

**Kellogg-Kroc Undergraduate Research Grant
Project Report**

European Approaches to Counterterrorism

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International terrorism is the predominant threat to global security and peace. Since the attacks of 9/11, responding to the diverse challenges posed by terrorists and their supporters has remained a difficult foreign and domestic policy question. Now, nearly six years after the attacks in New York and Washington, the world is consumed by an ongoing American-led “war on terrorism” that has achieved some successes, but which has also become increasingly problematic. The majority of global actors perceive limited utility in this open-ended, ambiguous war. Many individuals, governments, groups, nations, and regional organizations have framed and developed counterterrorism policy that is dramatically different from that of the United States.

Around the world, countries and regions frame and understand the terror threat in myriad ways. The United States has chosen to combat terrorism through a fundamental reliance on military force, but many other states perceive little or no utility in the continuance of an undefined global war on terrorism that lacks clear political, strategic and tactical objectives. My research in Western Europe this June and July aimed to define, explain and evaluate the similarities and differences between American and European – specifically British and E.U. – counterterrorism policies. Given the similarities in political and social structures between Europe and the United States, European approaches to counterterrorism have much to offer American thinking on international counterterrorism.

The fundamental aim of my research was to acquire information and perspectives that would allow me to bring together elements of American and European counterterrorism in written work that would make a new and useful contribution to policy debates by highlighting where policy can converge in order to improve global counterterrorism efforts. My time in Europe was successful in achieving this research goal. I have returned to Notre Dame with a sophisticated understanding of various ways Europeans understand and respond to international terrorism. My original research goals have been achieved and I am now able to continue researching and writing on issues of counterterrorism with a solid foundation established through my firsthand research in Europe. Rather than simply looking in on Europe's counterterrorism efforts from the outside, I have experienced and directly engaged with them. That was the most valuable part of the trip.

While in Europe, I conducted interviews at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, King's College, the London School of Economics, and the European Union Institute for Security Studies. I also met with terrorism experts from the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House). Each scholar, policy analyst, or policymaker I met with provided a unique perspective on terrorism and counterterrorism influenced by his or her professional background, historical encounters with terrorism, and personal political and policy preferences. Many of the experts with whom I met had considerable experience in military and intelligence communities, including the British and US Army and the British international intelligence organization MI-6. These current or previous "insiders" were able to provide me with information and perspectives that are simply unavailable in written texts or mainstream academia.

Much of my time interviewing was spent discussing the major differences between American and European approaches to counterterrorism. A basic dichotomy appeared: military force versus criminal justice. Essentially, many Europeans see little benefit in treating terrorists like soldiers or armed combatants. Their preference is to consider terrorists as criminals and use law enforcement tools and mechanisms to both prevent terrorism and prosecute terrorists. Although critical of some American policy choices, the Europeans displayed a distinct willingness to engage with and adapt America's preference for military force to certain situations. I expected a simple outcry against U.S. policy; I was pleased and surprised to find that most experts thought there was room for the American approach in counterterrorism. Of course, such generalizations regarding criminal justice versus military force do not adequately highlight the full complexity of the debate; they do, however, usefully underscore a basic and core divergence in strategic thought.

Of particular interest in conversation, especially in the UK, is Europe's struggle to cope with rising "home-grown terrorism." I was in London when carbombs were found in Piccadilly and attacks were carried out at Glasgow airport. In stark contrast to the United States, European nations increasingly find themselves in situations where terrorist attacks are not launched on their soil by international operatives sent in from another part of the world, but rather are carried out by European citizens or people who have lived in Europe for many years. Rising domestic extremism and the violence facilitated by actors in the local consumes policymakers in Europe in a way not seen or properly understood in the United States. America, because it does not face a substantial threat from people living in the country, can leverage its resources outward. In Europe, focus must remain at home

because home is a primary producer of potential terrorists. Within individual countries, European policymakers must contend with complex cultural and social issues, often linked to religion, immigration and identity politics, while developing counterterrorism strategies. The fusion between the local and the global is much more obvious in Europe compared to the United States, where attention is directed almost exclusively outward at troubled countries and regions such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, East Africa and South Asia.

Europe's historical experiences with terrorism dictate a different response to modern Islamist terror when compared with America. Most European nations have been dealing with terrorist threats on their soil since the 1960s or 1970s. Consequentially, many Europeans see terrorism as a more normal risk, where the tendency in the U.S. is often to consider terrorism as a new and extraordinary risk. These differing perspectives do not represent a better or worse understanding and response, but merely highlight the sometimes vast distinctions between various nations and regions. However, an important question regarding Europe's historical experience remains: How relevant is this to the new, strategic terrorism that is the post-9/11 norm? This, and other questions that underscore the utility of a criminal justice approach versus war, will be pursued further in my ongoing research this year.

At the conclusion of my research trip, I felt that most of my key research questions had been explored in detail during my interviews with European counterterrorism experts. These questions cannot be "answered" in any definitive sense, since my project is about highlighting and evaluating different perspectives on counterterrorism and the various policy paradigms that drive such policy. My personal understanding of how and why European states and the European Union approach the

problem of terrorism in specific ways has been greatly increased. I now have a knowledge of the debates and issues that attract the attention of policymakers, academics and concerned citizens throughout the European community that would not have been possible to attain without on-the-ground research in Europe.

My work in Europe will now be utilized in three primary ways. First, it has contributed to a paper I am co-authoring with George Lopez, professor in the Department of Political Science, on the need to redevelop our understanding of diverse and global terrorist actors. Second, my research will contribute to work being done at the Center for Global Counterterrorism Cooperation and the Fourth Freedom Fund. Third, this research will form the basis for my senior thesis which seeks to suggest ways the United States can shift away from a global war on terror and build a truly global counterterrorism program that will yield success against myriad terrorist threats.

Terrorism is the predominant geostrategic issue of our time. It is a global challenge that requires a global response. My research has allowed me to move into the global and begin integrating policies, perspectives and paradigms from all over the world.