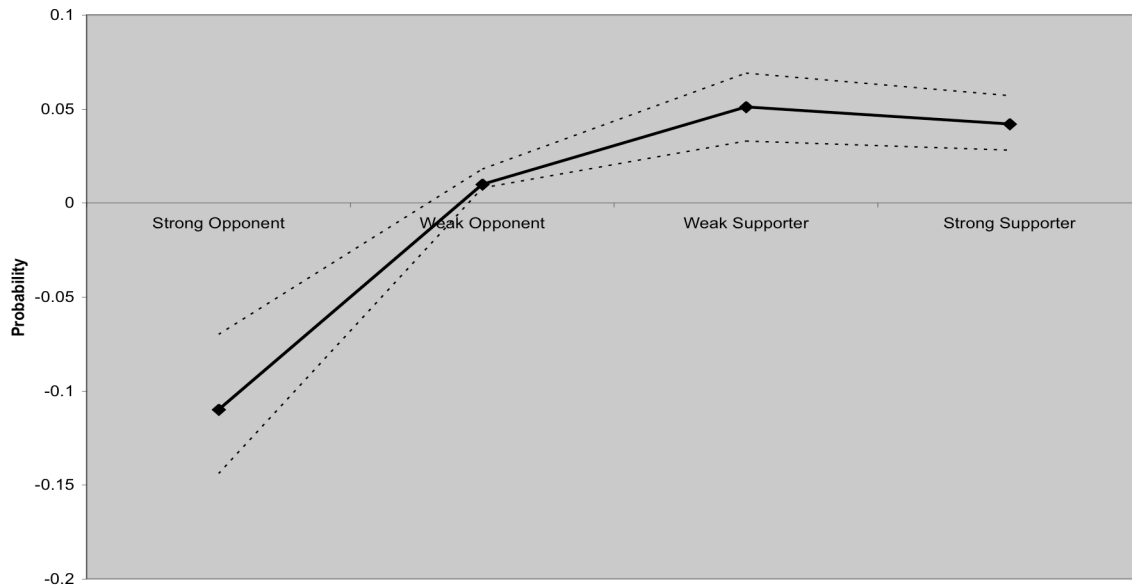

A larger change in perceived freedom of expression (from very little to very good free expression) is associated with an approximately four percentage point increase in being a strong supporter of terrorism and an approximately eleven percentage point decrease in being a strong opponent of terror. Moreover, the probability of being a weak supporter of terrorism increases by the approximately five percentage points. Thus, overall, this change in perceived freedom of expression is associated with an approximately nine point increase in the probability of being some type of supporter of terrorism.

This result is somewhat surprising. One possible interpretation is that, when people perceive themselves to have freedom of expression, they are more inclined to admit their support for terror.

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Simulated change in attitudes toward terror moving from very little to very good free expression
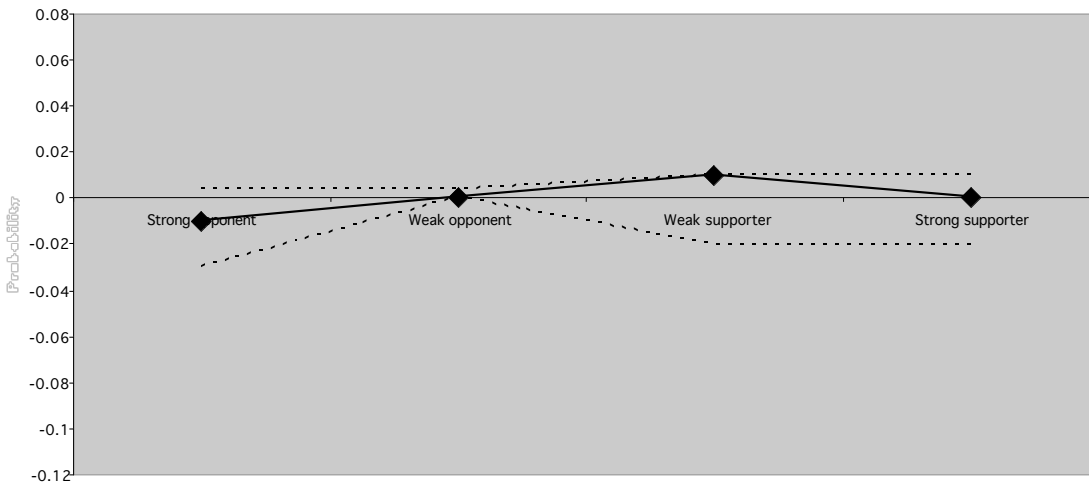

The Economy

In the correlations in the previous section, perception of the state of the economy was basically uncorrelated with support for terrorism. That relationship persists in the statistical model. As can be seen in the figure, there is almost no correlation between the two. Somewhat surprisingly, to the extent that there is any relationship, people who believe the economy is strong are less likely to oppose terrorism.

**Simulated probabilities of attitudes toward terror as a function of view of the state of the economy**
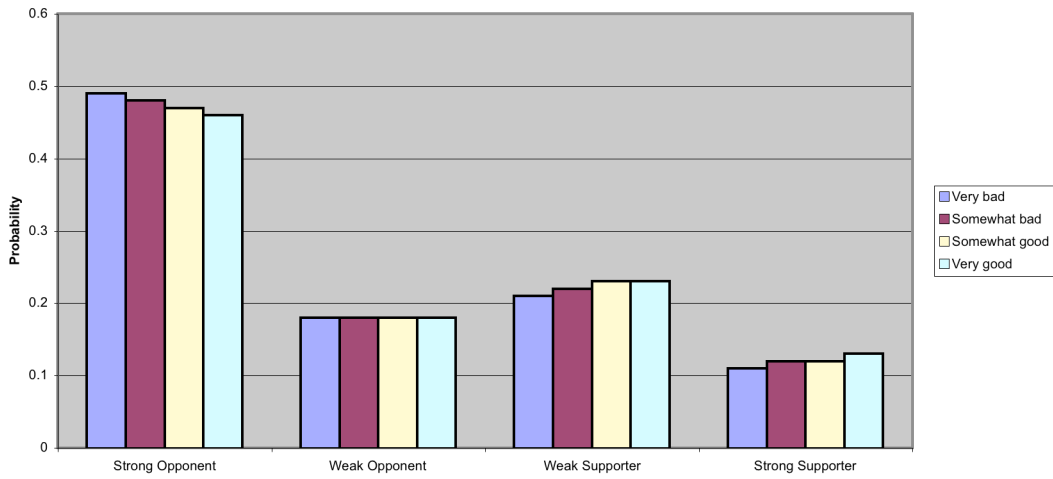
As is clear from the following figure, an incremental improvement in perception of the economy has a small and statistically insignificant relationship with support for terrorism.

Simulated change in probability of attitudes toward terror associated with an incremental improvement in perception of the state of the economy

Even a large change in perception of the economy (from very bad to very good), has no statistically significant relationship with support for terrorism.

Simulated change in probability of attitudes toward terror moving from perceiving the economy as very bad to very good
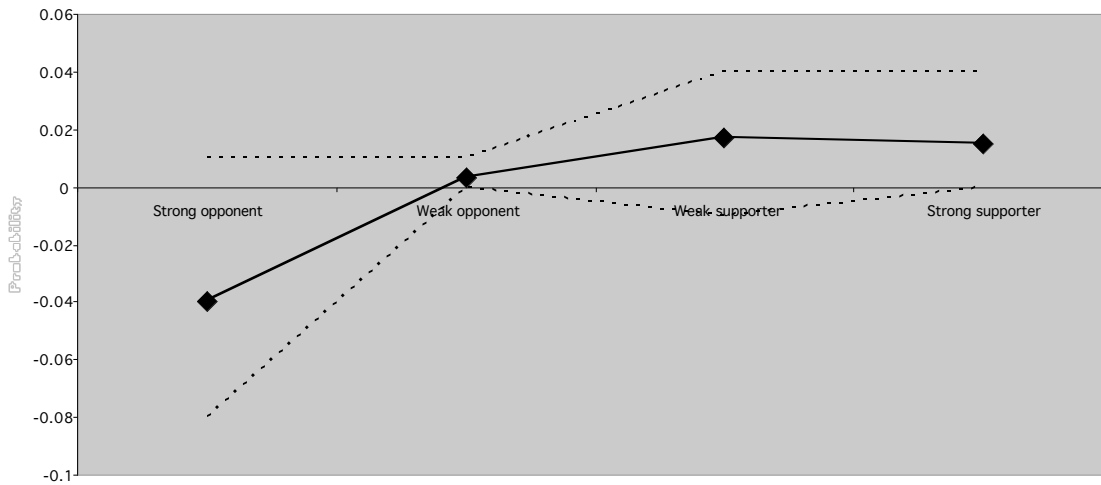

State Inefficiency

The literature on political violence has emphasized state capacity as a determinant of civil unrest (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Here, we examine how perceptions of the level of state efficiency correlate with support for terrorism.

The figure indicates that there does seem to be some relationship. Respondents who perceive the government to be highly efficient are less likely to support terror and respondents who perceive the government to be inefficient are more likely to support terrorism. However, the relationship is fairly small.

Simulated probabilities of attitudes toward terror as a function of perception of state efficiency
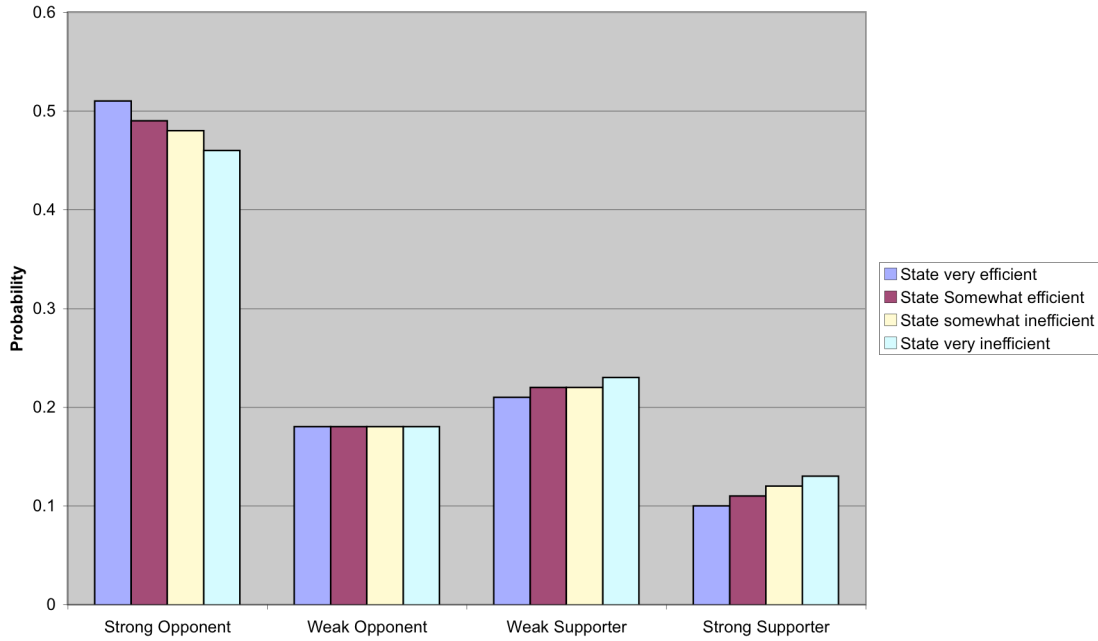
How an incremental change in perception of state capacity is related to support for terror can be see in the following figures. While the results are statistically significant, all of the estimated changes are very small. A small decrease in a respondent's view of the state's efficiency is associated with an approximately one and a half percentage point decrease in the probability of being an opponent of terror.

Simulated change in probability of attitudes toward terror moving from perceiving the state as very efficient to somewhat efficient
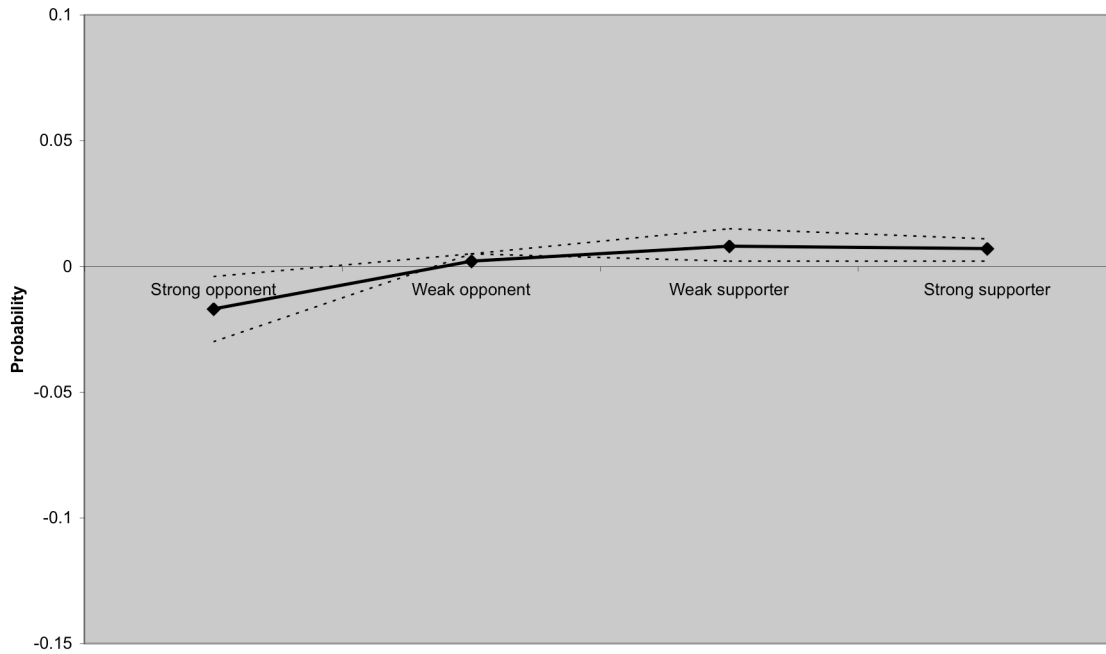
The effect of larger changes in perception of state efficiency can be seen in the next figure. Moving from perceiving the state as very efficient to very inefficient is associated with a decrease in the probability of being a strong opponent of terrorism of approximately five percentage points (plus or minus four) and an increase in the probability of being a weak or strong supporter of approximately four and a half percentage points.

Simulated change in probability of attitudes toward terror moving from perceiving the state as very efficient to very inefficient
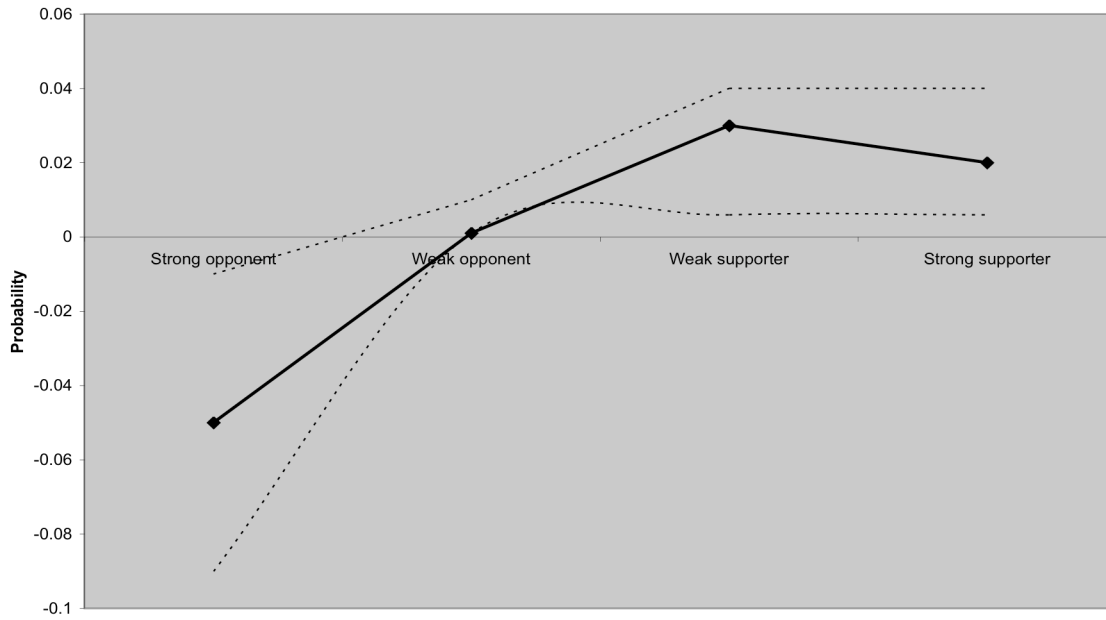

Education

Consistent with earlier surveys (Krueger and Maleckova 2003), support for terrorism seems to be constant across education groups. This can be seen in the following figure.

Simulated probabilities of attitudes toward terror by education
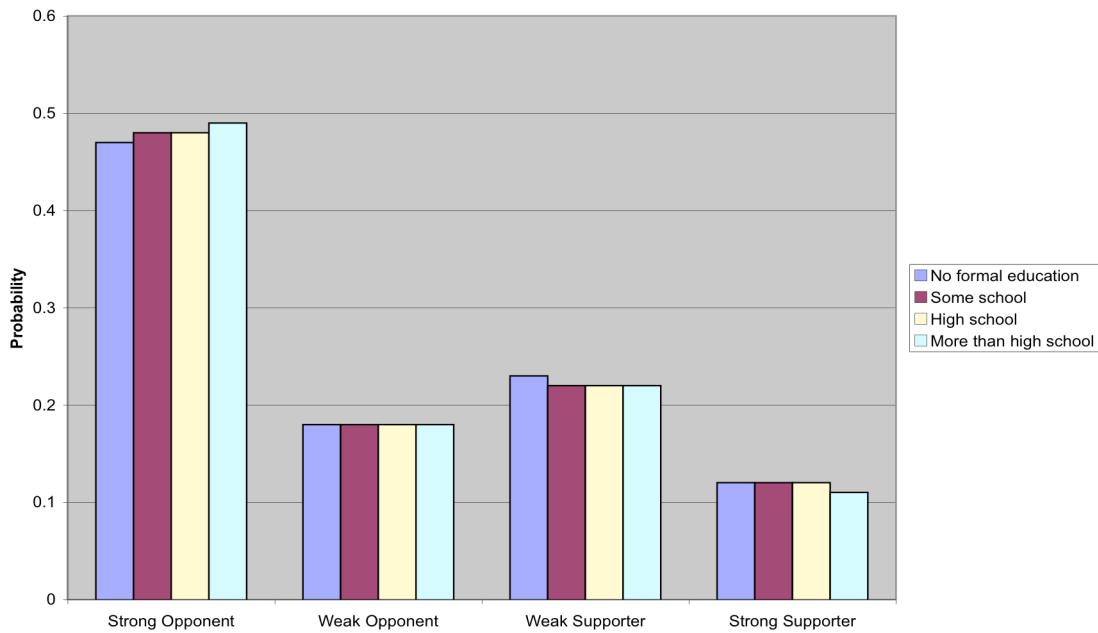
The absence of any relationship between education and support for terrorism can be seen most starkly in the following figure. It shows changes in the probability of holding each of the various positions with regard to terror as a result of a large change in education—from having no education to having an education beyond high school. Not only is the relationship statistically insignificant, but by and large the point estimates are zero.

Simulated change in attitudes toward terror moving from no education to more than high school
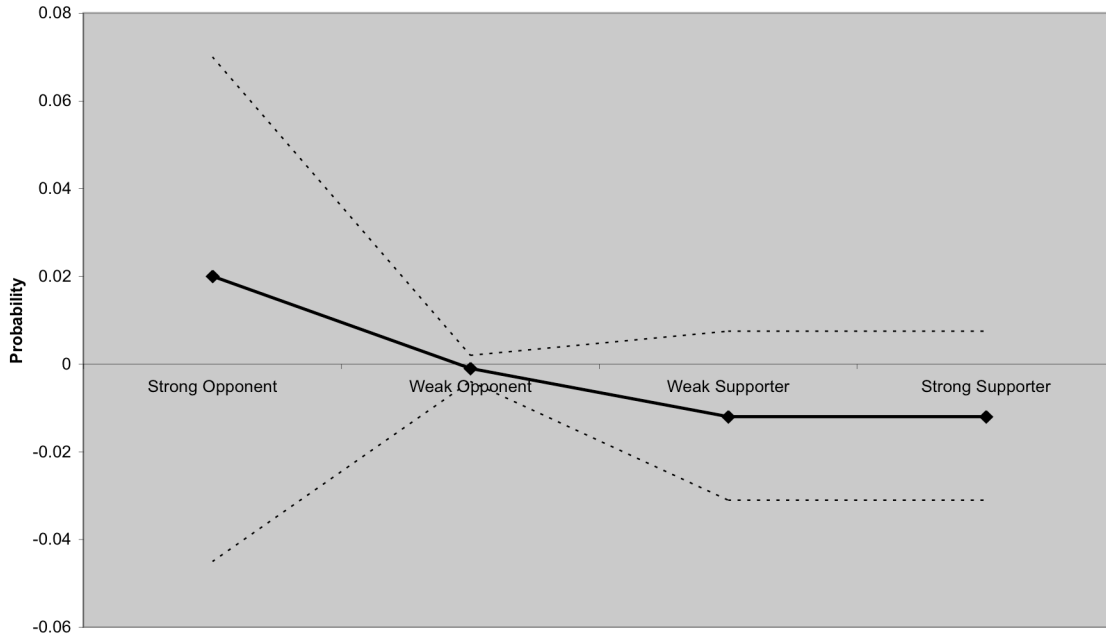
Demographics and Personal Characteristics

The model also includes several demographic characteristics of respondents. Consistent with Fair and Shepherd (2006), who study the same data (but aggregate up to a binary "support terror" or "oppose terror" dependent variable) we find that women are more likely to be weak or strong supporters terror. Interestingly, women are also slightly more likely to be weak opponents (this does not show up in Fair and Shepherds binary analysis). However, they are about 3 percentage points less likely to be strong opponents of terror.

Simulated probability of attitudes toward terror by gender
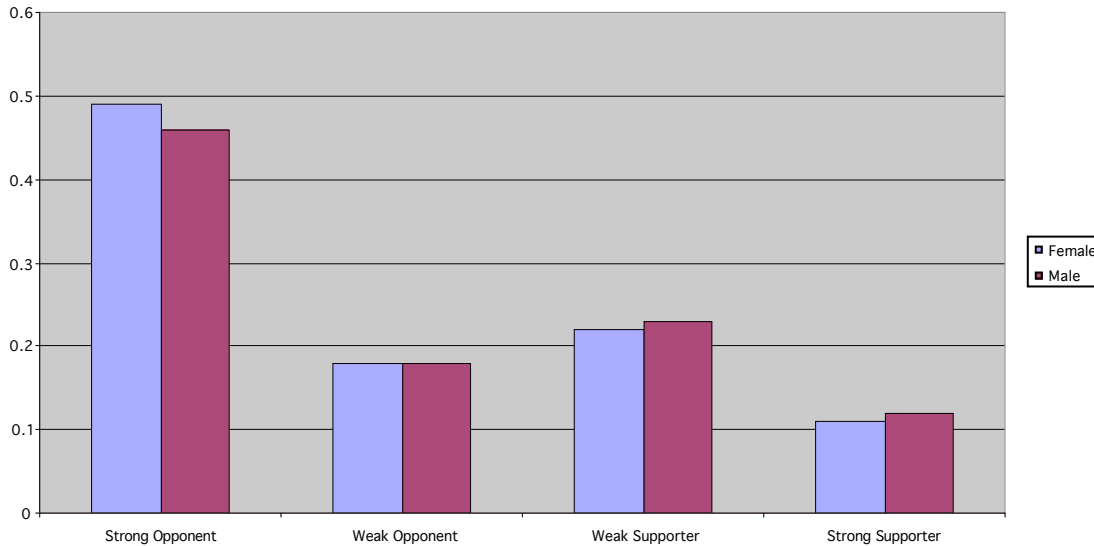
Simulated change in probabilities of attitudes toward terror associated with changing from male to female
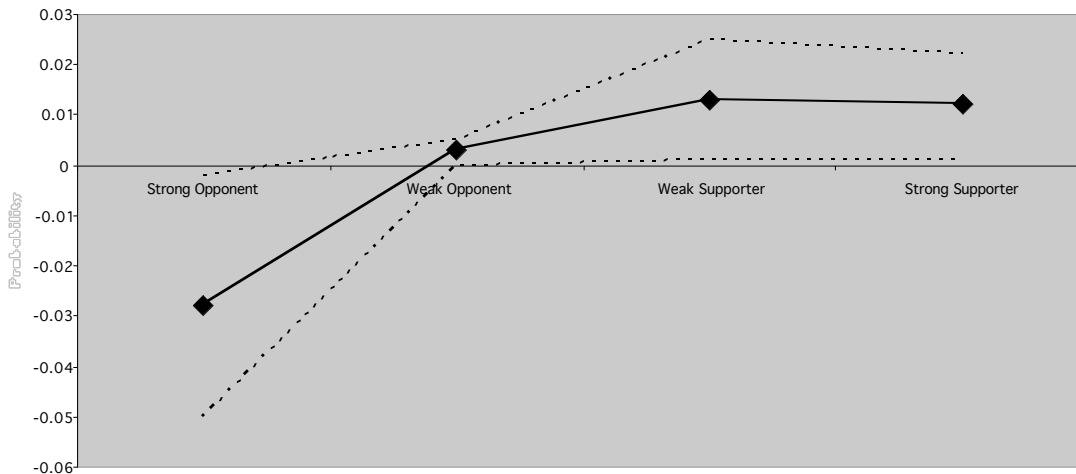
Age is negatively correlated with support for terrorism, as shown in the following figures. A change in age from 20 to 60 years old is associated with an approximately seven percentage point increase in probability of being weakly or strongly opposed to terrorism and an eight percentage point increase in the probability of being a strong opponent of terrorism. The negative correlation of age and support for terror could be a true age effect (older people are less likely to support terror) or it could be a generational effect (people born in the 1940s are

less likely to support terror than people born in the 1980s). Since these data are cross-sectional, it is not possible to adjudicate between these two accounts in this analysis.

Simulated probability of attitudes toward terror by age
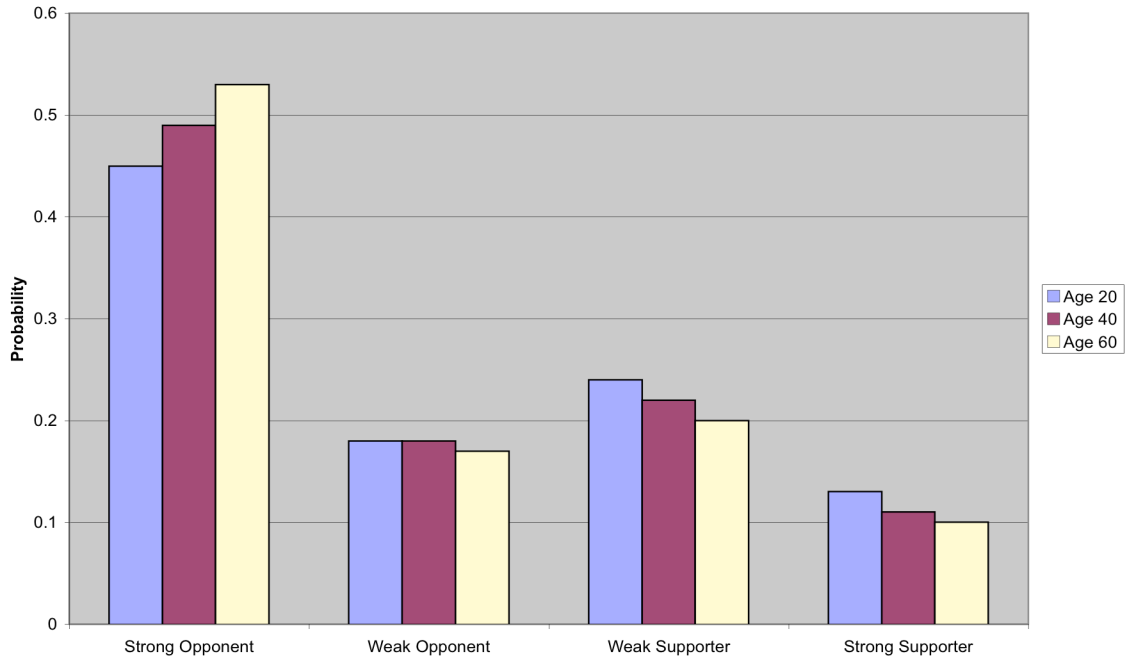
Simulated change in attitudes toward terror moving from age 20 to 60

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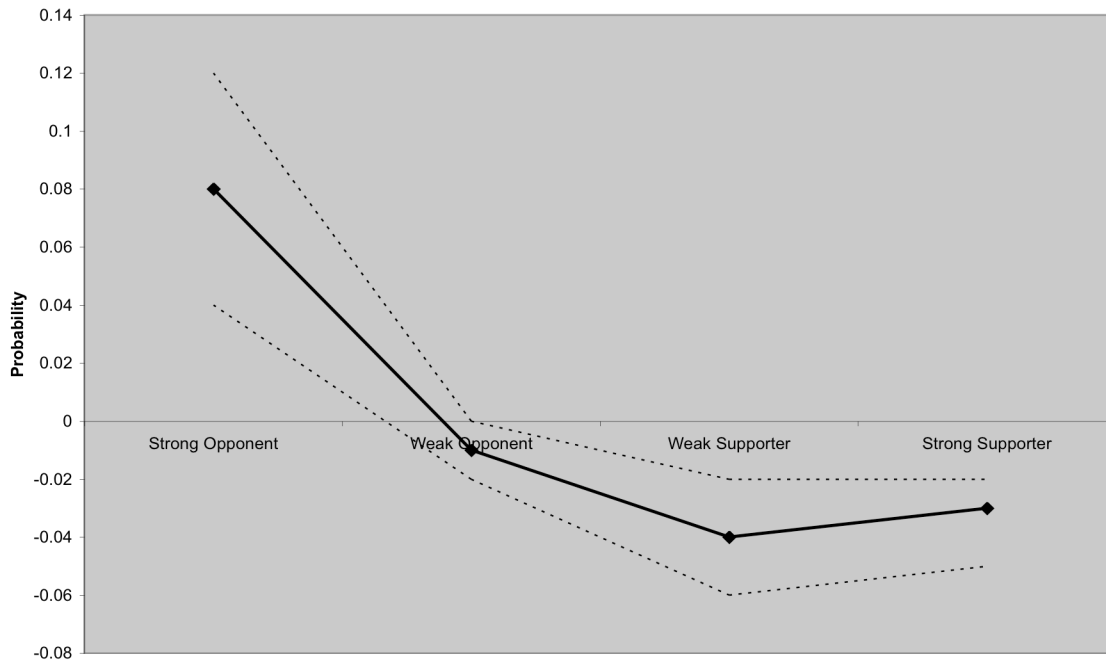
Marital status is also negatively correlated with support for terrorism, though, as the figures show, the effect is small (no more than 2 percentage points) and statistically insignificant.

Simulated probabilities of attitudes toward terror by marital status
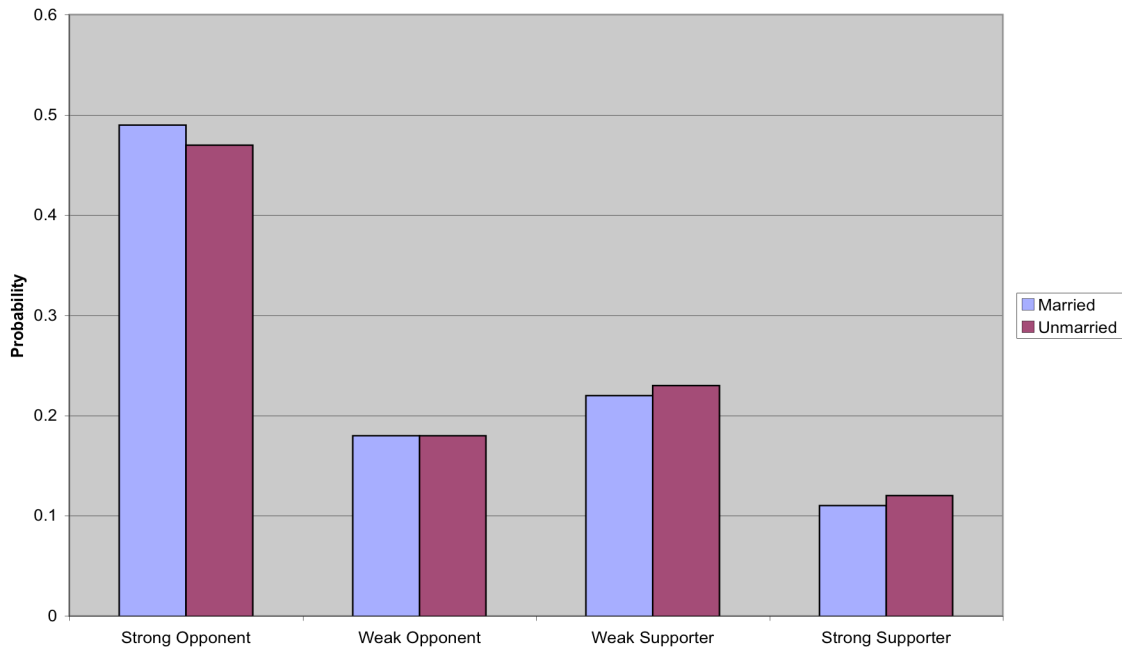
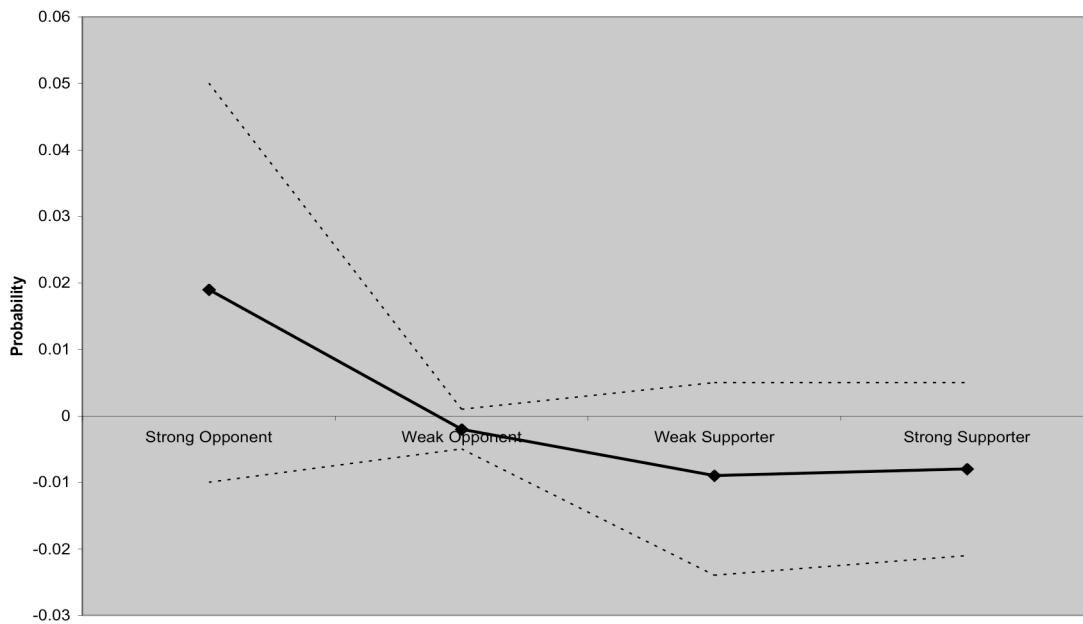**Simulated change in attitudes toward terror moving from unmarried to married**

4. Interpreting the Results

The following table summarizes the basic results described in the previous section. In general, the findings were that the strongest correlates of support for terrorism were respondents' attitudes toward the United States as a threat to Islam and respondents' views of the role of Islam in politics. As notable, however, are the independent variables that were not correlated with support for terrorism, including attitude toward both the United States and democracy, education, and perceptions of the economy.

Summary of Correlates of Terrorism

Correlation	Uncorrelated
Islam should play large role in politics (+)	General threat to Islam
Islam does play large role in politics (+)	Religious threat to Islam
U.S. threat to Islam (+)	Attitude toward the United States
Home government threat to Islam (-)	Attitude toward democracy
Perceived free expression (+)	Perceived state of the economy
State efficiency (-)	Education
Age (-)	Marital status
Female (+)	

It is important to recall, in interpreting the statistical analysis, that correlation does not equal causation. Thus, the results in the previous section should not be given a simple causal interpretation.

One example of the problems of causal interpretation was already highlighted in the discussion of the results regarding free expression. An incremental increase in perceived freedom of expression is associated with a four percentage point increase in the likelihood of being either a weak or strong supporter of terrorism. However, one ought not conclude that a country that increases the level (or perception) of freedom of expression will therefore experience an increase in support for terrorism. As discussed earlier, the direction of causality could run the other direction; people who perceive themselves to have free expression may be more willing to give voice to their support for terrorism.

A similar warning holds for other variables that show a strong relationship to support for terrorism. The analysis showed a strong positive relationship between support for terrorism and the belief that terrorism should play a major role in politics and perceiving the United States as a threat to Islam. It may well be that people support terrorism because they perceive there to be a threat to Islam from the United States. But the relationship could also work the other way.

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Terrorism is, among other things, a tool of propaganda. One of the key messages of Islamic terrorists is anti-Americanism. Thus, if terrorism is an effective tool of propaganda, it may be that people who support terrorism (for whatever reason) end up having strongly anti-American sentiments because they are persuaded by the terrorists' message. Another, related, explanation argues that people who support terrorism have a psychological need to justify this support. As a result, they adopt views that "rationalize" their support for terrorism. Thus, while they may perceive their support for terrorism to be caused by their anti-American views, the opposite might be the case—they may have adopted anti-Americanism to justify support for terror. Under either of these alternative interpretations, anti-Americanism does not cause support for terror, support for terror causes anti-Americanism.

A similar account can be given of the relationship between support for terrorism and the view that Islam should play a major role in politics. Again, one plausible interpretation is that people support terrorism because they want Islam to have a large role in politics and they view terrorism as a means to achieve that goal. Another possibility, however, is that people who support terror find themselves listening to messages, and interacting with people, who push them toward the view that Islam should play a large role in politics. Thus, the causal relationship, again, might be reversed.

The problem of causal interpretation means that one cannot draw simple policy lessons from this analysis. For instance, to conclude that this analysis implies that fostering favorable views of the United States' attitude toward Islam would decreases support for terrorism would be an over-interpretation. All that can be concluded is that support for terror and this form of anti-Americanism seem to be positively correlated. We do not know what interaction of actions and beliefs causes that positive correlation.

Care should also be taken with respect to the scope of the questions that were asked in the survey. The survey only asks people whether they support terrorism. Thus, one should not, for example, interpret the lack of correlation between support for terrorism and perception of the economy or support for democracy, as implying that the economy or democracy have no effect on terrorism. At the most basic level, this analysis speaks only to the question of ideological support for terrorism. Willingness to support terrorism, and willingness to become a terrorist, are quite different phenomena. It might well be that, say, economic perceptions do not affect support for terrorism, but they might nonetheless affect willingness to actually mobilize for violence (Bueno de Mesquita 2005).

Finally, the survey itself poses significant problems. Most strikingly, the question on support for terrorism conflates a variety of issues: defense of Islam from its enemies, suicide violence and other forms of violence, attacks on civilians, etc. As a result, it is not entirely clear how to interpret answers to this question. Respondents may be answering any of a variety of questions (do they support "violence against civilian targets," "suicide bombings," defending "Islam from its enemies"?).

Not only does the ambiguity of the question make interpretation difficult, it also raises questions about how robust some of the correlations identified here may be. The clearest example of this is the strong positive correlation between support for terrorism and the perception that there exist various threats to Islam. One part of the "support for terror" question specifically mentions defending Islam from its enemies. A respondent who paid particular attention to that part of the question would be unlikely to answer in the affirmative to supporting terror (for the purpose of defending Islam from its enemies) if that person did not perceive there to be significant threats to Islam. Thus, the correlation between threats to Islam and support for terror may be a specious result of the framing of the question. By mentioning Islam's enemies, the question may have filtered out those supporters of terrorism who do not perceive there to be significant threats to Islam.

One cannot solve these sorts of issues through statistical analysis. The only way to clarify these issues is for future surveys to field questions that are more targeted, so as to separate out the attitudes toward various different phenomena that are all embedded in this single question.

Appendix 1: Results of the ordered Logit

	Support for terrorism	Support for terrorism
Economic perception	0.05 (0.03)	0.07* (0.03)
Actual role of Islam	0.09* (0.03)	
Appropriate role of Islam	0.13 (0.03)	
Islamic dissatisfaction		0.02 (0.02)
Threat to Islam	0.07 (0.07)	0.07 (0.07)
U.S. threat to Islam	0.24* (0..08)	0.23* (0.08)
Government threat to Islam	-0.18* (0.09)	-0.17 (0.09)
Religious Threat to Islam	0.09 (0.08)	0.09 (0.08)
State Inefficient	0.07* (0.03)	0.07* (0.03)
Free Expression	0.14* (0.03)	0.16 (0.03)
Democracy good	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)
Visit U.S.	0.19 (0.16)	0.19 (0.16)
U.S. attitude	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
Age	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)
Female	0.11* (0.05)	0.10* (0.05)
Education	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)
Married	-0.08 (0.07)	-0.09 (0.06)
Lebanon	1.89* (0.14)	1.89 (0.14)
Ivory Coast	0.72* (0.21)	0.73 (0.21)
Bangladesh	0.22 (0.13)	0.20 (0.13)
Nigeria	0.70* (0.15)	0.75 (0.15)
Jordan	0.47* (0.12)	0.46 (0.12)

Pakistan	**-0.20** **(0.12)**	**-0.15*** **(0.12)**
Senegal	**0.00** **(0.12)**	**-0.09** **(0.11)**
Ghana	**-0.18** **(0.25)**	**-0.18** **(0.25)**
Uganda	**-0.35** **(0.23)**	**-0.38** **(0.23)**
Indonesia	**-0.27*** **(0.12)**	**-0.20** **(0.11)**
Tanzania	**-0.35** **(0.20)**	**-0.63*** **(0.20)**
Turkey	**-0.97*** **(0.13)**	**-1.05*** **(0.13)**
Uzbekistan	**-1.82*** **(0.24)**	**-1.90*** **(0.17)**
Cut 1	**0.77 (0.23)**	**0.16 (0.21)**
Cut 2	**1.52 (0.23)**	**0.90 (0.21)**
Cut 3	**2.87 (0.23)**	**2..24 (0.21)**

* = significant at 95% confidence

N = 6116, Pseudo R^2 = 0.08

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