Measuring support for terrorism: a survey experiment and an attempt at a comparison

Maria Sobolewska (University of Manchester)

Abstract: This article makes three points: two are substantive and one is methodological. The first one is that Muslim public opinion on terrorism is often presented in the light of an implicit assumption that the general consensus around terrorism would be one of zero tolerance. This however, is not true, as we see the general public opinion in Britain expressing statistically significant and substantively non-negligible levels of support. The second one is that Muslims and non-Muslims alike share a hierarchy of terrorism causes and targets, which means that a lot of questions supposedly measuring tacit support for terrorism actually tap into a consensus that some terrorist actions are more justifiable than others. Finally, measurement of support for terrorism is sensitive to the question wording and format- something that is rarely reflected upon in the reporting of these items in the press and academic research alike. To support these points I present a series of analyses of pre-existing Muslim public opinion polls taken at a similar time and four survey experiments conducted on the general population in Britain.

The most striking shortcoming of the existing literature on support for terrorism, both empirically and theoretically, is the lack of a frame of comparison. As a general rule, support for terrorism is only measured among populations suspected of high levels of support such as Northern Ireland, Palestine or Pakistan (ref). Hence we do not know how they compare to the populations who do not have any outstanding grievances that may lead them to terrorist action. Are these societies totally opposed to terrorism? Or is there an underlying level of support among these populations as well, springing maybe from their historical experiences.

1 I thank Joe Twyman from YouGov for giving me the opportunity to place the questions on their survey, Anthony Wells of YouGov for his feedback on the questions and Sundas Ali for her help in gathering the data on Muslim public opinion polls used here. Robert Ford receives special thanks for all his invaluable help and feedback.
of national struggle, war, or revolution? Perhaps there is a universal agreement that some circumstances call for violent political action? It seems that at different historical times most societies do show a taste for violence judging by human history of conflict, and so perhaps it is the different forms of violence that is more or less acceptable to all societies? There seems to be a general consensus about the undesirability of killing civilians for example, while other forms of war activities are conceived of as ‘just’ (Zehfus 2012). In this article I argue that we need a frame of comparison to judge whether support for terrorism among Muslims is in fact above the ‘norm’. A single study in Britain that has found that levels of support for violent extremism among the general population are non-zero has been mostly unnoticed. The question about support for violent extremism has been asked in the 2010 Citizenship Survey with a large sample of general British population as well as large oversamples of Muslims and other ethnic minorities. The figures, quoted in Government’s own Prevent Strategy show that whereas Muslims do show somewhat higher levels of support for violent extremism than Christians, the Hindus and Sikhs are the two religious groups sharing the highest levels of support (Home Office 2011). Part of the reason why the results of the study have done little to change the dominant narrative of Muslim extremism has been that the choice of wording has not been comparable to the questions asked in many more publicised polls of Muslim public opinion, in which Muslims were asked directly about terrorist actions against civilians, or specific instances of terrorism such as the 7/7 bombings. Secondly, the question asked about violent extremism without specifying what violent extremism was and so whereas for the wider British public it may have had a connotation of Islamic violent extremism- and therefore elicited less support- whereas in the eyes of Hindus and Sikhs it may have brought to mind other forms of extremism, such as violent actions by Hindu and Sikh nationalists in India - supported by many from these groups within India. This article will present and analyse survey questions that have been specifically designed to measure support for terrorist action, and in some questions specifically suicide bombings, and to offer a choice of very concrete and specific causes and targets of terrorism to achieve greater measurement validity.

Support for terrorism among British Muslims is usually framed in terms of failures of social and political integration. The picture of the Muslim minority presented in most of the (academic and non-academic) literature, with rare exceptions (Maxwell, Manning), is of an alienated, segregated and disenchanted community (Saggar, Saggar, Field etc). This picture is consequential, as it is usually assumed that alienation is the main reason behind what is perceived as significant levels of support for terrorism among British Muslims. As a result
even individuals who do not support terrorism, but are deemed to be alienated are thought to be vulnerable to the attractions of political violence and terrorism. The bulk of literature on support for terrorism therefore differentiates between express and tacit support for terrorism, even if more often than not the existence of tacit support is not addressed empirically. In this paper I take issue with how we measure the degree to which British Muslims are supportive to terrorism, or vulnerable to becoming supportive of terrorism. I show that the existing measures of tacit support for terrorism are either artefacts of measurement, or an expression of a wide-spread consensus over which targets and causes of terrorism are more justifiable. As a result I propose that scholarly research becomes more wary of using Muslim-only opinion polls to support their academic work, and that they abandon the notion of tacit support for a more measurable and useful concept of conditional support for terrorism.

The first part of this article summarizes the existing literature about support for political violence and terrorism and the measurement this literature employs. In the process, I make two observations:

• We do not know if the proportion of Muslims who support terrorism is larger, or smaller, or the same as the proportion supporting terrorism among other social groups

• We do not know HOW to measure ‘softer’, or tacit support for terrorism and WHAT we measure when we try to measure it.

To answer these questions, I set out to measure the levels of support for terrorism among general population and to test the question wording and format effects on a survey of general population. To develop hypotheses on the possible measurement effects on the support for terrorism, in the second part of the article I analyse the Muslim public opinion polls, which ask questions about support for terrorism (mostly conducted after the July 2005 London attacks). I then describe the survey experiments designed to test these hypotheses and analyse this data in the third part of the article. Finally, I conclude that terrorism, political violence, and even suicide bombing receive far more support among the general British population than is usually implicitly assumed, that it is governed by similar hierarchy of causes and targets seen among Muslims and that the tacit support is an artefact of measurement and not a distinct analytical concept.

**Tacit support for terrorism**
There is a vast literature, both academic and non-academic, assuming that support for terrorism falls within concentric circles—ranging from the small centre of committed and active supporters of terrorism, who may be ready to take part in terrorist activities or actively support them— to a wider circle of tacit and passive supporters of terrorism (Gove, Phillips, Bright, Pipes, Shore, Saggar). Whereas from a practical point of view this distinction seems sensible, as it is clear the actual engagement in terrorism can range from dying in a suicide mission to simply not informing police of one’s suspicions, in terms of attitudinal commitment it is hard to defend. First of all, it is not at all clear that the distribution of roles in terrorist action from the most to the least active is dependent on degree of commitment. This may depend on many other factors and opportunities and so one can easily believe an old inactive lady not calling the police equally supportive of terrorist action as the young engineer who is building the actual bomb. Secondly, measuring such attitudinal differences in commitment among the general population in public opinion polls is entirely inappropriate to capture tacit support, because the initial classification of the circles of support is based on behavioural, not attitudinal criteria: hence the circles of active perpetrators, facilitators, less active supporters, and inactive but permissive public rather than circles of most committed to least committed supporters.

In the existing literature using the concept of tacit support, the inactive but permissive social context is the main object of inquiry— and has also been the focus of the government’s policy (Home Office 2011, refs). Yet, there are two issues with this focus. Firstly, the underlying assumption that some members of the permissive public are likely to progress into the deeper circles of support for terrorism towards more active roles. There is little support for this in the empirical literature. Many studies of the trajectories of terrorism perpetrators show that they often emerge not from the permissive public sympathising with terrorism, but often from individuals who shared western values and lifestyles before radicalising (Gambetta, ref). The complexities of the process of radicalisation and their usual linear and somewhat simplistic interpretation has been an object of many an inquiry (for example see Githens-Mazer and Lambert 2010) and the assumption that a passive supporter of terrorism is more vulnerable to progress into active terrorist action than a non-supporter seems an easy, but potentially misleading cognitive shortcut. Secondly, there is no clear framework for measuring permissiveness. Existing measures of tacit support instead measure either sympathy for terrorism, ‘weaker’ support, or conditionality of support, neither of which capture the notion of permissiveness and tacit support. Sympathy for terrorists and their
motives, as well as conditional support, is often used to gauge the levels of passive support for terrorism (House of Commons 2012). These measures of sympathy are designed to tap into a popular theoretical explanation for radicalisation based on the notions of grievance and discontent (refs). However, these types of measurements suffer from unknown validity. What do people who express ‘sympathy’ with terrorists really mean? Do they really support their actions in some tacit way, or do they feel sorry for the terrorists’ lost ways? Or do they simply express an understanding of how hearing of wars and atrocities against Muslim civilians may have led some troubled individuals astray?

Similarly, the conditionality of support for terrorism may be an unclear way to understand the grievances route to radicalisation. Under an understanding that most people have an instinctive notion of a ‘just’ war, such as in defence of its people, territory or identity from foreign threat (refs), conditionality may well be measuring a more universal pattern of what people consider just causes of war and other forms of political violence—rather than a Muslim specific pattern of radicalisation and tacit support for terrorism. In addition to the validity issues, conditional support does not really belong in any of the proposed circles of support, but instead cross-cuts them: under certain conditions individuals can offer greater, and more active, support for terrorism than under other circumstances. While the degree to which different circumstances impact on individuals’ levels of support for terrorism could possibly differ, this presumably does not depend on their existing support for terrorism. Since the hierarchy of conditions in which a war is usually considered ‘just’ is universal (Zehfuss 2012), it is far more likely that the conditions under which individuals are willing to support terrorism are prior to the intensity of their support. The intensity of this support may in fact co-depend on these conditions and other external factors such as history, culture and personal experiences. One of the questions posed in this article is whether the support for terrorism expressed in response to different circumstances is different for non-Muslims and Muslims, or whether there is in fact a universal hierarchy of causes and targets. I will argue that conditionality of support is likely to be a distinct concept shared by the general population, not intertwined with the idea of concentric support for terrorism, and henceforth should be usefully distinguished from the notion of tacit support.

The third possible way to measure tacit support for terrorism is to separate those who chose a ‘strong’ support response from a ‘qualified’ or ‘weaker’ support option in questions that offer more than two or three response categories. The ‘weaker’ or ‘softer’ support measures a weaker commitment to the cause, or perhaps permissiveness. Such questions have
been asked of British Muslims; however there is no systematic distinguishing of these options in the literature. More often than not these ‘weaker’ support options are pooled with the ‘stronger’ support options. Does this pooling create a sense that overall levels of support are higher? It might do- as the existing research on survey methodology suggests offering more and more nuanced response options may allow some respondents who previously chose an undecided option to opt for one of the less extreme positions (refs). This may in fact be the most straightforward way of measuring tacit support, the reservations about the relationship between the behavioural and attitudinal definitions of tacit support notwithstanding, but only if empirically the respondents who tend to embrace the ‘weaker’ support for terrorism are qualitatively different from those expressing ‘stronger’ support.

Most of the questions about the levels and nature of support for terrorism among British Muslims that are being used in the existing literature have been asked following the terrorist attacks on London in July 2005 (7/7), these polls are best to illustrate the points made earlier about the difficulties in measuring tacit and conditional support. Until the end of 2010, a total of 23 polls asked questions about support for terrorism, 11 of which were conducted in the 18 month period after the 7/7 bombings (until end of December 2006), thus making it easier to compare the levels of support and look for possible measurement artefacts were responsible for such a spread of opinion, reasonably excluding the possibility that major shifts in support took place over this short period of time².

The 33 questions on support for terrorism asked of British Muslims between July 2005 and December 2006 fell into three main categories. The first one was designed to capture what I dub a core support for terrorism, in which a simple statement specifically on 7/7 or on general use of terrorism was offered together with two or three answer categories, two strong ‘support’ and ‘lack of support’ option and sometimes a don’t know. This category was clearly designed to capture the inner core of most committed supporters who were prepared to say they thought London 7/7 attacks were ‘right’ and killing civilians in a terrorist attack for political ends is ‘justified’. The second category contains questions about the ‘tacit’ support for terrorism, which employ the notion that tacit support involves expressing sympathy or understanding or some level of agreement with the motives (if not

² There was no perceivable over time trend with a trendless fluctuation between answers to similar questions over time. The main culprit for this lack of consistency is the low quality of the polls in question: the samples are fairly small enabling more extreme and volatile results. Non-probability sampling and poor wording also contribute. This is a huge issue that sadly cannot be addressed here in full, but is acknowledged in many publications (see Sobolewska 2009, Field 2007 refs).
actions) of the terrorists. Questions in the final category asked about the various circumstances and conditions of this support. Sadly, for the purposes of a natural experiment a few of the questions belonged to more than one category. The first category has been mostly using the word ‘justified’ or even sometimes ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ to gauge explicit and strong support. The second category probed sympathies with motives of terrorists and understanding of terrorist actions. Finally the third category varied geographical regions of terrorist actions as well as their targets to see if the support varies between actions in the UK and elsewhere and between attacks on civilians and other targets. As Table 1 shows that apart from the first category, in which the variation is smaller, the internal variation between items in each category of questions was large, suggesting that the measures used failed to discover a stable circle of tacit support. Instead, it suggests that different formats of asking about sympathy and understanding for terrorists and their motives yielded differing results, and that different conditions and circumstances elicited different level of support for attacks. Table 1 also presents a case for distinguishing between the tacit support as measured by sympathy and understanding and conditional support as a distinct set of attitudes - rather than merging them in a single notion of tacit support.

**Table 1 about here**

A more detailed look at the sources of the discrepancies between the levels of support for terrorism expressed in response to different questions within each category suggests that in the first category- core support- the main culprit seems to be the number of responses offered, in the second category- tacit support- it is the difference in responses to the questions containing the word ‘understand’ and those with the word ‘sympathy’, and in the third category there are systematic differences between which targets and locations of terrorist attacks receive more support. This analysis is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 about here**

One would expect the number of categories to make a systematic difference in the level of expressed support for terrorism: this is a textbook methodological effect described previously by many in many substantive policy areas (for example see Shuman and Presser). Usually offering fewer, more extreme options results in respondents shying away from them and an increase in the number of people offering, or opting for the don’t know answer. Offering more nuanced options makes more people choose affirmative, but softer option, reducing support both for extreme options and "don't know". Whereas it is not clear which of
these two options presents a more valid picture of public opinion, the difference is there and should be acknowledged in reporting of these questions, but as a general rule is not. Looking at British Muslim polls following the 7/7 attacks, one can see that giving more nuanced options resulted in fewer respondents offering any support for terrorism. This could be a result of some respondents choosing a weaker lack of support option instead of the weaker support option. Similarly, lower levels of ‘tacit’ support were expressed when more nuanced response options were available to choose from. Support and sympathy for motives of terrorists fell with more options, but other questions in this category were too differently worded to conclude with confidence that it has been the number of response categories, not the differences in question wording that were responsible for the changes in support. Finally, the conditional support for terrorism category only contained one question with more nuanced response categories, so it has been impossible to observe any impact on those.

The variance between answers elicited by the questions containing the words ‘understand’ and ‘sympathise’ is fairly clear cut and is likely to be down to the different meaning of these two words. Whereas ‘sympathise’ is generally more likely to signal some level of support or agreement with the thought process, motives or actions of terrorists, the meaning of the word ‘understand’ is more ambivalent. One way to interpret the meaning of this word is in a way that also includes sympathy as in when one says they can be understanding of someone’s faults or actions given their hard circumstances, the other is a purely cognitive process of understanding as knowing the reasons and roots of a behaviour—regardless of whether one sympathises with them (and the behaviour) or not. As an example a question asked by YouGov in July 2005, which included the vague word understand elicited an affirmative response from 13% of the respondents: I can understand why some young British Muslims might have wanted to carry out suicide operations in Britain (emphasis added). A similar question asked by NOP in August 2006, but which explicitly excluded the sympathetic meaning of ‘understand’, yielded an affirmative from 56% of respondents: Whether or not you have any sympathy with the feelings of those who carried out the attacks, do you think you understand why some people might behave in that way? (emphasis added).

Another variant of the question on sympathy for terrorists and their motives was to offer a conditional format, in which a specific motive was mentioned: war on terror, wars in Iraq or Afghanistan, or a religious motive. In such formulation the expression of sympathy went up in comparison to sympathy for unspecified motives.
Finally, the conditional support for terrorism category provides a fairly robust difference between levels of support for terrorism in the UK and against civilians, which is lower than support for terrorism in areas of conflict such as Israel/Palestine or Afghanistan, and against military targets. It is reasonable to assume that the difference between tolerance levels of terrorism in the UK and elsewhere has less to do with the proximity to home, and more to do with the political context of the other locations asked about. All the locations outside of the UK that were asked have had a history of armed conflict involving Muslims, from Chechnya and Israel/Palestine, locations of nationalist insurgencies, to Iraq where an unwelcome foreign intervention has been at stake. As a result these could also be interpreted as representing different causes for terrorist action. Apart from a clear hierarchy of locations and targets, the effect of specific places and targets were cumulative. Whereas violence in the UK and civilians received considerably less support than all other cases, questions that included both conditions- civilians AND the UK- elicited the lowest levels of support. Additionally, similar to findings about questions about sympathy for terrorists’ motives, giving a specific cause for terrorism increased the number of those supporting terrorism. Out of the four questions that gave specific causes for attacks, two gave religious causes, and two others mentioned war against terror and Iraq and Afghanistan. Unlike in the case of geography and nature of a target, the results were not substantively different, with both sets of questions eliciting support levels between 10-25%, so it is hard to conclude which causes are regarded as stronger justifications for terrorist actions.

With conceptual confusion and measurement problems, support for terrorism among British Muslims emerges as a very tricky area of research. Partly the obstacles to proper investigation are financial, as polling minority populations such as Muslims is expensive and difficult. But most importantly, correctly identifying the benchmark support among the general population against which any support from Muslims should be measured is paramount to even starting such an investigation. Therefore it is the general population that needs to be polled first as to their underlying levels of support for terrorism in an effort to establish the ‘normal’ levels against which levels of support among Muslims can be compared. Hence the first hypothesis:

H1. Support for terrorism among the general British population is non-zero.

Only once the baseline levels of support for terrorism have been discovered, one could address other issues raised in this article: is tacit support distinctly different from other
forms of support for terrorism, or is it an artefact of measurement? Given all the issues of measurement and validity, ultimately, the only way to really see whether tacit support can be measured meaningfully as a distinct attitude from explicit support for terrorism is to see if people who express it are meaningfully and systematically different from each other. Is there a ‘type’ of person who supports terrorism more or less intensely, or is tacit support an artefact of the way it is measured?

To answer this all-important question I pose two hypotheses:

H2. Is tacit support for terrorism conceptually distinct from explicit or hard support, or whether it is an artefact of measurement: i.e. are people who confess explicit support different from those who profess tacit or softer support, or is the level of support a result of different wording or format of questions?

H2.1: Question wording (understand/sympathy) and format (number of response categories) is responsible for people expressing what is interpreted as weaker and tacit support

H2.2: Respondents expressing weaker/tacit support for terrorism are not substantively different that those who express explicit/strong support.

H3. Is there a hierarchy of acceptable targets and causes of terrorist actions?

Support for terrorism among the general population- evidence from survey experiments

Since in the existing Muslim public opinion polls the wording of questions is often non-identical, polls were gathered by different methods and were separated by a few months, it is impossible to conclude firmly that the factors described above are fully responsible for the variation in the levels of support expressed, and whether these effects mean that the softer and tacit support for terrorism are separate phenomena from the explicit support, or they are artefacts of wording and format of questions. To test the four hypotheses developed on the basis of the analysis of literature and to an extent confirmed by a meta-analysis of the Muslim opinion polls, I designed and conducted four survey experiments in September 2011. As surveying Muslim minorities is notoriously hard, due to their overall low number in the UK, resulting in poor quality samples and high costs of polling, I conducted a survey experiment among the general population in Great Britain using a nationally representative online
YouGov sample of British population. This, while having a disadvantage of not being directly comparable to the analysis of Muslim polls, had an advantage of offering a comparison of levels of support among Muslim minority and British general population. Shockingly, this has not been done to date, despite Muslim support for terrorism being very high on the media and governmental agenda in recent years (ref). Another advantage of using the YouGov online survey rather a face to face poll is a greater comparability of mode, as most of the existing Muslim public opinion polls are either conducted through online or telephone methods. YouGov fielded the experimental questions in September 2011 on a sample of 2623 respondents from a general population (1.5% of this sample has identified as Muslim and was subsequently excluded from the analysis leaving the effective sample at 2583).

The first experiment, asking about support for different causes of terrorism has been designed especially for this survey in order to assess overall base levels of support. The second one was based on two questions asked of Muslims in existing opinion polls, and again asked about different causes of terrorism. The wording of the preamble has been reproduced, but more contextual detail has been added to the causes to evoke in the mind of non-Muslim respondents similar background information, which is likely to be salient for Muslim respondents. The last two questions were directly reproducing questions asked of Muslims. One asked about different targets of terrorist actions and the other tested the effect of using the word ‘understand’ as oppose to ‘support for’ terrorist actions. Each of these questions was asked in two versions, a base version and a treatment version. In three of these experiments, I manipulated response categories: hard (three response categories: yes, no, don’t know) and soft support (four response categories: yes, qualified yes, no and don’t know). In one of the experiments I manipulated question wording. The base treatment used the word ‘understand’ leaving it vague and open to interpretation while the manipulation explicitly excluded the sympathetic meaning of the word ‘understand’. For full question wording please see the appendix.

Before I discuss the results, it is important to keep in mind that the figures for Muslims presented in the graphs below (taken from the Muslim public opinion polls 2005-2006, which were also discussed above) are not directly comparable to the results obtained from the general population survey, and are only provided for orientation. The reason for the lack of full comparability- notwithstanding some wording differences outlined above- is the
passage of time between these two data collection points and sometimes differences of mode as well (with some of the polls collected via telephones, not internet).

**Support for terrorism: causes and targets**

Since asking about core support for terrorism, which in Muslim public opinion poll has been asked about without stating any additional conditions, would have in effect acted as a filter question preventing me from asking additional questions of those respondents who rejected any terrorism from the outset, the first question asked respondents whether they thought terrorism was justifiable for any of eight named causes: animal rights, environment, Islamic radicalism, protecting one’s culture, protecting one’s faith, protecting independence of one’s country, opposing an oppressive regime and opposing a foreign invasion. Terrorism was described as any violent act intended to incur harm on targets, which may include civilians. Figure 1 shows the levels of support for the 8 different causes of terrorist action among non-Muslim British population, looking at the base question, in which only three response categories were offered: yes, no and don’t know. There are two immediately obvious observations that arise when one looks at this figure. The first one is that all causes received non-zero support, and the second is that there was- as with Muslim public opinion discussed earlier- a huge variation in how much support the different causes received. The fact that the least popular cause of terrorism- Islamic extremism- received 7 per cent support among the general population is striking, given that it is not substantially smaller than levels of support expressed in the Muslim public opinion polls discussed earlier. In other words, non-Muslim Britons are as likely to express support for Islamic terrorism on these measures as Muslims were in previous polling.

The two other less popular causes of terrorism were animal rights and environmental terrorism. That they received 8 per cent support is however surprising as Britain has experienced in the last few years some instances of terrorism conducted in the name of these causes, including acts threatening civilians’ lives in the case of animal rights (ref or footnote). Terrorism in defence of one’s faith received a little more support (9 per cent), and in defence of one’s culture, both common justifications given by perpetrators of Islamic terrorism, received significantly more support, 13 per cent.

The causes of terrorism that seemed to be strongly supported by the general public were the defence of one’s country: whether protecting its independence (42 %) against an oppressive regime (52%) and against a foreign occupation (54%). It is perhaps unsurprising
that these items found themselves at the top of the hierarchy of causes, but it must be remembered that acts of terrorism were described as involving intentional harm to civilians, thus such high level of support for these causes is rather surprising. It is also worth noting that these are also causes used by Islamic terrorists to justify their actions in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq.

**Figure 1 about here**

The next question I asked the general British population was about different situations in which suicide bombings could be justifiable. Here I used the words ‘suicide bombing’ instead of terrorism to make this question more comparable to the question asked of Muslim public opinion (NOP 2006b). However, the original question offered three situations, which I felt would not have the same salience in the mind of the non-Muslim public. The original situations were simply described by their location: UK, Israel and Chechnya. Since this question was asked of Muslims in 2006, the UK location would have brought to mind terrorist attacks akin to the London bombings of 2005, perpetrated by British-born Muslims in opposition to the Iraq war; the Israel location would have been (as it is today) suggestive of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and the Chechnya location would have brought to mind a struggle against and oppressive regime (Russia) and fight for independence of the country. The risk that in 2012 and among non-Muslims these connotations would not be comparable led me to compromise on question wording comparability to try and evoke the same cognitive associations. As a result this question is not directly comparable to the original question, but remains indicative. Therefore, the new situations given to the general public were more descriptive: in the UK it was a British citizen protesting against an unjust war, in Israel a specific reference to Palestinian struggle for independence was made, and Chechnya was changed for a more topical and recent Libyan struggle against Colonel Gaddafi (full question wording in appendix). Another question probing the support for terrorism in Muslim polls was about justifiability of attacking specific targets. I reproduced this question in full, only distinguishing the last category, which in an original poll was a double-barrelled one asking about government workers AND buildings. Figure 2 shows the results of both these questions.

Looking at Figure 2 it is obvious that despite the differences in magnitude of support for specific targets, the hierarchy of justifiable terrorist targets is identical among the Muslim and general public opinion. While the size of the actual differences are not strictly
comparable for reasons discussed before, as with the previous question the ordering of targets is distinctly consistent. This confirms that people have a hierarchical view of causes and targets of terrorist actions that seems consistent among Muslims and the general population. Both publics agree that targets in the UK are less justifiable than attacks in Israel with 4% of the YouGov sample agreeing that UK bombings can be justified, but twice as many- 8%- thinking these would be justified in Israel. Similarly, attacks on civilians received least support, with just 1% of the general public in the YouGov poll thinking they can be justified. Police was a more acceptable target to 4% of YouGov respondents, as were government buildings (6%) and the military was considered the most justifiable target of suicide bombing (8%). Considering that the question wording in both cases used the extreme expression of terrorism- suicide bombings- these proportions of the general public expressing some support for them is substantively non-negligible.

**Figure 2 about here**

Are there any patterns among those who support terrorism? These questions fuel the radicalisation literature and the government’s Prevent agenda. However, these have never been addressed in the context of the general population. Also, the question crucial to the notion of circles of support for terrorism has been left unanswered: does the profile of a person who supports terrorism differ depending on causes, circumstances and targets of terrorist actions? I address both these issues here with the data from the general public opinion poll (YouGov 2011). I analyse the question on whether terrorist attacks can be justifiably for any of the following causes: environmental causes, animal rights, Islamic extremism, protecting your religious faith, protecting your cultural values, fighting for independence of your country, fighting against an oppressive regime, fighting against a foreign occupation of your country.

A multinomial analysis of this question is presented in Table 3. I analysed each of the cause separately, and presented how people who agreed terrorism can be justified and those who said they did not know differed from those who rejected terrorism. I looked at age and gender, which most literature on radicalisation present as strong predictors of support, with young men most likely to radicalise (ref). I also tested the impact of class (with some literature suggesting socio-economic disadvantage is a factor driving radicalisation- ref) and support for right wing parties (party identity and past vote), and anti-immigrant attitudes (proxy used here is newspaper readership with such anti-immigrant titles as The Sun standing
in contrast with more balanced Guardian), both of which are increasingly a source of non-Muslim terrorism (Goodwin). I also included a geographical control, with residence in London, which is by far the most diverse city in Britain, expected to reduce the support for terrorism.

The results in Table 3 show that the profile of a ‘supporter’ varies by the cause named. The most robust predictors of support for all causes were age and gender, with older respondents and men more likely to be supporting terrorism in defence of the country against loss of independence, oppressive regime and foreign invasion. Men were also more likely to support terrorism to defend their faith and culture. Younger respondents were more likely to be unsure about terrorism in the name of environment and religion (including Islam). Most other predictors were significant for only one or two of the causes of terrorism. Supporters of right wing parties, despite being hailed as a new terrorist threat (ref), were more supportive of terrorism only in the case of foreign invasion (although it of course remains a valid topic of debate how they understand such invasion). The fact that it is hard to paint a profile of a conditional supporter of terrorism among the general population echoes the difficulties in identifying prospective Muslim terrorists. There seems to be a minority of the population, regardless of religion, origin and any other social or economic characteristic who express some support for terrorist action under some circumstances.

Table 3 about here

Measuring tacit support

Two tests of tacit support were conducted here. The first test addressed the issue of sympathy and understanding of terrorists’ actions and motives as proxies for tacit support (question wording). The second one looked at the difference between levels of support for terrorism expressed when only a ‘hard support’ option was offered as opposed to the ‘softer support option (question format).

Firstly, looking at whether the words ‘sympathy’ and ‘understanding’ used in the context of terrorists’ motives can be reliably used for measurement of tacit support for terrorism, I designed an experiment, in which I asked respondents whether they could understand why some people may carry out suicide attacks. One group of respondents had to answer this question without any further clarification, while for the other group of respondents I included the following preamble ‘Whether or not you have any sympathy with
the feelings of those who carry out suicide attacks’ to specifically exclude the ‘sympathetic’ overtone of the word ‘understand’. This experiment reproduced two questions asked of British Muslims in 2005 (YouGov 2005) and so the results of the experiments are presented alongside the answers given by Muslims for a rough comparison, in Figure 3. As is apparent from both sets of columns, both publics were sensitive to the wording of the question with fewer respondents, both Muslim and general, agreeing they understand why some may carry out suicide attacks in the case where understanding may have implied feelings of sympathy as well, than in the case where sympathy was explicitly excluded. Muslims however seem a lot more sensitive to this effect, problems with direct comparison notwithstanding, with fewer willing to say that they understand when they could be implying sympathy, but with many more agreeing that they understand if sympathy is explicitly removed. This could be an effect of timing: with the Muslim poll asking this question immediately following the 7/7 attacks Muslims may have been particularly keen on excluding suspicions of sympathising with 7/7 bombers; or of context: Muslims may on the whole be more aware of (and hence cognitively understand) the grievances that led suicide bombers to their actions. What is clear is that asking about understanding terrorists’ motives is less a useful measure of tacit support for terrorism and more a gray area of measurement, in which responses are highly sensitive to question wording for both Muslims and non-Muslims.

**Figure 3 about here**

The second possible test of the tacit support hypotheses is that there is a substantitive difference between those people who- when offered- choose a stronger support response option and those who opt for a milder support option. To test this possibility I asked the same question analysed earlier: on support for terrorism according to different causes; in two different versions. One group of respondents were offered only three possible responses: yes (strong support), no (strong rejection) and don’t know; while the other group was offered weak support option as well (yes, but only in extreme circumstances). The number of questions asked in this format of British Muslims was too small to explore, but the literature on public opinion predicts that more people would choose the support option if they were given a milder, as well as a stronger, response option (ref). Figure 4 confirms that this has been the case for support for terrorism for all causes, for the general public (YouGov 2011).

**Figure 4 about here**
However, as I argued earlier, in order to see whether this difference in the number of people supporting terrorism as a result of the availability of the softer support option does constitute tacit support for terrorism and not a measurement artefact, we need to know if the people who choose ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ support options are qualitatively and systematically different. We know from the measurement literature that there are some general differences between people who opt for less extreme responses in surveys and polls, for example that they are more likely to be women (ref). But, are any of the other predictors of support for terrorism identified by radicalisation literature relevant to who chooses hard and soft support options? To test this I again performed a multinomial analysis of the 8 causes for support of terrorism and I present the results in Table 4. Like before, there were no consistent patterns between which predictors of ‘soft’ support were significant between different causes. Also, those that were significant conformed to the pattern of difference seen earlier between those who supported terrorist actions and those who did not, suggesting that any significant differences lie between those respondents who are willing to express any support at all and those who are not, rather than between those who choose a ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ support option. Men were less likely to take the ‘softer’ option and also expressed more support for terrorist acts in defence of the country’s independence, against an oppressive regime and foreign occupation. In the same causes younger respondents were more likely to be unsupportive, unsure and choose a ‘softer’ support option. Men were less likely to support terrorism for environmental causes and less likely to choose a ‘soft’ support option in this case. Supporters of right wing parties were more likely to choose the strong support option in the case of foreign invasion. Again, for most causes there was either just one, or no significant differences between those who chose a hard support option and those who opted for a soft support one.

Table 4 about here

Is this sufficient indication that ‘tacit’ support is a response to question format and not a distinct and measurable concept? It may not be a definitive rejection of the notion of tacit support, but it has highlighted that measurement of this concept is at best difficult and at worst deeply misleading.

Conclusions

- The general British population has a non-zero level of support for terrorism
• Support for terrorism is conditional

• There is a hierarchy of causes and targets

• This hierarchy is universal: Muslims and the general public share it

• Question wording and format matters for the results

• There is little systematic difference between people who expressed ‘weaker’ and ‘stronger’ support for terrorism across all the questions asked.

• SO- there is little reason to support the use of ‘tacit’ support as an analytical category

• Much smaller sample sizes of Muslim polls means that we are more likely to get unreliable results

• As a result there is good reason to believe that Muslims are NOT on the whole more supportive of terrorism

First point for analysing the issue of support for terrorism is to do with the conceptualisation of popular notion of tacit support. Tacit literally means implied and inferred - hence by nature not testable and measurable. This is a problem as many questions ignore this inherent difficulty and attempt to measure tacit support by using vague terms such as understanding, sympathy, motives and reasons to address the question: do Muslims support terrorism in some indirect and quiet fashion? None of these terms seems entirely fit for purpose, and certainly does not offer a direct measurement of indirect and hidden support, but the empirical picture will help solve the issue whether these questions measure anything at all- if the answers to them show consistent results- or whether they fall short of the mark even before we can start interpreting what it is what they measure.

Tacit or passive support is a vague and hard to test concept, whereas circumstantial/conditional support addresses a more specific, testable and ultimately tested-by the available questions- proposition. Henceforth we will use this expression to pinpoint the notion that some Muslims may not support terrorism in general, but in some extreme circumstances may support it in the future. Circumstantial support for terrorism is the third kind of terrorism-related questions asked in the polls under analysis. It is a unique situation where the context of questions asked is known and can be taken into account and many
pollsters were polling questions on the same topics, but with varied questions, at the same time- or very proximate time (often approximating time-variance in a single large academic survey that is in the field at the same time).

The study of the effects of question wording and question format on the public opinion responses suggests more scepticism is needed about using single poll items as valid representations of public opinion in this complex area, but also gives us an understanding which measures can be treated with more confidence than others. In 2009-2010 a similar question to those analysed here has been asked in a high quality, probability sample survey, the Citizenship Survey. The results were included in the Prevent Strategy document (Home Office 2011) and showed that levels of support for violent extremism were not very different from those presented here. This lends some support to the overall question on whether it is the public opinion polling in itself, due to its lower quality sampling and smaller sample sizes, is responsible for the artefacts of public opinion or measurement issues. In this paper I did not seek to add to the methodological literature on the question wording effects, but have looked to apply the issues raised in this literature to the politically salient issue of British Muslim public opinion. I have shown how this particular public opinion is to a large extent an artefact of the mechanisms described in the classic methodological literature. In the process I hope to have also offered a glimpse of what seems stable and universal across all questions in all polls and therefore what may be taken as the version of Muslim public opinion closer to the truth. Hence I do not see myself as a survey cynic advocating not to use public opinion data at all, but join in the chorus of voices advising the use of more carefully designed measure, and using over-time and across-poll/question comparison of public opinion and of properly baselining the opinions of minorities against those of the general population.
Tables and figures

Table 1. Levels of support for terrorism expressed by British Muslims in polls between July 2005 and December 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>July 2005- December 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core support</td>
<td>2-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacit support</td>
<td>13-56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional support</td>
<td>2-22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Muslim Polls (details in Appendix)*

Table 2. Levels of support for terrorism expressed by British Muslims in polls between July 2005 and December 2006 - measurement effects?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Two-three responses</th>
<th>Four-six responses</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Sympathise</th>
<th>UK, civilians</th>
<th>Other regions, military targets</th>
<th>Causes: wars, religion etc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core support</td>
<td>4-9%</td>
<td>2-6%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacit support</td>
<td>13-56%</td>
<td>16-29%</td>
<td>13-56%</td>
<td>8-13%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16-26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional support</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>2-10%</td>
<td>9-21%</td>
<td>10-24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Muslim Polls (details in Appendix)*
Figure 1: Percent of the general public who say terrorism can be justified under some circumstances.

Source: YouGov September 2011
Figure 2: Percentage who agrees suicide bombings can be justified in some cases.

Figure 3: Percentage expressing understanding for terrorists’ motives.

Figure 4: ‘Softer’ support for terrorism- general public.

Source: YouGov September 2011
Table 3: Who supports terrorism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Islamic</th>
<th>Faith</th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Independence</th>
<th>Regime</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Base outcome</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-01 (.006)</td>
<td>-012 (.006)</td>
<td>.017 (.007)</td>
<td>-006 (.006)</td>
<td>-006 (.005)</td>
<td>.014 .004</td>
<td>.012 .004</td>
<td>.02 .004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>.30 (.21)</td>
<td>-.32 (.21)</td>
<td>.34 (.22)</td>
<td>.50 .19</td>
<td>.67 .17</td>
<td>.61 .12</td>
<td>.84 .12</td>
<td>1.1 .13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNP support</td>
<td>-.9 (1.02)</td>
<td>.24 (.62)</td>
<td>-.95 (1.0)</td>
<td>.92 .47</td>
<td>.64 .45</td>
<td>.44 .39</td>
<td>.20 .40</td>
<td>1.0 .50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>-.50 (.23)</td>
<td>-.43 (.22)</td>
<td>-.41 (.24)</td>
<td>.03 .19</td>
<td>-.22 .17</td>
<td>-.007 .12</td>
<td>.08 .12</td>
<td>.28 .13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>.27 (.26)</td>
<td>-.19 (.30)</td>
<td>-.15 (.32)</td>
<td>.21 .24</td>
<td>-.008 .23</td>
<td>-.02 .16</td>
<td>-.002 .17</td>
<td>-.12 .17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun reader</td>
<td>.16 (.29)</td>
<td>.28 (.28)</td>
<td>.74 (.28)</td>
<td>.35 .26</td>
<td>.54 .22</td>
<td>-.13 .18</td>
<td>-.17 .18</td>
<td>-.41 .19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Const.</td>
<td>-1.7 (.35)</td>
<td>-1.534</td>
<td>-3.4 (.42)</td>
<td>-2.2 .33</td>
<td>-2.1 .30</td>
<td>-1.03 .21</td>
<td>-.66 .21</td>
<td>-.13 .22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>-013 (.006)</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>-01 (.007)</td>
<td>-016 (.006)</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>-.003 .005</td>
<td>.003 .006</td>
<td>-.004 .006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.18 (.19)</td>
<td>-.48 .2</td>
<td>-.48 (.23)</td>
<td>-.31 .19</td>
<td>-.11 .18</td>
<td>-.01 .18</td>
<td>-.07 .20</td>
<td>.02 .21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>-.09 (.62)</td>
<td>-.18 .74</td>
<td>-.05 (.74)</td>
<td>.54 .55</td>
<td>.29 .55</td>
<td>-.51 .77</td>
<td>-.48 .78</td>
<td>-.39 .10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNP support</td>
<td>-.85 (.22)</td>
<td>-.54 .22</td>
<td>-.42 (.23)</td>
<td>-.29 .20</td>
<td>-.23 .18</td>
<td>.006 .18</td>
<td>.03 .19</td>
<td>-.24 .21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>-.14 (.25)</td>
<td>.17 .26</td>
<td>.18 (.27)</td>
<td>.21 .24</td>
<td>.09 .23</td>
<td>-.02 .24</td>
<td>.06 .25</td>
<td>.31 .24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>-.18 (.26)</td>
<td>.30 .28</td>
<td>.22 (.30)</td>
<td>-.07 .29</td>
<td>.17 .26</td>
<td>-.65 .31</td>
<td>-.30 .30</td>
<td>-.20 .28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun reader</td>
<td>-.12 (.30)</td>
<td>-1.533</td>
<td>-1.4 (.34)</td>
<td>-1.1 .30</td>
<td>-1.4 .29</td>
<td>-1.3 .29</td>
<td>-1.2 .31</td>
<td>-05 .31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R sq</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1285</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: YouGov 2011. All significant effects are in bold.
Table 4: ‘Softer’ support for terrorism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Islamic</th>
<th>Faith</th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Independence</th>
<th>Regime</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
<td>β (s.e.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strong support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.01 (.009)</td>
<td>-.006 (.01)</td>
<td>-.004 .009</td>
<td>-.01 .008</td>
<td><strong>-01 .005</strong></td>
<td>-007 .004</td>
<td>-01 .004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td><strong>.98 (.34)</strong></td>
<td>.37 (.31)</td>
<td>-.26 (.35)</td>
<td>.12 .30</td>
<td>.28 .26</td>
<td><strong>-50 .16</strong></td>
<td>-46 .14</td>
<td>-90 .14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNP support</td>
<td>1.2 (1.0)</td>
<td>.47 (.66)</td>
<td>-.87 .94</td>
<td>13 618</td>
<td>-.63 .56</td>
<td>-.14 .40</td>
<td>-06 .39</td>
<td>-90 .44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>-.15 (.36)</td>
<td>.27 (.36)</td>
<td>.12 .38</td>
<td>.32 .34</td>
<td>.12 .30</td>
<td><strong>34 .16</strong></td>
<td>.05 .15</td>
<td>.08 .14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>.37 (.58)</td>
<td><strong>1.6 (.64)</strong></td>
<td>.33 .50</td>
<td><strong>146 .63</strong></td>
<td>.76 .41</td>
<td>.18 .22</td>
<td>.16 .20</td>
<td>-.01 .20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun reader</td>
<td>-.31 (.43)</td>
<td>.20 (.40)</td>
<td>.57 .48</td>
<td>-.17 .41</td>
<td>.08 .35</td>
<td>.10 .23</td>
<td>-.12 .22</td>
<td>.07 .22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Const.</td>
<td>.08 (.51)</td>
<td>-.53 (.50)</td>
<td>.66 .64</td>
<td>.76 .53</td>
<td><strong>12 .48</strong></td>
<td>1.1 .29</td>
<td><strong>.91 .27</strong></td>
<td>1.1 .27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td><strong>.01 (.009)</strong></td>
<td>.01 .008</td>
<td>-.009 .009</td>
<td>-.006 .008</td>
<td>-.01 .007</td>
<td><strong>-02 .004</strong></td>
<td>-01 .004</td>
<td>-02 .004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td><strong>.92 (.31)</strong></td>
<td><strong>63 .26</strong></td>
<td>-.20 .28</td>
<td>-.05 .26</td>
<td>-.06 .23</td>
<td><strong>-83 .15</strong></td>
<td>-10 .15</td>
<td>-12 .14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNP support</td>
<td>.37 (1.0)</td>
<td>.17 .75</td>
<td>-.49 .62</td>
<td>13 618</td>
<td>-.90 .48</td>
<td>-.41 .41</td>
<td>-.19 .41</td>
<td>-.70 .40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>.46 (.31)</td>
<td>.82 .30</td>
<td>.30 .30</td>
<td><strong>66 .29</strong></td>
<td><strong>66 .26</strong></td>
<td><strong>33 .15</strong></td>
<td>.21 .15</td>
<td>-.12 .14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>.65 (.43)</td>
<td><strong>14 .59</strong></td>
<td>.13 .41</td>
<td><strong>12 .59</strong></td>
<td>.37 .38</td>
<td>.09 .21</td>
<td>.10 .21</td>
<td>.004 .19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun reader</td>
<td>-.30 (.37)</td>
<td>-.27 .33</td>
<td>-.18 .40</td>
<td>-.35 .35</td>
<td>-.38 .32</td>
<td>-.26 .22</td>
<td>-.11 .22</td>
<td>.13 .21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Const.</td>
<td><strong>1.5 (.44)</strong></td>
<td><strong>13 .39</strong></td>
<td><strong>35 .51</strong></td>
<td><strong>28 .46</strong></td>
<td><strong>299 .43</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.0 .27</strong></td>
<td><strong>17 .26</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.0 .26</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not sure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td><strong>-02 .01</strong></td>
<td><strong>-04 .01</strong></td>
<td><strong>-04 .01</strong></td>
<td><strong>-04 .008</strong></td>
<td><strong>-03 .007</strong></td>
<td><strong>-05 .008</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>.01 (.39)</td>
<td>-.02 .35</td>
<td><strong>-84 .36</strong></td>
<td>-.47 .34</td>
<td>-.47 .31</td>
<td><strong>-82 .25</strong></td>
<td><strong>-12 .24</strong></td>
<td><strong>-13 .25</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNP support</td>
<td>-.38 (1.4)</td>
<td>-.64 1.2</td>
<td>-.13 1.1</td>
<td>12 618</td>
<td>-.11 .85</td>
<td>-.48 .79</td>
<td>-.13 1.0</td>
<td>-.13 1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>-.73 (.43)</td>
<td>-.41 .43</td>
<td>-.42 .40</td>
<td>-.30 .40</td>
<td>-.29 .36</td>
<td>-.29 .27</td>
<td><strong>-71 .27</strong></td>
<td>-.44 .26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>.78 (55)</td>
<td><strong>15 .66</strong></td>
<td>.01 .51</td>
<td>-.36 .45</td>
<td>-.50 .46</td>
<td>.53 .31</td>
<td>.37 .30</td>
<td>.30 .30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun reader</td>
<td>.17 (45)</td>
<td>-.12 .43</td>
<td>-.18 .50</td>
<td><strong>17 .64</strong></td>
<td><strong>-13 .41</strong></td>
<td>-.09 .34</td>
<td>.30 .30</td>
<td>.07 .34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Const.</td>
<td>.98 (55)</td>
<td>1.0 .51</td>
<td><strong>29 .61</strong></td>
<td><strong>22 .55</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.6 .52</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.4 .40</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 .38</strong></td>
<td><strong>14 .39</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R sq</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1342</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: YouGov 2011. All significant effects are in bold.
Appendix 1 - List of polls of British Muslims asking about support for terrorism between 07.2005 and 12.2006 (chronological)

- NOP 2006b: fieldwork 14 March–9 April, N 1,000, sample: telephone (random digit dialling), areas with 5% or more penetration of Muslims, weighted to 2001 census, client: Channel 4 Dispatches, release: 7 August 2006; http://www.gfknop.co.uk.
Appendix 2- Full question wording from Muslim public opinion polls 07.2005-2006

Core support for terrorism

Do you think the bombing attacks in London on July 7 were justified or not?

On balance justified
Not at all justified
On balance not justified
Don't know (YouGov 2005)

More generally, do you think that al-Qa'eda, or Muslims sympathetic to al-Qa'eda, are justified in launching a wave of terrorist attacks against Western targets?

On balance justified
Not at all justified
On balance not justified
Don't believe they have done so (YouGov 2005)

If such [future AlQueda] attacks took place, do you think they would be justified?

Yes
No
Don't know (YouGov 2005)

Do you think that any further attacks by British suicide bombers in the UK are justified or unjustified?

Justified
Unjustified
Don't know (ICM 2005)

Some people say it is acceptable for religious or political groups to use violence for political ends. Do you yourself think it is:

Acceptable
Unacceptable
Don't know (ICM 2005)

What is your view of the suicide bombers of July 7th?

Strongly against what they did
Against what they did
Not sure
Agree with what they did
Strongly agree with what they did (ComRes 2005)

For Al-Qa'eda or those sympathetic to Al Qa'eda to attack Western targets

Right
Wrong
Don't know (ICM 2006a)

For Muslims to have bombed London on 7/7 and 21/7

Right
Wrong
Don't know (ICM 2006a)

It is acceptable for religious and political groups to use violence for political ends

Agree
Disagree
Don't know (NOP 2006)

Is it justifiable to commit acts of terrorism against civilians in the UK?

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know (1990 Trust 2006)

Tacit support for terrorism

Whether or not you think the attacks were justified, do you personally have any sympathy with
Yes, a lot
No, not at all
No, not much
Yes, a little
Don't know (YouGov 2005)

Whether or not you have any sympathy with the feelings of those who carried out the attacks, do you think you UNDERSTAND why some people might behave in that way?

Yes, I think I can understand them
No, I can’t understand how anyone could behave like that
Don't know (YouGov 2005)

The Prime Minister has described as ‘perverted and poisonous’ the ideas that led the London suicide bombers to carry out their attacks

I disagree
I agree
Don't know (YouGov 2005)

Irrespective of whether you think the London bombings were justified or not, do you personally have any sympathy with

Yes a lot
Yes a little
No
Don't know (ICM 2006a)

I can understand why some young British Muslims might have wanted to carry out suicide operations in Britain

Agree
Disagree
Don't know (NOP 2006)
The 7/7 attacks were wrong but the cause of the bombers was right
Strongly agree
Somewhat Agree
Neither Agree nor disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don’t know (Populus 2006)

‘Given what is happening in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine, I have some sympathy with Muslims fighting a holy war against the West’
Agree
Disagree
Don’t know (YouGov 2006)

Conditional support for terrorism
Are there any circumstances under which you think that suicide bombings can ever be justified in any of the following places? Please say yes or no in each case...
• UK
• Israel
• Chechnya
• Iraq
Yes
No
Refused
Don’t know (Populus 2006a)

Are there any circumstances under which you think that suicide bombings can ever be justified against these following types of targets?
• Civilians
• The military
• The police
• Government buildings/ workers
Yes
No
Don’t know (Populus 2006a)

To exercise violence against those who are deemed by religious leaders to have insulted Islam
Right
Wrong
Don’t know (ICM 2006a)

Some people also said that the July bombings were justified because of British support for the US war on terror. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this sentiment?
Agree
Disagree
Violence against civilian targets in order to defend Islam can be justified... *

Often/Sometimes
Rarely
Never
Don’t know (NOP 2006a)

Are there any circumstances under which you think that suicide bombings can ever be justified in the UK against the following types of targets?

- Civilians
- The military
- The police
- Government buildings/ workers

Yes
No
Don’t know (Populus 2006b)

‘Given what is happening in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine, I have some sympathy with Muslims fighting a holy war against the West’

Agree
Disagree
Don’t know (YouGov 2006)

‘It is NEVER justified for anyone to attack British civilians because of Britain’s actions in Iraq and Afghanistan’

Agree
Disagree
Don’t know (YouGov 2006)

Is it justifiable to commit acts of terrorism against civilians in the UK?

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don’t know (1990 Trust 2006)
Question 1. Support for terrorism - causes

Treatment 1

[ms1a if split1==1]{grid roworder=”randomize”} There are many causes of terrorist attacks in the modern world. By terrorist attack we mean any intentional violent action against civilians, military, police or governments. Are there any circumstances under which you think that terrorist attacks can ever be justified for any of the following reasons? Please say yes or no in each case…

- [ms1a_1] Environmental causes
- [ms1a_2] Animal rights
- [ms1a_3] Islamic extremism
- [ms1a_4] Protecting your religious faith
- [ms1a_5] Protecting your cultural values
- [ms1a_6] Fighting for independence of your country
- [ms1a_7] Fighting against an oppressive regime
- [ms1a_8] Fighting against a foreign occupation of your country

<1> Yes, can sometimes be justified

<2> No, can never be justified

<3> Not sure

Treatment 2

[ms1b if split1==2]{grid roworder=”randomize”} There are many causes of terrorist attacks in the modern world. By terrorist attack we mean any violent action against civilians, military, police or governments. Are there any circumstances under which you think that
terrorist attacks can ever be justified for any of the following reasons? Please say yes or no in each case…

- [ms1b_1] Environmental causes
- [ms1b_2] Animal rights
- [ms1b_3] Islamic extremism
- [ms1b_4] Protecting your religious faith
- [ms1b_5] Protecting your cultural values
- [ms1b_6] Fighting for independence of your country
- [ms1b_7] Fighting against an oppressive regime
- [ms1b_8] Fighting against a foreign occupation of your country

<1> Yes, can sometimes be justified

<2> Yes, can sometimes be justified, but only in extreme circumstances

<3> No, can never be justified

<4> Not sure

**Question 2: Support for terrorism- geographical areas/causes**

**Treatment 1:**

[ms2aif split1==1]{gridroworder="randomize"} Are there any circumstances under which you think that suicide bombings can ever be justified in any of the following conflicts? Please say yes or no in each case…

- [ms2a_1] British citizens opposed to the British government’s wars in Afghanistan and Iraq
- [ms2a_2] Palestinians fighting Israel in Gaza and the West Bank
- [ms2a_3] Rebel forces fighting Colonel Gaddafi in Libya

<1> Yes, can sometimes be justified

<2> No, can never be justified
Not sure

Treatment 2:

[ms2bif split1==2]{grid roworder="randomize"} Are there any circumstances under which you think that suicide bombings can ever be justified in any of the following conflicts? Please say yes or no in each case…

-[ms2a_1] British citizens opposed to the British government’s wars in Afghanistan and Iraq
-[ms2a_2] Palestinians fighting Israel in Gaza and the West Bank
-[ms2a_3] Rebel forces fighting Colonel Gaddafi in Libya

<1> Yes, can sometimes be justified

<2> Yes, can sometimes be justified, but only in extreme circumstances

<3> No, can never by justified

<4> Not sure

Question 3: Conditional support for terrorism- targets

Treatment 1:

[ms3aif split1==1]{grid roworder="randomize"} Are there any circumstances under which you think that suicide bombings can ever be justified against these following types of targets?

-[ms3a_1] Civilians
-[ms3a_2] The military
-[ms3a_3] The police
-[ms3a_4] Government buildings
-[ms3a_5] Government employees

<1> Yes, can sometimes be justified

<2> No, can never by justified

<3> Not sure

Treatment 2:
Are there any circumstances under which you think that suicide bombings can ever be justified against these following types of targets?
- Civilians
- The military
- The police
- Government buildings
- Government employees

<1> Yes, can sometimes be justified

<2> Yes, can sometimes be justified, but only in extreme circumstances

<3> No, can never be justified

<4> Not sure

Question 4: Tacit support for terrorism

Treatment 1:

Whether or not you have any sympathy with the feelings of those who carry out suicide attacks, do you think you understand why some people might behave in that way?

<1> I do understand why some people might behave in that way

<2> I do not understand why some people might behave in that way

<3> Not sure

Treatment 2:

Do you think you can understand why some people might want to carry out suicide attacks.

<1> I do understand why some people might behave in that way

<2> I do not understand why some people might behave in that way

<3> Not sure
**Bibliography**

Michael Gove, *Celsius 7/7* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006);

Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan: how Britain is creating a terror state within* (London: Gibson Square, 2006);

Martin Bright, *When progressives treat with reactionaries* (London: Policy Exchange, 2006);


Shore Breeding Bin Ladens,

Saggar The One Percent World

Zehfuss M. 2012 ‘Killing civilians: thinking the practice of war’

Home Office ‘Prevent’

House of Commons ‘Roots of violent radicalisation’

Githens-Mazer and Lambert 2010 International Affairs

---

1 The exclusion of Muslims has made no substantive or statistically significant difference to the results—partly as a consequence of their negligible number.