

PREDICTORS OF SUPPORT FOR ANTI-WESTERN TERRORISM

Project Title: Support for Terrorism as a Function of Individualistic and Collectivistic Goals

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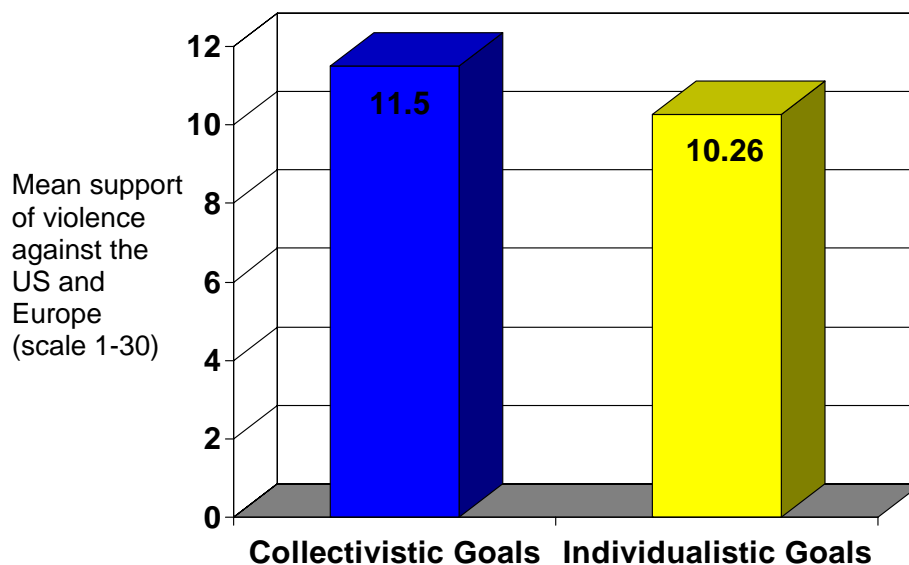
Overview:

The primary purpose of the study was to explore whether *collectivistic goals* are associated with support for terrorism. Collectivistic goals are those goals that consider the group or the community as more important than any given individual. The study also addressed the issue of different types of collectivism, specifically religion or nationalism, and whether they predict differences in support for terrorism.

Interim Findings:

A sample of 1,042 Muslims from Indonesia, Pakistan and a number of Arab countries participated in an online survey asking questions relating to collectivism, individualism and support for terrorism. Data from the survey support the hypothesis that Muslims who hold collectivistic goals are *more supportive* of terrorism involving attacks on US and European military and civilians than are Muslims with individualistic values, as revealed in the graph below (means represent statistically significant differences).

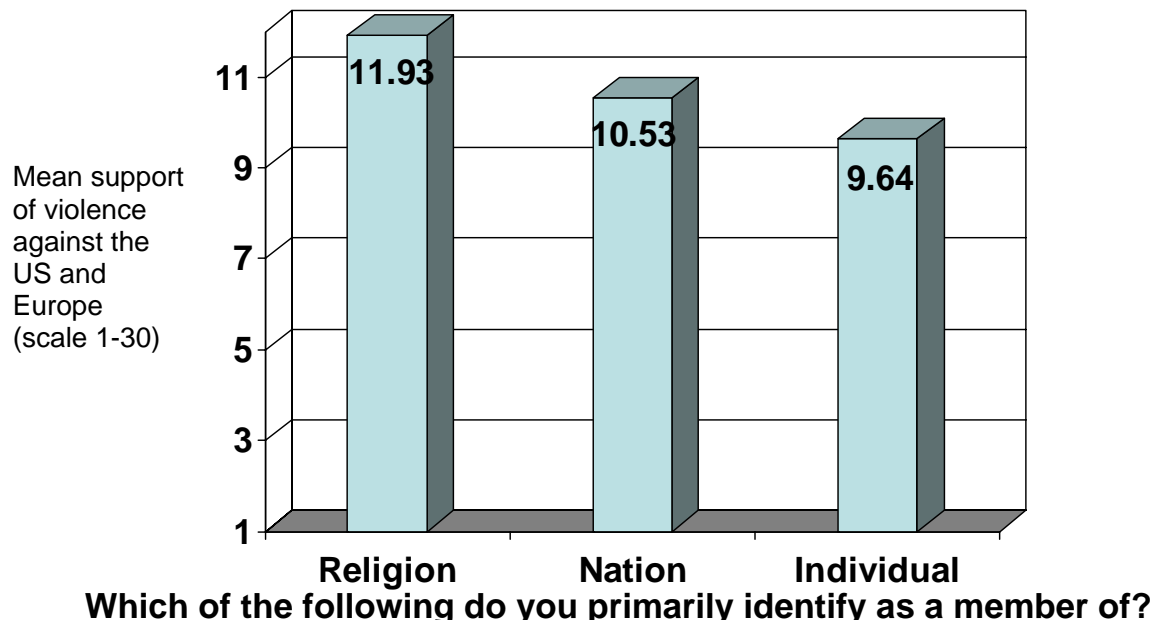
Mean support for terrorism, collectivistic versus individualistic goals.



$F(1, 998) = 14.36, p < .000.$

In addition, we find strong support among respondents from all of the countries for *religion* as the primary predictor of support for anti-US/European terrorism as compared to nationalism or individualism. Participants who identify most strongly as members of their religion show greater support for terrorist attacks as compared to participants who identify themselves primarily as a member of their nation or as individuals. Identification with religion thus appears to be a stronger predictor of support for terrorism as compared to collectivism expressed through identification with one's nation.

Mean support for terrorism for different types of goals



Each mean is significantly different from each other mean, $p < .05$

The data suggests that individuals in certain cultures are willing to support violence targeted against the West and we can begin to identify the factors that may encourage such a view. It is promising that overall, such support is relatively low, falling well below the midpoint of the scale and giving us reason to be optimistic that combating such attitudes is an important and feasible goal.

Although collectivism within a society may provide many benefits including a strong sense of identity, the results imply that collectivistic goals may also create strong feelings of enmity when engaged in conflict. Combating terrorism in societies that subscribe to collectivistic beliefs may present a complicated but important undertaking. In addition, cultures with a strong religious component may represent an even greater obstacle as compared to cultures with only a strong national identity. One challenge may be to provide alternative, individualistic goals, which, in turn, may lessen support for terrorism.

Future Directions:

We are expanding the sample to include participants from Morocco and Egypt. In addition, the future sample will be constructed to be a representative sample of individuals from these

countries as well as Indonesia and Pakistan. We are also interested in exploring further the process that underlies the link between collectivistic goals and support for terrorism.

Contact Information:

To provide feedback, or for any correspondence relating to this project, or for a copy of the full manuscript on this topic, please contact:

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The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence, tasked by the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate with using state-of-the-art theories, methods, and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins, dynamics, and social and psychological impacts of terrorism. START, based at the University of Maryland, College Park, aims to provide timely guidance on how to disrupt terrorist networks, reduce the incidence of terrorism, and enhance the resilience of U.S. society in the face of the terrorist threat.

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