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Article

Assessing Dimensions of the Security-Liberty Trade-off in the United States

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Abstract

The trade-off between security and liberty has been a leading frame for understanding public opinion about domestic surveillance policies. Most of the empirical work explicitly examining whether individuals meet the trade-off framework's core attitudinal assumptions comes from European studies. This study uses a survey of US residents to assess the veracity of the assumptions embedded in the trade-off framework, namely whether domestic counterterrorism policies are simultaneously viewed as improving security and decreasing liberty. We find that the vast majority of US respondents do not meet the basic attitudinal assumptions of the trade-off frame. Next, we evaluate the source of these attitudes with a focus on whether attitudes toward surveillance policies merely relate to core political values or whether they also depend on the messages from political leaders. We find that both political values and opinion leadership shape these attitudes. Finally, because general attitudes towards surveillance and privacy often fail to have practical implications, we assess whether these attitudes matter for understanding the structure of policy support. Our results show that heightened terrorism threat positively associates with increased support for counterterrorism policies only when people believe these policies are effective security tools.

Introduction

A large and informative literature examines US public opinion surrounding counterterrorism policy and the curtailing of individual privacy. Much of this US scholarship, however, relies on the assumption that counterterrorism policy preferences are shaped by a security-liberty trade-off, with individuals choosing their preferred policy by advantaging one value (i.e., security) at the expense of the other (i.e., liberty) (e.g., Davis and Silver 2004; Huddy et al. 2005; Lewis 2005; Strickland and Hunt 2005; Stevens and Vaughn-Williams 2014; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009; Garcia and Geva 2016). This common practice of using the trade-off perspective has been criticized as normatively problematic because it advantages security over liberty (Pavone and Degli Esposti 2012; Solove 2008; van den Broek et al. 2017), assuming without factual basis that security and privacy cannot be simultaneously achieved when in fact these may be “compatible rather than antagonistic” (Degli Espositi, Payone, and Santiago-Gomez 2017: 72). Assuming, as the trade-off frame does, an all or nothing interconnection of security and privacy minimizes the importance of privacy, relegating it to a secondary societal value with security typically placed above privacy on the hierarchy of societal needs (Fuchs 2013; Solove 2008; Cas et al. 2017; Strauß 2017). The importance of privacy for free expression, political engagement, and healthy democratic institutions is sidelined or absent from most trade-off discussions (Solove 2008). Due to the trade-off framework's inherent partiality towards security and its prevalence in structuring public opinion research, empirical scholars should assess whether individuals actually conform to core assumptions of the security-liberty trade-off.

Indeed, this systematic assessment of public opinion and the supposed trade-off has been undertaken in certain contexts. Several large and multifaceted European studies have sought to test whether the trade-off

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framework empirically organizes European residents' attitudes about domestic security policies (van den Broek et al. 2017; Potoglou et al. 2010; Friedwald and Bellanova 2015). Broadly speaking, these studies cast serious doubt on the trade-off framework, suggesting that ordinary people do not view privacy enhancing domestic security policies as necessarily leading to decreases in security (e.g., van den Broek et al. 2017). Despite examination of the trade-off framework in Europe, whether or not attitudes conform to this framework has not yet been deeply examined in the United States. Henderson (2015) notes that this trade-off may be culturally contextual with attitudes conforming to differentiated patterns across environments (see also Budak et al. 2017). Similarly, Menichelli (2017: 102) observes, "It is no longer possible to ignore questions of cultural, societal, and geographic variation when we talk about security and privacy." Certainly, given the pervasiveness of the use of this framework throughout the American public opinion literature, it is useful to directly study this question in a US context.

We begin our study of US residents by assessing the veracity of the assumptions embedded in the trade-off framework. Specifically, we examine if various counterterrorism policies are simultaneously viewed as improving security but also decreasing liberty. We find that the vast majority of respondents do not conform to these core assumptions of the trade-off framework. Rather than a trade-off, most simply think these surveillance policies either have no effect on reducing terrorism or have no negative privacy implications for ordinary individuals.

Next, we offer an explanation for how attitudes about the security effectiveness and privacy implications of these surveillance policies are structured. Consistent with standard approaches to understanding the structure of public opinion, we find that US residents exhibit security and privacy attitudes about domestic counterterrorism policies consistent with their political predispositions and existing knowledge. This suggests that these attitudes are not merely based on political leanings or values but instead are importantly shaped by elite messaging.

Finally, we assess the empirical implications of the lack of a security-liberty trade-off. This is important to consider because the privacy opinion literature has often recognized what is known as a "privacy paradox," where individuals' general surveillance and privacy opinions do not translate into obvious or expected outcomes such as positive correlations with engagement in privacy protecting behaviors or opposition to concrete public policies that violate privacy (Azjen 1991; Barth and deJong 2017). For this project, we consider how the lack of trade-off attitudes may impact the well-known relationship between perceived terrorism threat and support for counterterrorism policies. We show that terrorism threat positively predicts support for domestic counterterrorism policies only for those that believe these policies work as intended in reducing terrorism. These results suggest that opinions about the components of the privacy-security trade-off matter.

The Security-Liberty Trade-Off Framework and US Public Opinion

This notion that one desirable policy goal or value comes at the expense of another value is nothing new. From lower taxes and government spending to environmental protection and economic growth to unemployment and inflation, the pursuit of one desired outcome is often associated with the loss of a second outcome (Hibbs 1979; Kuklinski et al. 2001; Citrin 1979). Consistent with this approach, in the contemporary US literature, the trade-off between security and liberty has been the leading frame for scholarly discourse surrounding surveillance policies designed to reduce terrorism. Dragu (2011: 64) finds that this trade-off frame is ubiquitous, "almost everyone—citizens, policy makers, political pundits, and scholars—approaches the formulation of counterterrorism policies as a balancing act between allegedly competing values of privacy and security" (see also Lewis 2005; Strickland and Hunt 2005; Stevens and Vaughn-Williams 2014; Garcia and Geva 2016). The most highly cited US opinion literature on domestic

counterterrorism policies certainly uses a trade-off frame (Davis and Silver 2004; Huddy et al. 2005), often structuring research designs to force respondents into using the trade-off approach.¹

Two typically unarticulated assumptions about public opinion are central to these trade-off arguments: (1) these domestic counterterrorism policies are seen as effective at reducing terrorism and (2) respondents believe these policies damage civil liberties (Pavone and Degli Esposti 2012). That these surveillance policies work and that these policies violate citizens' privacy are taken as givens throughout much of the US public opinion literature. Yet security specialists have long noted that while the trade-off model of placing security and privacy at "opposite ends of a single continuum has appealing properties, it is overly simplistic" because domestic counterterrorism policy "implementation is not always effective" at reducing terrorism and only some domestic surveillance policies "degrade privacy" (Conti, Shay, and Hartzog 2014: 28–29; Degli Espositi, Payone, and Santiago-Gomez 2017.). Additionally, even if some domestic surveillance policies lead to a security-privacy trade-off, ordinary individuals may not appreciate all sides of the risks and benefits associated with a particular policy, thus their thinking about these issues may not conform to the trade-off frame (Margolis 1996; Sunstein 2003; Gaskell et al. 2004; Degli Espositi, Payone, and Santiago-Gomez 2017).

Although the security-liberty trade-off frame has produced valuable public opinion research about domestic surveillance programs, no studies have deeply examined whether US residents meet the basic conditions for using this trade-off framework when formulating opinions about these policies (though see the aforementioned European PRISMS project for a complementary approach).² If US residents use the trade-off frame to structure their opinions then we should find widespread evidence supporting the assumptions of the trade-off approach. Particularly, we should find that individuals generally perceive these policies to be both effective at reducing terrorism as well as a violation of privacy. Without each of these assumptions met, individuals could not view the decision to support or oppose these policies as a trade-off, and it would call into question the dominance of this trade-off framework for understanding attitudes towards domestic surveillance policies in the US.³

¹ Davis and Silver's *Civil Liberties vs. Security: Public Opinion in the Context of the Terrorist Attacks on America* is among the best-known public opinion pieces in this genre. The use of "vs." in the title places security and civil liberties in direct interconnected opposition. The main battery of Davis and Silver's (2004: 44) questions make these trade-offs explicit by asking respondents to tell surveyors which statement they agree with the most: "in order to curb terrorism in this country, it will be necessary to give up some civil liberties, -or- we should preserve our freedoms above all, even if there remains some risk of terrorism." Respondents are put into one or the other trade-off camp. Because of the forced choice nature of the question, unless they refused to answer the question, respondents could hardly escape the trade-off frame. In their equally influential early treatment of civil liberties and security after 9/11, Huddy et al. (2005: 603) take a similar trade-off approach to organize public opinion, finding that "[t]he public was split on this trade-off" between concern that antiterrorism laws would not be strong enough to prevent terrorism and worry about how strong counterterrorism laws would lead to a loss of civil liberties.

² A European project, *Privacy and Security Mirrors (PRISMS)* used both qualitative and quantitative approaches to consider many dimensions of privacy and security, including the appropriateness of using the trade-off framework for understanding citizen attitudes. Although attitudes towards government policies, technology, privacy, and security vary widely throughout the European countries studied, the general conclusion is that the trade-off frame does not explain how most Europeans structure their attitudes (Friedewald et al. 2016; Friedewald et al. 2015; Pavone and Degli Esposti 2012).

³ A US context complements the rich European studies as these studies suggest that support for surveillance and the trade-off argument may rely on cultural variance (Henderson 2015; Budak et al. 2017), are tied to type and goal of surveillance activities (Degli Espositi, Payone, and Santiago-Gomez 2017), and are policy specific (van den Broek et al. 2017). The US, in contrast to European country samples, has an enduring two-party system. The US system uniquely offers the opportunity to constrain dialogue surrounding competing values of security and privacy due to the limited nature of argument within political space. Multi-party systems may require more nuance in identification of specific policies and actions associated with security and/or privacy resulting in a more nuanced and engaged examination of the concepts in political space.

Fortunately, a unique 2007 probability sample survey (Best 2007) conducted by the authors⁴ asks US residents questions about several domestic counterterrorism policies ranging from the US government reading emails and listening to phone calls without a warrant to the government accessing phone metadata to the mandated carrying of a national ID card to full body x-rays at airports. Importantly, rather than assuming that respondents view these policies in terms of a trade-off, these questions separately assess the assumptions of the trade-off frame. With separate stand-alone questions, the survey assesses whether respondents (1) think each of these policies violate ordinary individuals' privacy and (2) think these policies will be effective at reducing terrorism. The question wording is detailed below:

Read Email Messages

Do you think reading ordinary Americans' email messages will or will not be effective in reducing the threat of terrorism?

Do you think reading ordinary Americans' email messages does or does not violate the personal privacy of people like you?

Collect Telephone Metadata

Do you think looking at the telephone numbers dialed by ordinary Americans without listening to the content of their calls will or will not be effective in reducing the threat of terrorism?

Do you think looking at the telephone numbers dialed by ordinary Americans without listening to the content of their calls does or does not violate the personal privacy of people like you?

Wiretap Phone Conversations

Do you think wiretapping telephone conversations between ordinary Americans will or will not be effective in reducing the threat of terrorism?

Do you think wiretapping telephone conversations between ordinary Americans does or does not violate the personal privacy of people like you?

Carry National ID Cards

⁴ As part of a larger project designed to investigate political attitudes and behaviors during the summer of 2007, the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut administered an RDD telephone sample of adult, non-institutionalized residents of the contiguous United States. From August 15 through September 12, 2007, telephone numbers were dialed daily. Interviewers attempted up to eight calls to contact potential respondents and used a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system to administer questions and record responses. The response rate was 36.2%, which yielded 1036 respondents. Although not as high as some national surveys, such as the National Election Studies or the General Social Surveys, research has shown that this response rate was common for this time period and does not necessarily yield lower quality data (Keeter et al. 2000). All analyses were run using weighted data (by race, gender, age, and education). Because of their centrality to the analysis, and the fact that table 1 displays frequencies, we do not impute any of the missing data for the questions used as dependent variables. But when independent variables had missing values, we did impute. In our view, the loss of information by fully discarding any case that had even one missing value across all independent variables would have been worse than imputation. We took a simple approach to avoid leveraging the results: we assigned missing values to either the neutral position or the median value.

Do you think requiring ordinary Americans to carry a national identification card at all times will or will not be effective in reducing the threat of terrorism?

Do you think requiring ordinary Americans to carry a national identification card at all times does or does not violate the personal privacy of people like you?

X-Ray Machine before Boarding Flight

Do you think requiring airline passengers to walk through and be scanned by x-ray machines before being able to board a flight will or will not be effective in reducing the threat of terrorism?

Do you think requiring airline passengers to walk through and be scanned by x-ray machines before being able to board a flight does or does not violate the personal privacy of people like you? (Best 2007)

Table 1 displays the cross-tabulations of the above “effective” and “violate” questions for each of the five domestic counterterrorism policies. Respondents can fall into four categories for each policy. They may think these policies are (1) not effective and not a violation of privacy, (2) not effective and a violation of privacy, (3) effective and not a violation of privacy, or (4) effective and a violation of privacy. Any of the first three categories do not satisfy the assumptions of a trade-off between security and liberty. Only those respondents in the fourth category satisfy the assumptions of the trade-off frame. Individuals in the fourth category may wrestle with a security-liberty values trade-off when considering whether to support domestic surveillance policies as they view these policies as effective at reducing terrorism but at the same time likely to violate privacy. This fourth category conforms well to the classic security-liberty trade-off dilemma, which leads to our first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: The security-liberty trade-off framework expects the majority of US residents to view these policies as both effective at reducing terrorism and a violation of privacy.

For each of the five domestic counterterrorism policies, about one quarter or fewer of respondents fall into the classic trade-off category. In other words, for any given policy only between six and twenty-six percent conform to the trade-off assumption that these policies are both effective at reducing terrorism and a threat to ordinary individuals’ privacy. On average, less than one in five respondents would possibly wrestle with the security-liberty trade-off when deciding whether to support these domestic policies.

The first category generally held the lowest proportion of respondents. Only a small fraction, averaging just over eleven percent of the sample, believe that these policies are both not effective at reducing terrorism and at the same time not a violation of privacy. For this group, the decision to support these domestic counterterrorism policies is not a security-liberty trade-off. Indeed, neither of the key outcomes, security or privacy, are at stake.

On average, over a third of respondents fall into the category representing views that these policies do not effectively reduce terrorism but do violate privacy. These individuals seem to see these domestic surveillance policies as liberty infirming security theatre. Similarly sized proportions fell into the opposite category—beliefs that these policies do effectively reduce terrorism but do not violate privacy. These individuals believe in the ability of these policies to achieve the stated security objectives without the negative privacy externalities. For each of the five policies, the largest group of respondents resides in one of these middle categories.

The cross-tabulations tell a clear story. The vast majority of US residents do not believe that these policies are both effective at reducing terrorism and at the same time a violation of privacy. Hypothesis 1, based on the security-liberty trade-off framework, is not supported, making it hard to accept that this frame explains

how individuals evaluate domestic counterterrorism policies in the US. Indeed, despite its prominence, the trade-off frame seems deeply inadequate as an explanation for the attitudes of the vast majority of US residents. That 71%, 68%, 71%, 68%, and 79% of respondents reside across the middle two categories in Table 1 suggests that perceptions about the security and privacy implications of these policies are generally sorted into polar opposite camps. What then explains the dissonance between the core assumptions of the trade-off frame and the presented empirical evidence about polarized privacy and efficacy perceptions of these domestic counterterrorism policies? We expect that, like many other political attitudes, this opinion polarization towards the privacy implications and effectiveness of domestic surveillance programs are likely explained by elite opinion leadership models.

Certainly, the pattern of elite communication was polarized on domestic surveillance policies, with one study showing that the major networks evenly split airtime between those who supported and criticized the administration’s domestic counterterrorism policies (Nacos, Bloch-Elkon, and Shapiro 2011). President Bush’s supporters and surrogates claimed that these surveillance practices targeted only potential terrorists and extolled the importance of these counterterrorism approaches for protecting the lives of Americans. Opponents of the administration argued that these new domestic counterterrorism policies were merely ineffective security theatre that did little to protect Americans but that did damage the privacy of ordinary citizens (Richey 2009).

	Tradeoff Assumptions Not Met			Tradeoff Assumptions Met	Total
	Not Effective & Not a Violation	Not Effective & Violation	Effective & Not a Violation	Effective & Violation	
Read Email Messages	5%	52%	19%	24%	100% (N=969)
Phone Metadata	15%	39%	29%	17%	100% (N=974)
Wiretap Telephone	3%	53%	18%	26%	100% (N=985)
National ID Card	27%	27%	41%	6%	100% (N=981)
Pre-Flight X-Ray	7%	6%	73%	15%	100% (N=1004)

Table 1: Effective Reducing Terrorism and Violation of Privacy for Broad-based Domestic Anti-Terrorism Policies

Given the elite patterns of divergence in messages regarding the security efficacy and privacy implications of these policies, an elite opinion leadership model may help explain the opinion polarization pattern seen in Table 1. Many related approaches to understanding elite opinion leadership exist (for example, Vermeesch and De Pauw 2017), but Zaller’s (1992) well-known “Receive-Accept-Sample” (RAS) framework is particularly well suited to be tested using survey data such as the type included in this study. Zaller’s Receive-Accept-Sample model suggests that elite messages can influence attitudes but elite influence depends on the individual’s political predispositions and political knowledge. Politically sophisticated recipients are informed about the political debates occurring between elites and tend to heed the arguments about policy from leaders with whom they are predisposed to agree. Additionally, knowledgeable individuals are unlikely to be converted by counter-attitudinal elite messages because they are better able to neutralize arguments when they come from elites with whom they are predisposed to disagree. Message recipients with higher levels of knowledge are less likely to be swayed by a counter-attitudinal message because they have the tools to question the credibility of the messenger and evidence.

By contrast, those with lower levels of knowledge are less likely to receive any messages in the first place and have more difficulty consistently connecting their predispositions to any messages to which they are exposed.

If the elite opinion leadership framework helps explain this public pattern of opinion, we would expect that supporters and opponents of President Bush will tend to hold different views regarding whether the domestic counterterrorism policies were effective at reducing terrorism and whether these policies violated privacy. But we might expect this result based on political predispositions alone. For the data to support that elite opinion leadership is at work in structuring individual opinions and not just political predispositions, the most knowledgeable Bush supporters should best conform to the administration's position that these domestic counterterrorism policies effectively increase security and do not violate privacy. For Bush opponents, higher knowledge levels should have the exact opposite effect on opinions. The most knowledgeable Bush disapprovers, relative to the least knowledgeable Bush disapprovers, should view these policies as particularly ineffective and a violation of privacy.

Hypothesis 2: For President Bush approvers, knowledge should positively associate with views that these domestic counterterrorism policies effectively increase security and negatively associate with views that these policies violate privacy.

Hypothesis 3: For President Bush disapprovers, knowledge should negatively associate with views that these domestic counterterrorism policies effectively increase security and positively associate with views that these policies violate privacy.

The key goal here is to assess whether standard attitude patterns, such as elite opinion leadership, apply to the structure of opinion about the privacy and security implications of domestic counterterrorism policies. This contrasts with the trade-off framework that assumes people broadly accept that a loss of privacy and an increase in security are the inevitable outcomes of domestic counterterrorism policies.

Two models assess whether the nature of domestic counterterrorism policy opinions (effectiveness and privacy) conforms to opinion polarization patterns, which would help explain the Table 1 descriptive results. In this context, the elite opinion leadership framework suggests that political predispositions moderate the influence of knowledge on attitudes towards the effectiveness and privacy implications of domestic counterterrorism policies. The dependent variables are a 0–5 point additive index of the five domestic counterterrorism effectiveness questions and a 0–5 point index of the five privacy violation questions used in the descriptive analysis. Higher index scores represent agreement that these domestic counterterrorism policies are effective at reducing terrorism and a violation of ordinary Americans' privacy respectively. For the theoretically applicable independent variables, we create an interaction term using a standard presidential approval question anchored by “strongly approve” and “strongly disapprove” to measure political predispositions and an objective knowledge index that gauges individual's knowledge about various aspects of US domestic counterterrorism programs. The following survey script and questions were used to construct a four-point knowledge index, with respondents scored as having zero (28% of respondents), one (28%), two (29%) or three (15%) correct answers:

Next we have a few questions about current events. Many people don't know the answers to these questions, so if there are some you don't know just tell me and we'll go on.

Which of the following does the USA Patriot Act primarily deal with, is it...[choices rotated randomly]

Enhanced surveillance procedures

Supplying body armor to the soldiers serving in Iraq

Procedures for interrogating suspected terrorists

Security of airlines

What action did the National Security Agency undertake without first obtaining a warrant, was it...[choices rotated randomly]

Wiretapping telephone conversations of US citizens

Searching immigrants crossing the Mexican border

Interrogating terror suspects at Guantanamo Bay

Seizing passengers' luggage at American airports

What information did the government ask Internet search companies such as Yahoo, Google, and Microsoft to turn over about its users, was it...[choices rotated randomly]

Internet search terms

User's email addresses

Credit card information

Computer passwords (Best 2007)

This interaction term of political predispositions and knowledge will be used to test whether opinion polarization regarding the privacy and security implications of domestic counterterrorism policies conforms to elite opinion leadership mechanisms. Also included are a series of control variables that have been previously shown to shape attitudes towards public policies generally and counterterrorism and surveillance policies specifically (Huddy et al. 2005; Stevens and Vaughn-Williams 2014). Demographic variables include age, education, income, race, and gender. Attitudinal variables include trust of government, ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, patriotism, and partisan identification. Because many of the domestic counterterrorism policies involve the use of new information technologies, we also include the degree of internet use and a measure of online skills (Ridout, Grosse, and Appleton. 2008). Finally, to capture an individual's personal sensitivity towards privacy violations, we include a measure of past personal privacy violations.

	Violation Index	Effectiveness Index
Surveillance Knowledge	.337 *** (.118)	-.417 *** (.125)
Bush Approval	-.391 *** (.094)	.348 *** (.101)
Knowledge*Approval	-.195 *** (.052)	.163 *** (.056)
Age	-.002 (.004)	-.003 (.004)
Income	-.098 * (.051)	.028 (.056)
White	-.205	.147

	(.144)	(.148)
Education	.033 (.062)	-.030 (.066)
Female	.232 * (.129)	-.276 ** (.138)
Government Trust	-.320 *** (.085)	.229 *** (.087)
Authoritarianism	-.201 *** (.065)	.267 *** (.070)
Personal Privacy Violation	.188 ** (.069)	-.024 (.070)
Online Skills	.146 * (.078)	.025 (.081)
Internet Usage	-.087 (.052)	.011 (.054)
Party Identification	-.015 (.037)	.028 (.039)
Patriotism	-.120 (.078)	.253 *** (.080)
Ethnocentrism	-.221 *** (.062)	.306 *** (.064)
LR Chi-SQR	310.5	279.8
N	965	878
Cells are coefficients with standard errors in parenthesis. * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$		

Table 2: Ordered Logistic Models of Effectiveness and Violation Indices

Table 2 displays the two ordered logistic regression models of the privacy violation index and the effectiveness index.⁵ In each model, the interaction term is statistically significant at conventional thresholds ($p < .01$), suggesting that the effect of knowledge on attitudes is indeed different for Bush approvers and disapprovers. Of course, the interaction terms of presidential approval and surveillance knowledge make straightforward interpretation of the coefficients challenging from the numerical tables alone. Therefore, to gauge how knowledge levels differently influences Bush supporters' and opponents' views of privacy and effectiveness, we graphically display the effect using the Clarify addition to Stata Statistical Software (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000). This approach displays the effect of surveillance knowledge on the effectiveness and the violation indices, as moderated by presidential approval. Specifically, Figures 3 and 4 display high and low knowledge Bush approvers' and high and low knowledge Bush disapprovers' predicted probabilities of having high scores on the violation and effectiveness indices.

⁵ Because the dependent variable is not continuous, ordered logistic regression, rather than OLS, is used.

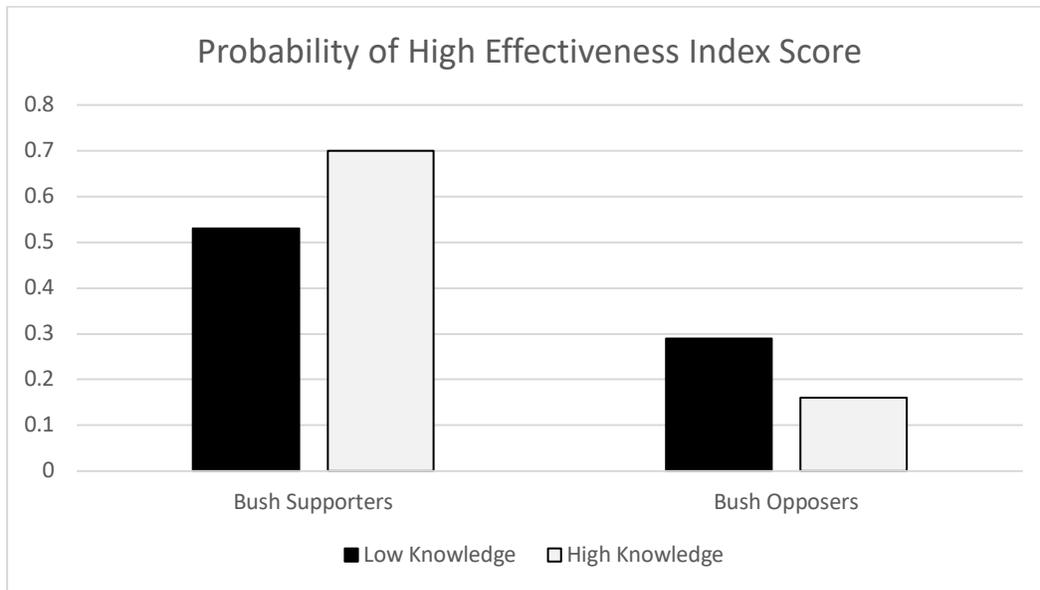


Figure 1: Effect of knowledge on effectiveness views by presidential approval.

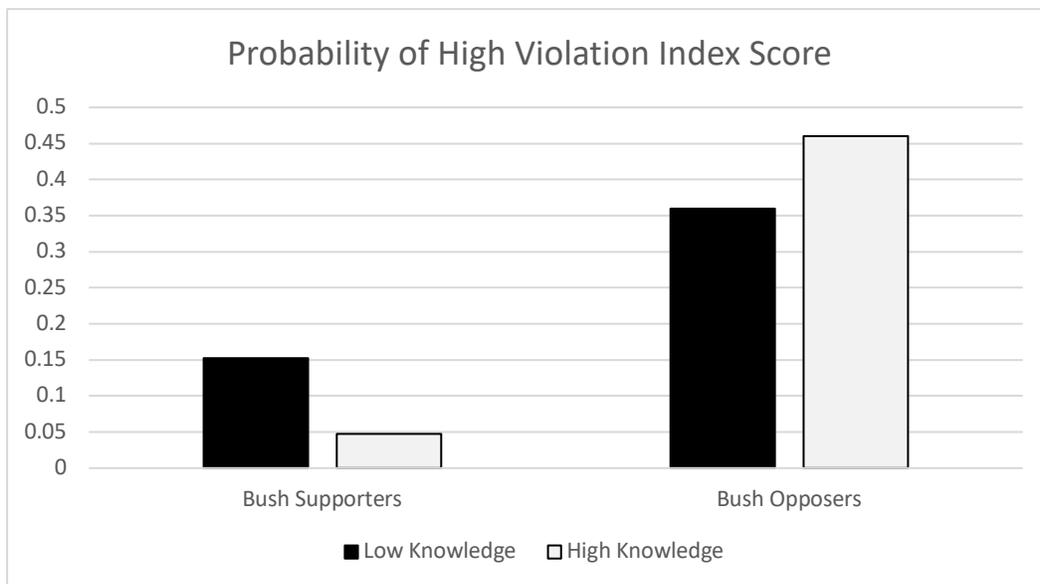


Figure 2: Effect of knowledge on violation views by presidential approval.

The results support hypotheses two and three: knowledge has opposite effects for Bush approvers and Bush disapprovers. As such, the results are consistent with standard opinion polarization frameworks and suggest that elite opinion leadership drives individual opinion. The figures show that knowledgeable Bush supporters, relative to less knowledgeable Bush supporters, consider these policies less likely to violate privacy and more likely to effectively reduce terrorism. Sophisticated supporters are most aligned with the administration’s positions about the privacy and efficacy of these surveillance programs. As expected, higher knowledge levels have the opposite effect on those who disapprove of the president. Knowledgeable Bush disapprovers, compared to less knowledgeable Bush disapprovers, consider these policies more likely to violate privacy and less likely to reduce terrorism. Well-informed opponents of the president are least aligned with the administration’s messages.

Additionally, Bush approvers and disapprovers with the lowest degree of surveillance knowledge have more similar attitudes towards the privacy implications and counterterrorism effectiveness of these policies compared to Bush approvers and disapprovers with the highest degree of surveillance knowledge. The magnitude of the privacy and effectiveness opinion gaps is substantively impressive. Comparing Bush supporters' and opponents' probability of scoring high on the effectiveness opinion index, we see just a 23-point effectiveness opinion gap for the least knowledgeable respondents; this gap swells to 53 points for the most knowledgeable respondents. We see a very similar pattern when considering Bush supporters' versus Bush opponents' attitudes towards privacy violations, with the opinions much more similar for those with low knowledge levels (20-point gap) compared to those with high levels of knowledge (42-point gap). These results suggest that the opinion polarization at the individual level seems to be driven as much by political predispositions as by elite opinion leadership.

Discussion and Extension of Findings

Studies of attitudes towards surveillance and privacy should attempt to assess their practical relevance because the surveillance and privacy literature often finds that individual preferences for valuing privacy fail to translate into actions protecting privacy (Joinson et al. 2010) or into support for policies ensuring privacy or curtailing surveillance efforts (Ajzen 1991). This disconnect between individual privacy values and logically anticipated individual outcomes is described as “the privacy paradox” (Simon 1955, 1982). Numerous examples of this paradox have been demonstrated. For example, despite expressing support for the value of privacy and concerns surrounding privacy violations, individuals still submit personal information online or on non-anonymous surveys in contravention to explicitly identified values (Smith, Diney, and Xu 2011; Degli Espositi, Payone, and Santiago-Gomez 2017) often in order to secure a small benefit (Barth and de Jong 2017). Privacy concerns are triggered, it seems, only when the violations are personally very consequential (van der Brock et al. 2017), suggesting that generalized concern about privacy violations are not inherently motivating (Barth and de Jong 2017). Most relevant for this project, the relationship between privacy and government intrusion in particular is constantly re-negotiated through fiscal, employment, educational, and other channels, potentially fracturing the connection between general attitudes and acceptance of government actions (Smith, Diney, and Xu 2011).⁶

The privacy paradox literature suggests that we should not simply assume that the attitudinal components of the supposed trade-off studied in this project will have meaningful impact on more practical outcomes, such as support for or opposition to domestic counterterrorism policies. Therefore, we offer a test of the components' relevance for understanding the structure of opinion towards domestic counterterrorism policies. As we will describe below, some attitudes towards the components of the supposed trade-off should logically disrupt the positive connection between terrorist threat and support for domestic counterterrorism policies.

A review of securitization theory suggests that governments often inflate crises to shape desired policy outcomes, including the expansion of the surveillance state. The identification of some existential threat is used to promote the acceptance of security maximizing policies (Hundt 2014; Schneier 2003, 2008) and expand government power into new spheres (Fuchs 2013; Buzan, Waeber, and deWilde 1998; Huijboom and Bodea 2015; Strauß 2017). Mueller's 2009 book, *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them*, offers a substantive examination of this phenomenon in the United States. Mueller argues that the US executive branch purposely amplifies terrorism threat levels to bolster support for internationally aggressive and domestically invasive

⁶ Merchelli (2017) considers the paradox of support for inefficient government-run airport security screenings. Despite limited demonstrated efficacy and increased cost in terms of time and personal invasion, individuals supported heightened security airport screening because heightened screening meant the government was trying to do something rather than nothing to keep them safe from terrorism.

antiterrorism policies (see also Huddy et al. 2005).⁷ US elites pushing the threat of terrorism seems to be an effective strategy, as citizens respond by increasing support for domestically invasive counterterror policies. This connection has been consistently shown in empirical studies, with higher individual perceptions of terrorist threat powerfully associating with higher levels of policy support (Davis and Silver 2004; Hetherington and Weiler 2009; Huddy et al. 2005, 2007; Cohrs et al. 2005; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009; Kam and Kinder 2007; Joslyn and Haider-Markel 2007; Haider-Markel, Joslyn, and Tal-Baghal 2006; Norris 2017; Best, Krueger, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2012; Stevens and Vaughn-Williams 2014; Dolan and Ilderton 2017).

We reason that the connection between terrorism threat and counterterrorism policy support should be disrupted by the attitudes focused on in this project. Our logic borrows from Garcia and Geva's work (2016); increased terrorism threat should not increase support for invasive counterterrorism policies when people think these policies fail to protect people from terrorism.⁸ The Table 1 results show that large proportions of Americans, often a majority, do not see these domestic surveillance programs as effective at preventing terrorism. For this reason, we should detect a major attenuation of the positive relationship between terrorism threat and support for domestic counterterrorism policies *among individuals who find these policies ineffective at reducing terrorism*. In our view, the axiomatic positive relationship between perceptions of terrorism threat and support for domestic counterterrorism policies should extend only to those who believe domestic surveillance programs work to reduce terrorism. While this may seem obvious, it is worth testing for two reasons. First, most empirical models of the relationship between terrorism threat and counterterrorism policy support reviewed above do not make this distinction but instead treat the terror threat effect as uniform across individuals. Second, consistent with the privacy paradox, attitudes towards surveillance often fail to translate into expected outcomes, which makes judgments about the implications of surveillance attitudes using logic alone undependable.

Therefore, we develop a test to assess whether attitudes towards the effectiveness of domestic counterterrorism programs can disrupt the connection between terrorism threat and support for domestic counterterrorism policies. For the dependent variable, respondents were asked how strongly they support or oppose each of the five domestic counterterrorism policies. Because each policy has five response categories, factor analysis is used to create a factor score representing overall levels of policy support or opposition. We included the same independent variable specification as the previous models. Further, to test the key conditional effect, we include a standard measure of perceived terrorism threat and the previously detailed effectiveness and privacy violation indices. Specifically, we create an interaction term of the effectiveness index and the perceived terrorism threat measure to determine if the effect of terrorism threat is moderated by individuals' views towards effectiveness.

Hypothesis 4: The association between perceptions of terrorism threat and support for counterterrorism policies will be null when individuals generally believe that domestic counterterrorism policies do not effectively reduce terrorism.

The first column of Table 3 shows a nested model to establish that the relationship between threat and policy support conforms with the literature; the results replicate the common finding that perceived terrorism threat predicts support for domestic counterterrorism policies. The second model includes the interaction term, which is used to assess whether the effect of perceived terrorism threat is attenuated for those who believe these policies ineffective at reducing terrorism. The interaction term of perceived terrorism threat and the

⁷ The US executive branch creates national-level (sociotropic) perceptions of threat rather than personal safety concerns, as sociotropic threats are more significant than individual threats in shaping counterterrorism policy attitudes (Joslyn and Haides-Markel 2007). This aligns well with psychology literature on threat that shows individuals under threat react by seeking to resolve the basis of the threat (Witte 1992; Witte and Allen 2000).

⁸ Garcia and Geva's (2016) experiment builds in the liberty-security trade-off assumption challenged by this project. Work such as Peffley, Hutchison, and Shamir (2015) offers related insights showing chronic terrorist acts have different effects on intolerance attitudes depending on political affiliation of the individual.

effectiveness index is statistically significant at conventional levels ($p < .01$). Figure 3 shows the effect of this interaction term by displaying the marginal effect of perceived terrorism threat on support for domestic counterterror policies across the different levels of the effectiveness index. Because hypothesis four anticipates insignificant results, we use the 90% confidence level as the threshold to give the conventional finding of a significant positive relationship the greatest opportunity to receive support.

	Support Domestic Counterterrorism Policies	Support Domestic Counterterrorism Policies
Threat*Effectiveness	-	.036 *** (.011)
Terrorism Threat	.056 *** (.019)	-.043 (.035)
Effectiveness Index	.212 *** (.014)	.108 *** (.034)
Violation Index	-.245 *** (.016)	-.245 *** (.016)
Surveillance Knowledge	-.026 (.039)	-.023 (.039)
Bush Approval	.062 * (.031)	.071 ** (.031)
Knowledge*Approval	.014 (.017)	.012 (.017)
Age	.002 (.001)	.002 (.001)
Income	.018 (.017)	.015 (.017)
White	.015 (.045)	.005 (.045)
Education	-.001 (.020)	-.001 (.020)
Female	.054 (.042)	.049 (.042)
Government Trust	-.033 (.027)	-.032 (.027)
Authoritarianism	.027 (.021)	.026 (.021)
Personal Privacy Violation	.025 (.021)	.019 (.022)
Online Skills	.029 (.025)	.021 (.025)
Internet Usage	-.025 (.017)	-.017 (.017)
Party Identification	.018 (.012)	.016 (.012)
Patriotism	-.020 (.025)	-.014 (.025)
Ethnocentrism	.048 ** (.020)	.048 ** (.020)
R2	0.67	0.67
F	80.69	78.22
N	780	780

Cells are OLS coefficients with standard errors in parenthesis.
* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table 3: OLS Model Predicting Support for Domestic Counter-Terrorism Policies.

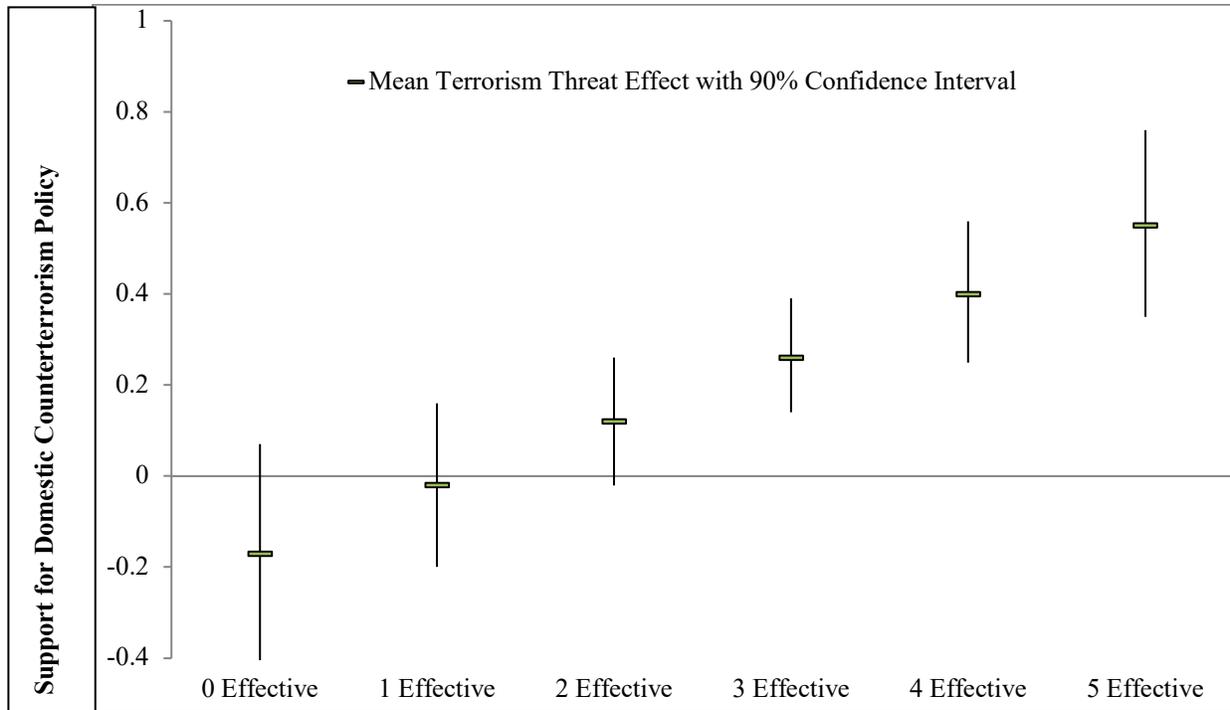


Figure 3: *Terror threat effect on support for domestic counterterrorism policy by effectiveness level.*

We find that for those respondents with low scores (0, 1, or 2) on the effectiveness index, terrorism threat has no significant association with domestic counterterrorism policy support, even when using the liberal 90% confidence level. This null condition comprises about half of the sample (scores of 0, 1, or 2 on the effectiveness index). Only those that had scores of 3, 4, or 5 on the effectiveness index, also representing about 50% of the sample, had positive statistically significant associations between terrorism threat and support for domestic counterterror policies. This pattern supports hypothesis four; terrorism threat would only associate with support for counterterrorism policies when there was some reasonable prospect of that policy resolving the threat. This threshold is identified as believing that a majority of the domestic counterterrorism policies would effectively reduce terrorism. The overall positive effect of perceived terrorism threat in column one of Table 3 then is driven by just the half of respondents that consider these policies to be generally effective tools to reduce terrorism in the United States. It seems that the attitudinal components (i.e., effectiveness index) of the supposed trade-off indeed have relevance for understanding the structure of domestic counterterrorism policy support and are not simply interesting antecedent attitudes with little practical import as is sometimes found in studies of privacy and surveillance.

Conclusion

Public opinion scholarship commonly assumes that counterterrorism policy preferences are structured by the security-liberty trade-off framework with policy attitudes formed by advantaging one value at the expense of the other. Several European studies have offered strong evidence that ordinary individuals do not typically think in terms of a trade-off when considering counterterrorism policies (van der Brock 2017; Potoglou et al. 2010; Bellanova and Gonzalez-Fuster 2013). Despite this work probing the veracity of the trade-off framework for understanding European attitudes, we still lack an overt examination about whether US attitudes conform to this trade-off framework. A focus on the trade-off thinking in the US is warranted because privacy and surveillance attitudes can vary greatly by culture and context and because the United States' approach to security often trickles over into the security arrangements of US allies.

In this study, a nationally representative survey of US residents demonstrates that the vast majority of Americans do not think of domestic counterterrorism policies in terms consistent with the assumptions of the liberty-security values trade-off. Specifically, the vast majority of US residents do not believe that these counterterrorism policies are simultaneously effective at reducing terrorism and a violation of privacy. Instead of fitting the trade-off assumptions that these policies increase security and impair privacy, what we find is that perceptions about the security and privacy implications of these policies generally sort into large contrasting camps. Respondents typically thought these policies either do not effectively reduce terrorism but do violate privacy or do effectively reduce terrorism and do not violate privacy. Rather than needing to carefully weigh privacy versus security, most US residents simply dismiss the applicability of one side of the liberty-security trade-off. Little evidence exists to support that trade-off thinking broadly occurs in the US population.

This opinion polarization pattern suggests that elite opinion leadership may be at work. When tested, we found that the data conforms to the standard elite opinion leadership framework, which helps comprehend why most people are sorted into distinct camps. Even above and beyond their political predispositions, individuals most aware of current events tend to most conform to the domestic counterterrorism attitudes of elites with whom they typically agree. Therefore, to protect democratic affirming attitudes in the face of terrorism we need to insist on maintaining vigorous public debate during times of crisis, especially from widely visible opposition leaders. Unfortunately, in the United States, opposition leaders are often silent and deferential to the executive branch during the critical moments that decide the trajectory of domestic counterterrorism policies, such as congressional Democrats' near universal early support for the initial Patriot Act.

Our results also have important consequences for understanding the regularly found positive relationship between the degree of terrorism threat and support for domestic counterterrorism policies. Instead of threat leading to a visceral, universal effect on support for counterterrorism policies, our results strongly suggest that perceived terrorist threat positively relates to support for domestic counterterrorism policies for only the subset of the US population that thinks these policies work to reduce terrorism. Large subpopulations of US residents think these domestic surveillance policies do not work as intended to reduce terrorism. As such, studies that follow the practice of simply including a linear terrorism threat variable in their models of policy support risk presenting a deeply inaccurate account of how threat connects to support for state domestic surveillance programs.

Of course, the primary concern of this project centers on testing whether the security-liberty trade-off framework actually structures the attitudes of US residents. If people are not thinking this way, then it is problematic to persist in using this framework given that the framework confines the range of policy discussions to discovering how much privacy the public should cede in order to prevent terrorism. Because dramatic loss of life via a terrorist attack generally will trump broadly dispersed privacy violations, debating within the trade-off framework when terrorist threat is high advantages the security side of the debate. At the same time, the assumptions of this framework that these policies work to keep us safe but regrettably violate privacy avoids the critical debate about the efficacy of these terrorism prevention measures. The basic question, "do these policies work?" is sidelined within the trade-off framework because this characteristic is taken a given. But research shows that these security policies may not work or, worse, may encourage future acts. As Dragu (2017) argues, democratic regimes restricting free speech and civil liberties in response to terrorism may actually increase the likelihood of subsequent attacks, while maintaining democratic norms and principles can decrease the probability of an attack. The United States may need to work harder to engage in an easily accessible, transparent, public dialogue about the efficacy of domestic prevention policies. More than anything else, our results suggest that the foundation of the security-liberty frame should be more carefully questioned by US policy makers, scholars, and the public alike. And our results suggest that one of the best ways for scholars to approach this may be by evaluating the security implications of these policies, not simply their privacy informing characteristics.

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