

[Annabelle Lever](#)

Democracy and security

Keynote address

Original citation:

Originally presented at the Ethics and counter-terrorism workshops, 7-9 January 2009, The Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism, The Home Office.

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/23096/>

Available in LSE Research Online: March 2009

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“DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY”

Dr. Annabelle Lever

Dept. of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method
London School of Economics
A.P.Lever@lse.ac.uk

Key Note Address
‘Ethics and Counter-Terrorism Workshops’

Jan. 7 and 9th, 2009

The Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism
The Home Office
UK

In association with

DEMOS:

The Think-Tank for Everyday Democracy

This talk is concerned with the role of democracy in preventing terrorism, identifying and apprehending terrorists, and in minimising and alleviating the damage created by terrorism. Specifically, it considers the role of democracy as a resource, not simply a limitation, on counter-terrorism.

I am mainly concerned with the ways in which counter-terrorism is similar to more familiar forms of public policy, such as the prevention of crime or the promotion of economic prosperity, and so nothing that I say turns on being able sharply to distinguish terrorism from other bad things that democracies have to face. I will not, then, address the extensive debate on the best way to define terrorism. However, I assume that terrorists characteristically seek to terrorise people in order to secure their particular ends. What forms that terror takes, what people terrorists seek to terrorise, and what ends terrorists seek to promote I assume to be indeterminate, open to change, and a matter for empirical investigation. However, I take it that the IRA, Baader Meinhoff, the Red Brigade, as well as certain animal rights' groups in the UK, and certain anti-abortion groups in the US, are examples of terrorist groups, and individuals.

In short, I will be assuming that terrorism is principally characterised by the choice of means to given ends, rather than by the ends themselves, and that it is the choice of means, rather than the favoured ends, that makes terrorism so problematic from a democratic perspective. However good the goal, terrorising a population – whether or not this involves killing the innocent – is morally wrong and, from a democratic perspective, an abuse of power over the lives of others. While the use of terror may indicate that the ends sought by terrorists are such that people cannot be expected to support them voluntarily, there is no justification for supposing that the ends of terrorism must be morally or politically unacceptable, simply because the means are both. It is a staple of ordinary life – not merely of philosophical examples- that people are sometimes unjustified in the means they use in order to accomplish perfectly acceptable ends. So, the ends terrorists seek are, or might become, morally or politically acceptable without in any way altering our objections to the use of terror as a tool for promoting them.

Before turning to the goals of counter-terrorism, and the role of democracy in achieving those goals, it may be helpful briefly to distinguish specifically democratic objections to terrorism from more familiar ethical objections to it. Most obviously, terrorism is generally wrong because it involves unjust killing, maiming and terrorising. Utilitarians, for instance, will likely focus on the pain and fear it creates in sentient beings (animal, as well as human); Kantians will likely object to the ways that terrorism treats people simply as means to other people's ends, as though people are not also ends in themselves, however useful they may be to others.

These both strike me as persuasive objections to terrorism. However, they are not intrinsically democratic – that is, they are the sorts of objections to terrorism you might make whatever your views of legitimate government. By contrast, the democratic objections to terrorism importantly turn on the unjust ascription of power over others implicit in terrorism. Arrogation of such power is at odds with the core democratic idea that people are entitled to govern themselves freely and as equals. No government is entitled to terrorise its citizens, whatever one thinks about the legitimacy of capital punishment. Nor is government entitled to exercise its powers arbitrarily, or in ways and for ends, that have not been approved by citizens or their representatives. There are, therefore, distinctive ethical objections to terrorism from a democratic perspective which are not reducible to, although consistent with, more familiar objections.

A comparison may be helpful. “Outing” involves the dissemination and publication, without consent, of sensitive personal information in order to achieve some particular moral or political purpose. The typical case involves revealing that some well known or influential figure is gay or HIV positive – but the fact that someone has cancer, that they had an abortion, were a victim of rape, that they were once communists, or worked for the secret service are also examples of the phenomenon. Classic objections to “outing” involve claims that the relevant information is private or personal, and so should not be made public without consent; or that revealing this information is unlikely to achieve the desired ends, and may even prove counter-productive. A natural Kantian objection

would be that outing treats someone simply as a tool for other people's purposes, and that this is morally wrong.

These strike me as good objections to "outing" as a general matter, although they are not always persuasive. However, these objections are rather different from the specifically democratic objection, which is to the arbitrary ascription of power over others involved in the practice. Who decides to do the outing, who is chosen as victim, how the costs and benefits of outing are determined are all decided in ways that deny victims the ability to influence a matter that may have serious implications for their lives, liberty, social standing, their prospects of employment, their marriage and the custody of their children. Nor of course, is there any scope for appeal, oversight or compensation implicit in the practice of outing. The power involved, therefore, is fundamentally undemocratic, even if it is not absolute – or the power of life and death. So, while outing, like terrorism, may be successful in achieving ends that are morally good, and potential objects of democratic consent, the means used are unacceptable and at odds with the reasons to value democratic government. They are, in short, illegitimate, as well as immoral.

A. The Goals of Counter-Terrorism

I take the goals of counter-terrorism centrally to involve – the prevention of terrorism, the identification and capture of terrorists, and the minimisation and alleviation of damage from terrorism. These are scarcely the only goals of counter-terrorism, but I imagine that these must have a central place in democratic responses to terrorism, whatever the case with other political regimes.

If these are the central goals of counter-terrorism, then the origin of terrorism (whether it is home-grown, imported or some combination of the two) is irrelevant to the legitimacy of the goals, though it may matter to the means used in realising them. Moreover, the goals of counter-terrorism are importantly similar to those characteristic of other forms of public policy, which typically seek to minimise or prevent the occurrence of bad things – whether or not the causes are human or intentional.

The implications of these points for counter-terrorism are

- (a) that attributions of moral or legal responsibility are generally irrelevant to the legitimacy of the goals of counter-terrorism, because we are entitled to stop ‘innocent threats’ to ourselves and others, and to protect our lives even if we are partly, even largely, responsible for the threat we face.
- (b) However, moral and/or legal responsibility is important in determining the means we may use to stop the threat of terror; and this means that we will sometimes have to accept forms of terror, as of other crimes, that we would otherwise be entitled to stop.

For example, the difference between child and adult killers means that the former cannot be threatened with the same forms and degrees of punishment appropriate to the latter; and we may even have to prioritise rehabilitation over punishment in the case of minors, even when their acts have created harms that are more severe than those created by an adult. In short, child killers may merit lesser punishment and greater efforts at rehabilitation than adult thieves, although death is a much worse harm than theft.

(c) The goals of fighting terrorism are importantly similar to the goals involved in fighting crime and, more generally, to the goal of preventing non-criminal sources of harm. So, many of the resources and constraints typical of these other cases will be useful and important in the case of terrorism – in part because the differences between terrorism and organised crime may be hard to determine (especially because terrorists are likely to fund themselves through various criminal activities) and because the terror created by some diseases when first discovered (cancer/AIDS) or by certain events (floods, famines, eclipses, economic depressions) are all susceptible to manipulation by the unscrupulous for their own purposes. The *source* and particular *character* of the terror, therefore, does not matter to the legitimacy of trying to prevent it, to minimise the harms created by it, and to identify and apprehend those who seek to promote and to benefit from it.

(d) finally, *rehabilitation and not just punishment*, may be a legitimate goal of counter-terrorism and, in some cases, may be obligatory, because the moral horror of an act – as we have seen – does not automatically transfer to the person who committed it.

These theoretical points have practical relevance to counter-terrorism. It is likely that fairly long-running terrorist organisations will have members who ‘want out’ or who, with a little persuasion, can be brought to envisage and desire an alternative way of life. Handling such people involves complex moral, as well as practical, judgements about the appropriate punishment for their acts; the appropriateness of promising immunity from that punishment; and the appropriateness of demanding their active participation in the fight against their former comrades.

Fear of public hostility to anything that looks like being ‘soft on crime’ – let alone ‘soft on terrorism’ – may well hamper efforts (1) to be *open* about the bargains/promises made to former terrorists; (2) to use the promise of rehabilitation and/or immunity from punishment as an inducement to desist from terrorism; and (3) it may leave security forces vulnerable to the charge of acting illegitimately (undemocratically) and immorally if and when their bargains come to light.

These are real practical handicaps in counter-terrorism, as in efforts to diminish crime more generally. They arise from mistaken views about the nature of moral responsibility, desert and punishment; and it is as important to counter-terrorism, as it is to other public-policy objectives, to counter these. In particular, it is important to try to educate journalists, politicians and the public about the complexity of moral judgements in these areas. There are a variety of ways in which we might do this – and I will explore some of these further when discussing democracy as a resource, not merely a limitation, on the ways we can respond to terrorism. For now, it is enough to note that making debates in moral and political philosophy more accessible and engaging to the general population seems highly desirable, not least as a counter-weight to the grip of the tabloid press in the UK. This might suggest the merits of teaching the topic in schools from a fairly early

age, as happens in France, rather than keeping it as the preserve of specialised university courses, as we largely do in the UK. But it is also worth noting that the ethical dilemmas of counter-terrorism are as susceptible to dramatisation and debate on the radio, t.v. and in newspapers, and can be fully as interesting, accessible and informative as discussions of historical events (the Tudors, as well as the Nazis), artistic masterpieces, and programmes on ‘current affairs’. So if, as I have suggested, mistaken beliefs about ethics hamper efforts at counter-terrorism, and leave security services vulnerable to charges of immoral and/or illegal behaviour, there seem to be a variety of things we might do to alleviate this problem.

B. Democracy

Democracy has many forms, but its key feature is that citizens are entitled to participate in government – in formulating, executing and judging matters of public policy – and have intrinsically equal claims to do so. This claim to participate is different from the idea that citizens are entitled to be consulted by those who have responsibility for government – an ideal that characterised the medieval conception of kingship, for example. It is also different from the idea that governments should consider people’s interests equally, or ‘govern in the interests of all’. Attractive and important though these political ideals may be, they do not imply that ordinary people are entitled themselves to hold positions of public power and responsibility and, therefore, to do the consulting, considering and governing themselves, or through agents who they have authorised.

Of course, there are different ways of ensuring democratic participation, and different ways of interpreting the ideal itself. However, a common feature of these is that people have moral and legal rights, liberties, opportunities and resources to *enable* them to participate in politics freely and as equals. These rights, liberties, opportunities and resources structure the *competitive* aspects of politics so that winners and losers are capable of, and motivated to seek, cooperation in future. In short, in (modern) democracies winners do not ‘take all’; losers ‘live to fight another day’; and words,

arguments and dialogue, rather than force, intimidation and exclusion are the main tools of competition, as of government itself. This helps to explain why religious, civil and personal liberties are so critical to democratic government, even when they seem to be apolitical or, even anti-political, and why their content and justification from a democratic perspective may be rather different from those characteristic of liberalism, even in its egalitarian forms.

For example, the point of protecting privacy, from a democratic perspective, is not that privacy is some pre-eminent individual good because of its connection to human dignity, intimate and familial relationships or to property ownership – as it would be from liberal perspectives. Privacy may, or may not be justified on these grounds. The point, rather, is that protection for anonymity, confidentiality, seclusion, and intimacy – to name a few characteristics of privacy – helps to foster the freedom and equality necessary for democratic politics, by structuring and limiting competition for power in ways that enable people to see and treat each other as equal despite incompatible beliefs, interests and identities. Although there is likely to be considerable overlap between democratic and liberal accounts of people's rights to privacy – especially when we consider the more egalitarian forms of liberalism associated with John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin or Thomas Nagel – these are not going to be identical and there is no reason, off hand, why democratic ideas of privacy should be closer to liberal ones than to utilitarian, Marxist, communitarian or feminist ones – which typically accord less importance to individual self-expression, sexual and romantic fulfilment, or to private ownership than liberals.

The relevance of these points to counter-terrorism is that democratic government is not the same as liberal government or, even, constitutional government, although many forms of democracy are liberal, (in the sense that they place a premium on individual rather than collective goods and rights) and are constitutional, (in that deciding upon, judging and carrying out formal laws is the preeminent way in which collectively binding decisions are made – by contrast to the more informal and ad-hoc ways in which people often govern themselves).

It is only comparatively recently that philosophers have really started to probe the differences between democratic and allied moral and political ideals – in particular, the differences between democratic and liberal egalitarian ideas about people's rights, values and claims on scarce resources. It is therefore difficult to provide simple and concrete examples of the significance of these differences for counter-terrorism. The point, rather, is to be aware that liberal objections to wire-tapping, for example, may be rather different from democratic ones- so what would be unjustified from one perspective is not necessarily unjustified from the other. This is partly because the considerations determining what is and is not justified can differ – as we have seen – but partly that what counts as an invasion of privacy (whether justified or not) may be rather different in the two cases.

Put crudely, liberals tend to think that there is something especially bad about constraining sexual and religious expression, compared to scientific or military expression. This shapes their understanding of people's claims to secrecy in sexual and religious matters, compared to economic and scientific ones – where companies, for example, are typically accorded considerable freedom to determine what is secret; and in military matters, where the government is given a fairly free hand.

It is unclear that we should accept these sorts of priorities – however familiar they may be – if what we are concerned with is the distribution of power amongst individuals. Hence, perhaps, the moves towards greater openness on the part of those involved in counter-terrorism – not simply about the nature and extent of terrorist threats, but about how those threats are being approached, by whom and why. Hence, too, I think the importance we should attach to differences between various techniques for surveillance – CCTV cameras compared to policemen, say- and to their location in pubs and shops, not just train stations and airports. These differences may not be particularly significant from a liberal perspective, in so far as surveillance here can be described as occurring in public, rather than in private, but they may matter a great deal from a democratic perspective. These different tactics and locations of surveillance suggest rather different ways of distributing security and liberty amongst individuals and of conceptualising the

good of security itself. So, the differences between democratic and liberal approaches to privacy can affect the ethics of counter-terrorism, and of security more generally.

B. Democracy a Constraint in Counter-Terrorism

Democratic principles are a constraint on the ways we can respond to terrorism, just as they are to the ways we can fight crime, promote economic growth, or secure peace, love and happiness at home and abroad. These constraints are partly institutional and partly created by the the moral and political considerations which justify democratic institutions. There are two main ones I want to highlight here, in part because they tend to be shortchanged in the more familiar discussion of the ways liberty conflicts with security, or with efficiency. The first concerns the relationship amongst different liberties, rights and opportunities; and the second concerns the way we conceptualise and distribute the costs and benefits of security.

(1) Liberty

As we have seen, it is not possible sharply to differentiate political and non-political rights, liberties and opportunities – or constraints on religious freedom, sexual equality or freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment and rights to vote, stand for election to government, or to dissent from the political choices, associations and actions of others. We cannot sharply differentiate political and non-political liberties and rights partly because the political consequences of curtailing any particular liberty are hard to predict and because democratic politics cannot be neatly cabined in Parliament, or its regional equivalents, and limited to the choice of legislators every few years.

It is therefore disheartening to hear people say that constraints on privacy are necessary to protect ‘the rule of law’ – as though we could form, pass, judge and execute laws democratically without the secret ballot, rights of confidential judgement, information and association. (Unfortunately, I am prevented by Chatham House rules from naming names at this point). That is also why it is disheartening to hear someone like Mandelson assert that the current economic crisis means that we should (again) put on hold our efforts to rectify significant, and long-recognised sexual inequities as though sexual

equality had nothing to do with the legitimacy of government policies, and could only prove a barrier to economic growth. In each case what is, at best, a problem in jointly protecting two values is presented as a reason to sacrifice one to another. At worst, what we get is confusion about the political choices we face, alternative ways of making those choices, and alternative standards for deciding which of these is best, and from what perspective.

Why do such mistakes – if they are mistakes – matter to counter-terrorism? The reasons are partly normative and partly practical. The normative concern is that sacrificing privacy to ‘the rule of law’, or equality to prosperity – if that *is* what we were really asked to do – undercuts the claim that our society cares how people’s lives go; their prospects of respect, self-development and expression, their chances to hold take responsibility for their own lives and the lives of others. Privacy and equality are no more ‘optional extras’, from a democratic perspective, than are the rule of law and the right to vote. Not all voting rights are democratic; nor all forms of constitutional government. Those that are democratic, therefore, are constituted in part by the forms of privacy and equality that they secure for their members. So while it is undoubtedly true that constraints on privacy and equality are sometimes necessary to protect the security and prosperity of democracies, it is no less true that constraints on security and prosperity are justified – often simultaneously – in order to secure the privacy and equality of individuals.

The practical problem, quite simply, is that it is unwise to treat people’s acknowledged claims to justice as optional extras, whether we care about prosperity or security. It is unwise, because we do not know who future terrorists will be and what will motivate them. However, we know that Asian women in the UK are often well-educated, highly skilled and well aware of sexual injustice, as well as racial and religious prejudice; nor are their views evidently the same as those of more conservative, less educated, but more vocal Muslims. So it seems short-sighted to risk alienating a potentially crucial part of our population – from the perspective both of security as well as prosperity – whether or

not you care about women's pensions, pay, freedom from domestic violence, religious and political expression.

(2) *Equality*

Of course, we cannot always protect – let alone promote – the liberties and opportunities to which people are entitled. But if and when we can't, it matters *how the costs and benefits of any sacrifice are made* in counter-terrorism, as in other aspects of public policy. In fact, I would suggest, it is necessary publicly to show that sacrifice x by group y is, indeed, necessary to prevent greater harms to some other group. Hence, it is necessary to discuss alternative ways of preventing harm, and how their respective costs and benefits are to be described and assessed.

An example may be helpful, and can illustrate why talk of 'proportionate' sacrifices is often so empty and misleading. At present my part of London, Streatham, is facing the loss of its local police station, in the interests of efficiency and cost effectiveness, to some 'central' location somewhere else within the borough. The move may, indeed, be justified, although given the appalling traffic in the area it is hard to be confident that shop-keepers, victims of domestic violence or young people will get the timely help that they need.

Putting problems of response times aside, however, it is natural to wonder what conception of crime and efficiency justifies moving a police station from an area characterised by problems with gangs, prostitution, drugs, and with a significant immigrant – and often Muslim and refugee – population to one which, even if it is only 5 – 7 miles away, is culturally, historically and politically very different. Moreover, if we consider that it can take an ordinary person anywhere from half an hour to an hour or more to travel within Lambeth, the consequences of such a move for democratic forms of policing and security become apparent. After all, the point of police stations, from a democratic perspective, is not simply that they enable police quickly to get to the scene of a crime/potential crime, but that they represent the local community, and are a focus for local hopes, complaints, knowledge, pride and initiative. This is scarcely possible if

people have to find anywhere from an hour to three hours, in already busy lives, for a round-trip visit to 'their' police station.

Thus, whether we are concerned with powers to stop and search, wiretap, detain without trial, to limit choice of religious dress, expression, travel and employment, it matters how we describe and assess the costs and benefits of our actions. It matters, in order to avoid stigmatising minorities and unpopular social groups for what is, typically, the behaviour of a very small percentage of their population. It is necessary to avoid cementing injustices and social problems – racial and sexual inequality, poverty, alienation, ignorance and hopelessness – that we already find it hard enough to deal with. And it is necessary to avoid confusing democratic rights and liberties with alternatives, however efficient, familiar and seemingly attractive.

Suicide Bombers

Before turning to democracy as a resource in the fight against terrorism, I would like briefly to suggest how the idea of democracy as a constraint on counter-terrorism, and public policy more generally, may help us to handle the real and potential problems of *suicide bombers*.

I assume that an important goal of counter-terrorism is to move suicide bombers away from suicide, even when we cannot yet stop them planting/setting off bombs. The parallel here is to the IRA – and the importance of getting advance warning *that* a bomb is about to go off, even when it is impossible to prevent the bomb from being planted and/or triggered. In each case, what is at stake is saving lives but also – and importantly, from a long-term perspective - the ability to establish a relationship with bombers, however tenuous and difficult, in order to discuss alternative ways to achieve their ends, and different ways to think about those ends themselves.

To do this it is essential that we can persuasively convey the message that the lives of suicide bombers are more valuable than they think; that they are valuable for reasons other than, or in addition to, those they believe; and that we recognise and care about

their lives for reasons related to the reasons why we value our own, and that of our compatriots. Put simply, we need to convey the message that we want them to desist from *suicide*, not merely from *bombing*; and that our objections to the latter – that this is a dreadful way to die; that nobody deserves such a death; that nobody is entitled to inflict such a death on others – are connected to our objections to their suicide and to those who have encouraged/persuaded/ordered them to die in this way.

Of course, we are unlikely to be able to convey this message successfully in many cases; just as it is difficult to persuade some would-be bombers of the advantages of calling in order to avoid or, at any rate, to minimise death and injury. But there are some people who can be persuaded or are, at least, credible targets of persuasion. An important goal of counter-terrorism is to work out how to reach and influence these people. However, the credibility and practical effectiveness of our claims of concern and care – or of the effort to turn potential suicide bombers into negotiating partners – is the way that our society treats its own members, as well as foreigners. While it is clear that foreign policy has made Britain a target of Muslim ire, I think we also need to consider the ways in which our *domestic* politics prevent an adequate response to suicide bombers, and may even foster the belief that killing oneself, along with others, is necessary to manifest the sincerity and strength of one's convictions, the urgency of one's cause, and one's claims to public attention. We might start by noting how counter-productive it is to describe the IRA as cowards, because they sought to kill without being killed. Whatever else might be said about this claim, it seems likely to reinforce, rather than to undermine, the attractions of suicide to people with whom we need to talk now, and in future.

C. Democracy as a Resource in Counter-Terrorism.

It is important to the motivation and justification of democratic government that people have some hope of influencing the political agenda on things that they care about. Where people have this sort of influence, democracies can accommodate the classic 'single issue voter' described by political scientists, whose views are organised around one particular issue, or set of issues – be they abortion, animal rights, global warming, self-rule for Ireland, Kashmir, Palestine. It is typically these people who are most readily alienated

from democratic government, even though only a very small minority of those who are alienated will act out that alienation through politically motivated violence.

Democracy offers the promise that losing on the swings (for example, on economic policy) is compatible with gaining on the roundabouts (for example, civil liberties or foreign policy). So, while many people are not particularly enamoured of democratic government, let alone of their political leaders, they are unlikely to reject democracy as a means of handling political conflict. This is less likely to be true for those with single-issue, non-negotiable causes, and this makes it a matter of some importance that people have multiple ways of competing for political power and positions of public responsibility, so that failure in any one of these is less likely to determine failure on all.

Making politics accessible to people in a variety of ways and through a variety of means encourages us to seek cooperative means to the realisation of our cherished ends, even when these are eccentric or unpopular. Political participation can help us to see why compromise is a legitimate response to the demands of others, and how to structure compromises that respect the sincerity and importance of people's fundamental convictions, even when we cannot endorse them. Engagement with democratic politics is not guaranteed to produce satisfaction and can, sometimes, be alienating and dispiriting. But we are much less likely to be bitter and cynical about politicians as a class when we have tried our hand at politics; and we are more likely to accept the need to compromise in order to accommodate the interests of others when we have, ourselves, experienced the efforts of other people to accommodate our interests and concerns.

If these points are right, the centralised, hierarchical and hide-bound character of British democracy is, unfortunately, a real obstacle to counter-terrorism; and current efforts to promote a 'respect' agenda, and a stronger sense of national identity are misconceived and likely to be counter-productive. Of course, rights imply duties – but this is a truism that no one has ever disputed. Most people do not expect to get 'something for nothing', whether from the Welfare State, the National Health Service or public defence, security and education. Nor is there anything particularly democratic about insisting that rights

imply duties – whatever one takes that to mean. The point, rather, is that democratic entitlements to welfare, education, employment and security imply rights to participate in determining what forms of these are desirable, how best to achieve these, and at what costs in terms not just of taxes raised and spent, but of opportunities foregone, and claims postponed or ignored. The real democratic agenda, therefore, is to improve people's abilities and opportunities to debate their rights and duties, their liberties and opportunities, and the proper distribution of resources in matters of security, as well as of education, employment and health.

There are many ways in which we might try to do this, and there is research on democratic budget-setting, prioritising of health-care needs, and jury deliberation – as well as on democratic deliberation more generally – which can be examined and built upon. How democratic deliberation obviously depends on the way it is structured – what veto rights people have over discussion; what the terms of entry and exit are; what information is available to all, and what is secret; what sorts of coalitions are allowed and disallowed; who, if anyone, monitors or facilitates discussion. All these are important, because deliberation is not always free and equal, let alone capable of generating more light than heat.

Nor can all aspects of counter-terrorism be openly debated – though this, it should be said, is as likely to be true of economic and foreign policy as of counter-terrorism. Discussions may need to be confidential in order to facilitate the free and frank exchange of ideas – hence, in part, the ideal of cabinet secrecy. They may need to be limited in subject matter in order to avoid needless offence, or to enable people actually to sit down together. And, of course, public debate sometimes has to be limited to protect people, institutions and facts of national interest.

But discussions of security can be useful even when they are based on historical cases, or on hypothetical ones. They can be comparative and quite general in focus – as when we compare attitudes to CCTV, ID cards, the storage and use of DNA samples, in Britain and other countries. They can be useful when we consider how Britain differs from other

democracies in its fairly extensive use of wiretapping for security and police purposes, but its unwillingness to allow that evidence in court. We can compare the treatment of gang members and the incidence of gang crime amongst children in Boston and Chicago, compared to London or Liverpool and its significance for racial profiling, for stop and search laws, and for the relationship between crime and terrorism. Above all, it is possible to help people to think about, and confront, difficult questions of identity, value and experience that are important to current efforts against terrorism, and that may be useful in considering what Donald Rumsfeld so memorably referred to as ‘unknown unknowns’.

Take, for example, the role of Islam in Africa – in the conflicts in Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya. Why not encourage Muslims in Britain and elsewhere to discuss the role of race in Islam, just as it is appropriate to ask Christians or Jews to consider the way it has shaped, and continues to shape, their theology, culture and politics? Why not have television programmes, newspaper and radio discussions on religion in contemporary Britain in which Asian Muslims and Christians from Africa and the Caribbean – two of the livelier religious groups in our country – discussed shared experiences of faith, racism, immigration and international concerns, as well as their mutual suspicions? These are merely examples – perhaps not good ones. But they illustrate how narrow in structure and subject matter most contemporary debates on religion and security really are; how much we have to learn about people’s experiences of identity, religion and security; and how little we actually know about the sources of conflict and cooperation in our society.

In short, democratic debate and choice are important weapons in the fight against terrorism. In the UK there is plenty of scope for increasing the range of topics, the quality and the sites of democratic discussion and choice; and it may be that the security services, themselves, can promote discussion about the ethics, as well as the practicalities, of security internally and by their engagement with citizens. At all events, this would seem to have far more to do with democratic government than the insistence that people have duties as well as rights; or the effort to formulate some conception of

national identity or common values which right-thinking citizens share. Efforts to identify such an identity or set of values typically result in windy platitudes that bear a rather loose relationship to what people have believed or do believe. *For that very reason*, they are likely to hurt and alienate people whose loyalty to this country, and to democratic government is not, and should not be, in doubt.

Conclusion

I have argued that democracy is a resource, as well as a constraint, in the goals of counter-terrorism and suggested that the two are intimately related. They are related in some of the same ways, and for the same reasons, that democratic government helps to prevent famine. As Amartya Sen showed, in some of the work for which he won the Nobel prize in economics, democracies facilitate the effective use and sharing of information, as of other goods, because of the freedoms they secure.

Those freedoms come at a price and that price is not purely financial. It includes the death of people who would not have died, and might have had happier, more successful, lives under other forms of government. In some cases, this is no cause for regret, because people are not entitled to secure their lives, liberty and happiness by enslaving others. But matters are often more complicated, because people do not deserve to die or to be maimed because we may not inflict worse harms on others. To say that democracy is a resource, not merely a constraint, then, is not to underestimate the latter. Instead it is to recognise that the dilemmas of counter-terrorism, as of public policy more generally, arise because the constraints of democracy are our resources for securing voluntary cooperation, even in the face of involuntary conflict.