I give permission for public access to my Honors paper and for any copying or digitization to be done at the discretion of the College Archivist and/or the College Librarian.

Signed

Anna Michaela Meyerrose

Date
Possible Causes for the Increased Susceptibility of Radicalization among British and American Muslims

Anna Michaela Meyerrose

Department of International Studies
Rhodes College
Memphis, Tennessee

2012

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree with Honors in International Studies
This Honors paper by Anna Michaela Meyerrose has been read and approved for Honors in International Studies.

Dr. Nuray Ibryamova
Project Advisor

Dr. Stephen Ceccoli
Second Reader

Dr. Yasir Kazi
Extra-Departmental Reader

Dr. Stephen Ceccoli
Department Chair
CONTENTS

Signature page ii

Contents iii

Abstract iv

Introduction 1

1. The Role of Western Foreign Policy 6

2. Literature Review 10

   2.1 Constructivism 12

   2.2 Relative Deprivation 17

   2.3 Rational Choice 20

   2.4 Alternative Explanations 22

3. Methodology 24

4. Evidence 24

   4.1 Identity 25

   4.2 Relative Deprivation 40

   4.3 Rational Choice 55

5. Discussion and Conclusion 61

Appendix 68

Bibliography 69
ABSTRACT

Possible Causes for the Increased Susceptibility of Radicalization among British and American Muslims

by

Anna Michaela Meyerrose

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 placed religiously motivated terrorism at the forefront of western security concerns. In the past decade, however, radical Islamist terrorism has transitioned from a centralized movement with an identifiable leadership to a decentralized one whose existence is dependent on self-radicalization at the local level. Consequently, there have been rising rates of radicalization among primarily second and third generation Muslims living in the West. Due to the continually high threat level of terrorist attacks, it is important for states to understand why certain Muslims living in the West radicalize, a necessary, though not deterministic step on the path toward becoming a terrorist. While this paper does not delve into western foreign policy as a primary cause of radicalization, it does use case studies of the United Kingdom and the United States to compare the prevalence of three proposed possible causes for increased susceptibility to radicalization: identity crises caused by social alienation, feelings of relative deprivation, and a lack of access to political opportunity structures. The research demonstrates that the three variables listed above are more prevalent in the UK than they are in the US, thereby facilitating higher rates of radicalization in the UK than in the US.
INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, and especially since September 11, 2001, terrorism, and radical Islamist terrorism in particular, has increasingly come to dominate the security agendas of states. Initially, the United States and Western Europe were preoccupied primarily with combating international terrorism. More recently, however, homegrown terrorism has become an increasingly relevant concern. This shift toward recognizing and addressing the threat of homegrown, not just international or transnational, radical Islamist terrorism came about as a result of the fact that, following 2001, the al Qaeda organization most prominently entered its third phase in which it evolved into a decentralized movement. As a decentralized movement, al Qaeda’s inspiration and ideas have become more dangerous than its operatives. One significant characteristic of this third phase is the observably higher rates of radicalization amongst second and third generation Muslim citizens of western countries. In rare cases, these second and third generation Muslims have even launched attacks against their own western countries of residence.

Due to the continually high threat level of terrorist attacks, numerous studies have sought to uncover the best and most effective way that states can combat homegrown terrorism. While it is important to gain the knowledge and intelligence necessary to preempt terrorist attacks, another strategy for combating terrorism is to eliminate the threat at its source. In other words, it is important for states to understand why certain western Muslims radicalize: a necessary, though not deterministic step on the path toward becoming a terrorist. If the causes can be identified, policies could subsequently be put into place to help prevent homegrown radicalization, thereby decreasing the terrorist
threat level. Since instances of homegrown terrorism have been more prevalent in Europe, and in the United Kingdom in particular, than in the United States, this paper seeks to answer the following questions: What are the causes of increased susceptibility to radicalization among British and American Muslims? Furthermore, why is radicalization more prevalent in the United Kingdom than it is in the United States?

In order to answer these questions, it is important to first understand what is meant by radicalization. Although it is a commonly used term, scholars and other experts are far from reaching a consensus on how best to define radicalization (Kuhle et al. 2010, 22). Consequently, a wide array of definitions of radicalization has been utilized. Across these varying definitions, several common characteristics of radicalization emerge.

In this paper, radicalization is defined as a process by which an individual internalizes a radical belief system as one’s own, thereby resulting in a drastic change in attitudes and/or behavior. More specifically, radicalization is a directed, gradual process, which “unfolds through more or less distinct and succeeding phases” and lacks a specific beginning or ending point (ibid, 25). Although radicalization is a process, it is important to note that the phases of radicalization are “not set and vary from one person to the next” (Hemmingsen et al. 2007, 4); each radicalized individual is presumably affected by a unique combination of causal factors. For example, while some individuals have been found to self-radicalize and subsequently seek-out radical groups, others have radicalized as a result of their inclusion in such bodies. Furthermore, as the radicalization process occurs, and an individual’s level of radicalization increases, that person progresses from a state of passive discontent or peaceful activism toward an increased willingness to support or pursue the use of undemocratic or violent means with the goal of bringing
about far-reaching political, ideological, or societal changes (David Mandel 2010; Jenkins 2011; Kuhle et al. 2010; Hemmingsen et al. 2007; European Commission 2008; AIVD 2007; PET).

Since radicalization is considered to be a process comprised of phases, not all radicalized individuals are radicalized to an equal extent. Rather, radicalization can be viewed along a continuum of lower and higher levels of radicalization in which “many merely listen to talks and attend events” whereas “others become committed activists, willing to sacrifice themselves for the cause” (Wiktorowicz 2005, 3). As the variability in the levels of radicalization demonstrates, radicalization is a vital, though not deterministic step toward becoming a terrorist (Sedgwick 2010, 483).

An individual’s level of radicalization is operationalized here to be low, medium, or high. Individuals who are either sympathetic to the radical cause, or who participate in peaceful protests in support of this cause, are characteristic of the lowest level of radicalization. For the topic at hand, an example would be individuals who condone or even applaud the 9/11 attacks or the 2005 London bombings. In the middle of the continuum are individuals who seek to become increasingly more active in supporting and furthering their radical beliefs. This increased activism is characterized by purposefully seeking out radical groups, discussing radical ideology with like-minded individuals, aiding or financing radical or terrorist groups, or even joining radical Islamist groups. Finally, at the most extreme and highest level of the spectrum are those who participate in the planning and/or execution of Islamist terrorist attacks in support of their beliefs.

In this paper, terrorism, which is the highest level of radicalization, is defined as
either violence or the threat of violence conducted by an ideologically inspired, non-state group, movement, or individual. Such an act is politically motivated and is perpetrated against non-combatants (Hoffman 2006, 40; Crenshaw 2011). More specifically, the type of terrorism treated in this paper is homegrown Islamist terrorism; international and transnational Islamist terrorism are beyond the scope of this study. Islamist terrorism is a form of religious terrorism, or, “terrorism [that is] motivated in whole or in part by a religious imperative, where violence is regarded by its practitioners as a divine duty or sacramental act” (Hoffman 2006, 83). As such, radical Islamists often invoke aspects of Islamic theology to justify violent actions. Although Islamic theology plays a role in motivating and justifying Islamist terrorism, it is important to note that the interpretation of theology used by Islamists is far from mainstream. Islamist beliefs often rely upon theological interpretations that are not supported by religious authorities. For example, in his February 1998 fatwa, Osama bin Laden succeeded in “interpreting the imperative of jihad as an individual responsibility incumbent upon Muslims everywhere” (ibid, 96).

The causes of homegrown Islamist radicalization are multifaceted and highly individualized. The three probable causes of increased susceptibility to radicalization treated in this paper are identity crises, caused by social alienation; discrimination and other feelings of relative deprivation on the part of the individual; and a lack of access to political opportunities through which to express discontent. These three variables are environmental, contextual causes of radicalization, rather than direct causes of radicalization, such as western foreign policy (discussed below). Studying these three environmental variables allows for a more direct comparison of the UK and the US along a number of factors. Since these three probable causes are more prevalent in the UK, this
may explain why radicalization has been more prevalent in the UK than in the US.

This trend can be attributed to evidence that suggests that radical Islamist ideology has held more appeal for British Muslims than it has for American Muslims. For example, public polls have found that American Muslims are less likely to sympathize with the jihadist cause (Pew 2011), whereas “an increasing number of Muslims [in the UK] seem attracted” to the message of radical Islamist movements (Wiktorowicz 2005, 3). Another indication that radicalization has been less prevalent in the US is terrorist activity since 9/11. Comparing the number of suspected terrorists arrested in the UK versus in the US since 9/11 can be misleading since arrest and security policies vary between the two countries. Instead, Brian Jenkins argues that it is not the quantity of arrests, but rather the quality of terrorist activity that has occurred over the past decade that distinguishes the US from the UK and demonstrates that radical Islamist teachings have resonated to a greater extent with British Muslims. Jihadists in the UK have not only tended to be better organized and networked, but their level of plotting has also been significantly more advanced. While few of the terrorist plots in the US have gone beyond the planning stage, plots uncovered in the UK have been much more advanced and, in the case of the 2005 London bombings, a plot was carried out successfully (Jenkins 2011).

This study seeks to account for the observed discrepancy between the UK and the US as related to homegrown Islamist radicalization and terrorism.

In order to further explore the three proposed probable causes of increased susceptibility to radicalization among British and American Muslims, this paper is divided into five sections. The first section looks briefly at western foreign policy as an active catalyst for homegrown Islamist radicalization in the UK and the US. The
literature review in section two provides a theoretical overview of constructivism, relative deprivation, and rational choice theory, demonstrating how each of these theories contributes to explaining the probable environmental and contextual causes of radicalization among British and American Muslims. Each of these theories has a corresponding hypothesis; the hypotheses and variables, as well as the ways in which they are measured, are explained within the literature review. This section concludes with a brief acknowledgment of other alternative explanations for the causes of radicalization in the West. Next, the methodology section explains the choice of the comparative case study method. The fourth section, which consists of the evidence collected, is divided into three principal parts: identity, relative deprivation, and rational choice. Each part provides evidence of the extent to which British and American Muslims experience social alienation, relative deprivation, and difficulty in influencing domestic politics. The fifth and final section briefly considers the ways in which the evidence supports or refutes the hypotheses put forth in the literature review, and then concludes the paper by considering the implications of these findings for future security strategies in the West.

1. THE ROLE OF WESTERN FOREIGN POLICY

As explained above, radicalization occurs as a result of a unique combination of casual factors. Although radicalization is a highly individualized process, western foreign policy regarding the Muslim world has been identified as being a particularly prevalent catalyst for radicalization among western Muslims, especially in recent history. Although western foreign policy is not treated in this paper, it is important to be aware of the role that it plays in homegrown Islamist radicalization in the UK and the US. Two cases of radicalization in the West illustrate this idea.
In the decade since 9/11, the July 7, 2005 bombings in London are arguably the most noteworthy example of homegrown Islamist radicalization in the West. Four Muslim men carried out the 7/7 bombings in London. Of these four men, three were ethnically Pakistani, second-generation British citizens; the fourth member of the group was a Jamaican-born British resident who had converted to Islam (BBC 2005). In the months following the suicide bombings, evidence began to emerge explaining the motivations behind these attacks; one prominent reason behind the attacks was western foreign policy, which often coincides with the mistreatment of Muslims abroad. In a video aired on Al-Jazeera in September of 2005, Mohammad Sidique Khan, the group’s ringleader, explains: “your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world … until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight” (House of Commons Report 2006, 19).

Even though a homegrown Islamist terrorist attack such as the 7/7 London bombings has not occurred in the US in the decade since 9/11, examples of radicalized individuals can similarly be found among American Muslims. The case of Tarek Mehanna is a recent and relevant example. In April of 2012, Mehanna was sentenced to seventeen and a half years in prison on a number of charges, four of which are related to terrorism directed against American interests (Crimaldi 2012). More specifically, Mehanna was found guilty of supporting the use of violent jihad against American forces occupying Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia. Much as was the case with Khan and the other 7/7 bombers, one prevalent factor driving Mehanna’s radical beliefs appears to have been western foreign policy in the Muslim world (March 2012).
As these two examples demonstrate, and in line with recent scholarship on the topic, western foreign policy is a likely catalyst for homegrown Islamist radicalization and ultimate acts of terror. As Robert Pape, Brian Jenkins, and Marc Sageman all point out, Islamist terrorist attacks against the US did not begin in earnest until after the Gulf War in 1990, which resulted in the presence of western troops in the Muslim world. Furthermore, these same terrorist organizations seemed to have few grievances against the UK until the British government allied itself with the US (Pape 2003; Sageman 2008; Jenkins 2009).

Western foreign policy, and especially the West’s treatment of Muslims abroad, has been a particularly potent source of grievances for British and American Muslims. Many Muslims living in the West experience “humiliation by proxy” when they see the effects of western foreign policy concerning conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Bosnia, Chechnya, as well as the events of Abu Ghraib, Fallujah, and Guantanamo Bay. Muslims both in the West and also around the world are increasingly viewing the US as a colonial power, using Israel as its surrogate. This is further complicated by the fact that the US has a military presence in the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Jerusalem, home to the three holiest sites of the Muslim religion (Bloom 2005, 173).

Often, a consequence of western intervention in these conflicts has been the mistreatment of Muslims. Media images of Muslims being mistreated abroad leads to increased feelings of discrimination and also humiliation by proxy on the part of British and American Muslims. Western involvement in Iraq and other conflicts in the Muslim world have been interpreted by many Muslims to be a sort of a neo-crusade in which the Great Powers in the West (including the UK and the US) are waging a war against Islam.
as a whole.

Although western involvement in all of these areas has been controversial among Muslims living in the West, it seems that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was the tipping point. Prior to 2003, the US’s European allies were not viewed by Islamists as the source of western aggression against the Muslim world (Rees et al. 2005, 905). However, “the Iraq conflict has become the cause célèbre for jihadists, breeding deep resentment of U.S. involvement in the Muslim world and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement” (Sageman 2008, 91). According to “Shahid Malik, a member of the national executive of Britain’s Labour Party from strongly Muslim Burnley, in northern England, ‘Muslims see the “war on terrorism” as drifting into a war on Islam’” (Economist 2003).

In fact, it was the invasion of Iraq that triggered the third wave of Islamist terrorists, which largely consists of homegrown radicalization of second and third generation Muslims in the West. As a result, these Islamist groups transitioned from supporting Islamist insurgencies in the Muslim world to the situation today in which their primary targets are western (Wilkinson 2005, 14).

Public opinion polls further demonstrate British and American Muslims’ opposition to the war in Iraq. Polls found that both Muslim and non-Muslim British citizens believed that the UK’s involvement in Iraq was one of the primary causes of the 2005 bombings in London, and that Tony Blair’s unconditional support for US policy in Iraq significantly decreased public support of the British government (Al-Lami 2009, 7). Another poll, taken by the Federation of Islamic Student Societies in 2005, found that 95% of Muslim students in the UK opposed British foreign policy, while 66% of these students felt that Iraq had a significant impact on domestic terrorism. In the US, the
Muslim population has similarly low levels of support for the invasion of Iraq, with only 13% of Muslim Americans supporting this war (Sebian).

In short, western foreign policy toward the Muslim world, especially in the past decade, has created “political grievances which will more than likely lead to further campaigns of terrorism” against the West (Jackson 2006, 21). Although this is an important point to note, this paper does not delve into western foreign policy as a primary cause of radicalization. Instead, by comparing variables within the UK and the US, this paper seeks to explore the passive, contextual and environmental factors that may contribute to susceptibility of radicalization among British and American Muslims (identity crises caused by social alienation, feelings of relative deprivation, and a lack of access to political opportunity structures). As will be demonstrated, all three variables exist for both British and American Muslims; however, these factors are significantly more prevalent in the UK than they are in the US, thereby likely facilitating the observed higher levels of radicalization among British Muslims.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Constructivism, relative deprivation, and rational choice theory all likely contribute to explaining the causes of terrorism in the UK and the US. Existing research has found that homegrown terrorism (attacks against the interests of a state by citizens of that same state) has been much more prevalent in the UK than in the US since 9/11. In general terms, this difference has been attributed to the relative failure of the UK (and Western Europe in general) to assimilate Muslim immigrants into society, which often leads to alienation and decreased employment opportunities for British Muslims (Jenkins 2011; Sageman 2008).
Jenkins and Sageman make multiple references to al Qaeda’s “leaderless resistance”; this trend facilitates the rise of homegrown terrorism in the West through a process of self-radicalization. According to Jenkins, since 9/11, roughly 176 Americans been charged with terror-related crimes in the US. In total, these 176 Americans were involved in 32 plots, only 10 of which had anything remotely close to an actual operational plan. Most terrorist plots were planned by individuals who were living in the US legally and were either Muslim immigrants, recent descendants of immigrants from the Muslim world, or converts to Islam; “Arab and South Asian immigrant communities were statistically overrepresented in the small sample of recruits” (Jenkins 2011, viii).

The median age of these recruits was 27. For Jenkins, this shows that homegrown Islamist radicalization and terrorism are legitimate concerns for US security, but not overwhelmingly so. In general, he argues, the Muslim American community seems unsympathetic to the jihadist movement; “there are veins of extremism, handfuls of hotheads, but no deep reservoirs from which al Qaeda can recruit” (Jenkins 2010, 3).

Both Sageman and Jenkins argue that the UK has experienced a much more serious threat of jihadist violence. According to Sageman, “the simple fact is that there are far fewer domestic homegrown Islamist terrorists in the United States than in Europe” (2008, 90). Statistics aside, Jenkins instead focuses on the intensity of the jihadist activity that has taken place in the UK, and Europe in general, since 2001. While only a small number of the American plots managed to progress beyond the planning stage, “the failed terrorist attempts and terrorist plots uncovered and foiled by authorities in Europe have been far more serious than those in the United States” (Jenkins 2011, 8). Although it cannot be definitively proven since all American plots were prevented from being carried
out, it seems that “unlike the jihadists who launched [suicide] attacks … [such as] the 2005 bombing in United Kingdom … America’s homegrown jihadists are simply not contemplating suicide” and, therefore, seem to exhibit a lower level of commitment to the jihadist cause (ibid, 22).

A number of theories contribute to identifying and explaining the possible sources of increased susceptibility to radicalization in the UK and the US. The widely varying assumptions of constructivism, relative deprivation, and rational choice suggest that the causes of radicalization in these two states are multifaceted.

2.1 CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivist theory addresses the identities of actors, which can be states, international organizations, or even individuals. Actors’ identities, as well as the norms according to which they act, the values that they espouse, and the ways in which they view other actors, co-constitute one another. Consequently, an actor’s identity, which is both associated with certain values and also dictates norms of behavior, is important in identifying both the “self” and the “other” once the identity has been internalized by the individual. According to constructivists, an actor’s identity is not given or immutable, but rather can be influenced by various sources and can also evolve over time (Viotti et al. 2010, 286; Stivachtis 2008, 7-8).

Understanding the identity of British and American Muslims is an important step toward comprehending what facilitates radicalization among certain individuals within these groups. According to Catarina Kinnvall, globalization has created insecurity for both individuals and groups. In response, there has been an attempt by many to reaffirm their identity by drawing closer to a collective; religion has been particularly instrumental
here. Such speculations about identity crises suggest that some Muslims living in the
West will seek to become members of exile communities in order to combat feelings of
“homelessness” and alienation from the societies in which they live. Kinnvall identifies
religion as an important source of collective identity, thereby providing an explanation as
to why certain Muslims in the West embrace radical Islamist teachings (2004). The
connection drawn between security and identity begins to explain why many of these
individuals who radicalize have relatively secular upbringings, yet still ascribe to radical
religious teachings (Sageman 2008, 68): they are seeking closer identification with a
group.

Not only is it important to understand how these individuals define themselves,
but also it is important to look at how they are influenced by the belief systems that they
embrace upon joining these radical groups. As noted above, according to constructivism,
one characteristic of groups is that they espouse certain norms and values. These
collective norms and values are an example of intersubjectivity: “when doing something
together, ‘the individual intentionality that each person has is derived from the collective
intentionality that they share’” (Adler 1997, 327). In other words, identification with a
group influences and shapes an individual’s norms of behavior, thereby altering their
identity. The identity of those western Muslims who join radical Islamist groups is
therefore altered by their inclusion and participation in these groups.

The Copenhagen school, a sub-category of constructivism that addresses security
theory, is also relevant here. According to this school of thought, nationalism, ethnic
conflict, and migration are all security concerns when one thinks of Europe today.
However, these issues are not explained by classic security theory, which is strictly state-
centric. Consequently, scholars such as Barry Buzan and Ole Waever sought to redefine and expand these classical security theories. For one of Buzan and Waever’s conceptions of security, societal security, society itself, rather than the traditional state, is the referent object; in these cases it is the identity of a society, not the sovereignty of a state, which is threatened. Since identity can be viewed as a social power if it has become sufficiently entrenched in a given society, any threat to a society’s identity is viewed as an existential one (Buzan et al. 1997). Issues such as migration are socially constructed into security threats through the speech acts of influential individuals. Political rhetoric that links issues such as migration to potential instability within society is what often transforms these issues into security concerns for a state (Huysmans 2000; Williams, 1998). When this happens, securitization, wherein “an issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures,” occurs (Stivachtis 2008, 14).

The British and American nations, which are seen to represent non-Muslim citizens, and their respective interactions with the Muslim immigrants living in their countries, are pertinent in identifying possible causes of radicalization. Cultural affinity, or lack thereof, between the migrant population and the receiving country plays a crucial role in determining the relationship between the two groups. It has been shown that western migration policies have become increasingly restrictive in recent years, a trend attributable to the securitization of migration. For example, Yannis Stivachtis asserts that Americans have viewed Muslim immigrants as a threat, particularly since 9/11. The reason for this is that Americans believe that Muslim immigrants have different values and beliefs; therefore, they are a threat to the social and political identity of the United States (Stivachtis 2008).
Similarly, Huysmans argues that securitization of migration in the western states of the European Union is a result of both internal security issues and also cultural security issues. The increased threat of Islamist terrorism in the past decade “has exacerbated further public fears regarding immigration” in Western Europe (ibid, 3); therefore, similar to in the US, migration has been securitized in the UK. Securitization of the issue contributes to alienation of western Muslims from the societies in which they live (Huysmans 2000). By identifying certain groups of immigrants as potential security threats, securitization makes it difficult for these individuals to become integrated members of their host society. As a result of securitization, immigrants become alienated from the majority population of the country in which they live, often being viewed with a certain amount of suspicion and associated with another, dangerous group. This alienation helps to explain why “the radical Islami[st] ideology has become popular among young people within the Arab/Muslim communities in Europe” (Stivachtis 2008, 3).

Stivachtis, when describing different types of identities, discusses ‘resistance identities.’ This type of identity is most prevalent in countries where the native population discriminates against immigrants. In response to discrimination, the migrant populations often form resistance identities that arise “‘out of a sense of alienation, on the one hand, and resentment against unfair exclusion, whether economic, political, or social” on the other hand (ibid, 8). Since second and third generation descendants of Muslim immigrants to the West are often discriminated against by western society, it can be argued that one response to this discrimination (a point that will be further explored in the discussion of relative deprivation) is the creation of resistance collectives in the form of
radical Islamist groups, which are one type of radicalization. Adherence to radical
Islamist ideology, whether it is due to self-radicalization or radicalization as a result of
membership in a group, gives alienated Muslims in the West an otherwise perhaps
lacking opportunity to become part of a collective.

The case studies in this paper are divided into three sections. The first section is
constructivist-based and considers the identity of British and American Muslims. These
individuals consist of Muslim immigrants, recent descendants of Muslim immigrants, or
converts to Islam. Second and third generation Muslims, who have been identified as the
primary sources of homegrown Islamist radicalization, will be of particular importance.
Reference to British and American Muslims refers to legal, not illegal, immigrants, most
of who are citizens of the western countries in which they live.

An actor’s identity is in large part based on their culture. Culture “is a system of
meaning that people use to manage their daily worlds … [and] is the basis of social and
political identity” (Lichbach 2009, 42). Furthermore, the way in which an actor defines
their identity also determines how they view themselves in relation to others. Identity can
be individual, but it is also an important source of social interaction and collectivity.
Often, ethnicity and religion both serve as measurements of one’s identity. For this study,
it will be beneficial to look at how Muslims in the West identify themselves. For example,
whether or not a third generation Muslim living in the UK or the US defines himself or
herself as British/American first, Muslim second, or the other way around, will serve as
an indicator of identity.

Feelings of identity and belonging often influence whether or not an individual
becomes radicalized. Demographic factors, including the countries from which these
individuals, or their parents or grandparents, immigrated, and also what factors (economic or otherwise) originally encouraged these individuals to immigrate to the West, are one component of identity. In addition, the extent to which Muslims living in these countries feel alienated from society is important in shaping their identities. Feelings of alienation are demonstrated both by the attitudes of Muslims living in these countries and also by the attitudes of the host societies toward Muslims. The attitudes and feelings of alienation will in large part be measured through public opinion polls.

It has been found that when individuals feel alienated from society, they experience an identity crisis and, therefore, become more susceptible to radicalization. Public opinion polls will be beneficial in measuring radicalization by looking, for example, at Muslims’ approval of tactics, especially violence, used by prominent terrorist groups, al Qaeda in particular. Police reports, furthermore, identify the number of arrests of suspected terrorists since 9/11 and, of course, the number of attacks committed in the past decade, thereby further helping to measure the extent to which the Muslim populations in the UK and the US have radicalized. This paper will look at the effects of identity change on radicalization and will investigate the correlation between two variables, social alienation and radicalization, hypothesizing:

**Hypothesis I:** An individual who experiences social alienation is more likely to become radicalized.

### 2.2 RELATIVE DEPRIVATION

Although constructivism addresses the various aspects of identity that contribute to radicalization of British and American Muslims, this theory does not address the effects of economic factors or various forms of discrimination on radicalization in these
countries; therefore, relative deprivation, which looks at the effects of economic and resource discrepancies on inter-group relations, is also relevant here. Relative deprivation is in many ways about perception in that it comes about when one group feels that there is an unacceptable difference between their resources or accumulated wealth and those of another group living in the same circumstances. An unequal distribution of resources is often accompanied by political exclusion (an issue that will be addressed by rational choice theory). Relative deprivation is increased when a group makes demands for certain rights, but is subsequently denied access to these rights. This theory also suggests that these disadvantaged groups need access to power resources in order to support their demands for increased privileges and access to the same level of comforts as others. In some cases, an inability on the part of these disadvantaged groups to change the status quo can lead to conflict or even violence (Korpi 1974; Homer-Dixon 1994).

It is important to note that poverty (i.e. lack of resources) is merely a contributing factor to violence and social unrest; poverty alone does not lead to conflict. Rather, poverty coupled with group identity and/or a perception of discriminatory treatment is what can sometimes lead to violent conflict (Douma 2006). Based on this apparent correlation, poverty alone cannot be considered to be a cause of radicalization. However, both group identity (i.e. in the form of radical religious groups, as explained by constructivism) and the perception of discriminatory treatment (as explained by relative deprivation) are applicable to Muslims living in the West. Therefore, the interaction between relative deprivation and violent conflict, as put forth by Douma, is applicable to radicalization in the West.

It can be argued that some Muslims living in the West experience feelings of
relative deprivation. Many of these individuals have personal experiences of political, economic, or social grievances against the state. Such grievances can center on discontent with discriminatory policies, such as counterterrorism laws, law enforcement discrimination, unfair employment policies, or unequal access to education. These feelings of relative deprivation experienced by Western Muslims may contribute to radicalization. As is demonstrated below, second and third generation descendants of Muslim immigrants who live in the UK and the US tend to have less access to resources, including education and job opportunities, and also have lower incomes than do non-Muslim individuals living in these countries; this discrepancy often results in a situation in which these individuals are economically disadvantaged when compared to the general population. As predicted by Douma, relative deprivation can lead to violent conflict between groups. Since radicalization is a necessary step toward terrorism, it can be argued that feelings of relative deprivation are one contributing cause of radicalization.

The second section of the case studies in this paper examines feelings of relative deprivation and their effects on the radicalization process. Relative deprivation is when a group feels that they are somehow unfairly disadvantaged, mistreated, or discriminated against by their government, the society in which they live, or both (Korpi 1974, 1569). Possible causes of feelings of relative deprivation for the Muslim populations in the UK and the US in relation to the other members of these societies are emphasized here. Such sources include: discrimination, poor economic conditions, and lower levels of education. Feelings of discrimination can in part be determined by public opinion polls. Counterterrorism laws and police policies, especially those enacted since 9/11, will also serve as indicators of discriminatory treatment, perceived or otherwise. Economic factors,
such as job opportunities and income levels, will further aid in measuring feelings of relative deprivation. More specifically, differences in job opportunities and income levels for Muslims compared to non-Muslims living in the UK and the US will be instrumental here. Finally, differences in levels of education will be important as well. From within the framework of relative deprivation, this paper will seek to demonstrate a correlation between relative deprivation and radicalization, hypothesizing:

**Hypothesis II:** Individuals who experience feelings of relative deprivation are more likely to become radicalized.

### 2.3 RATIONAL CHOICE

Despite their contributions to addressing the causes of homegrown radical Islamist terrorism in the UK and the US, constructivism and relative deprivation fail to account for the importance of political opportunities and institutions within these western states. This is better explained by rational choice theory, which is strongly influenced by economic thought and argues that the decisions that actors make are based on a cost-benefit analysis. Decisions are believed to maximize goals given the situational constraints, and provide the actor with an optimal outcome that best suits their interests (Levi 2007; Bloom 2005).

In conjunction with this cost-benefit analysis, it is important to note the argument that any given individual or group’s success, or lack thereof, in achieving their goals is determined in large part by the political opportunity structures available to them. Political opportunity structures refer to “the degree to which actors (mostly individuals) are able to gain access to power in order to manipulate the system” (Lichbach 2009, 152). The nature of domestic political structures and institutions will influence the rational
calculation or cost-benefit analysis of actors (McAdam et al. 2007, 142).

Terrorism is a rational act in that the terrorists have calculated that it provides the best means by which to achieve a (usually political) goal (Crenshaw 1990). Occasionally, actors who are unable to bring about changes through legitimate and traditional means resort to terrorism. Terrorism is often chosen as a means to a political end in situations where the extant political structures and institutions do not enable these individuals to influence their government through more democratic means. When actors feel that they have no other mechanism at their disposal to instill change, terrorism becomes a rational alternative in that the actors are “picking the option they think is best suited to achieve their goals” (Bloom 2005, 83). This idea is closely linked to Crenshaw’s assertion that terrorism is a rational choice made by a logical actor. Since radicalization is a necessary step toward becoming a terrorist, it can be argued that radicalization is a rational choice for an individual who is unable to make their political grievances heard or addressed through more legitimate and peaceful means.

The third section of the case studies investigates the role that rational choice plays in radicalization. Since terrorism, the highest level of radicalization, is often politically motivated, the rational choice framework of these case studies focuses in particular on the political opportunity structures available to British and American Muslims. To measure political opportunity structures, this paper compares and contrasts political access points within the unitary British system as opposed to the American federal system of government. In addition, this study will examine British and American Muslims’ involvement in civil society organizations and political parties, as well as the extent to which they are properly represented in government. With this data, the paper will attempt
to demonstration the correlation between an inability to impact political opportunities and radicalization, hypothesizing:

**Hypothesis III:** *The inability of an individual to impact the existing political structures increases the likelihood of that individual radicalizing.*

### 2.4 ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Even though the variables explained by constructivism, relative deprivation, and rational choice theory apply to a large number of British and American Muslims, the majority of Muslims living in the West never radicalize, or only do so at very low levels. Therefore, there must be other factors that influence whether or not an individual chooses to adhere to radical teachings, join radical movements, or even engage in acts of terror. As seen above, western foreign policy is a prevalent catalyst for radicalization. Although this and the following alternative explanations concerning the causes of radicalization are beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to be aware of them.

Quintan Wiktorowicz explains that, for some individuals, economic, social, cultural, or political crises provoke a cognitive opening that “shakes certainty in previously accepted beliefs and renders an individual more receptive to the possibility of alternative views and perspectives” (2005, 20). If Islam is somehow part of the affected individual’s identity, a turn to religion is more likely to be a result of this cognitive opening (ibid, 21). Based on this idea about cognitive openings, it can be argued that individuals who are more deeply affected by one or more of these crises are more susceptible to radicalization and Islamist teachings. However, the extent to which a crisis or hardship affects specific individuals would be exceedingly difficult to measure, and therefore is disregarded in this study.
Social movement theory offers another alternative explanation as to why individuals with similar backgrounds and experiences make different choices about whether or not to radicalize. Of particular importance here is the role of leadership and socialization because, “at the heart of decisions about joining [radical Islamist groups] is the process of persuasion” (ibid, 85). Research has consistently shown that prospective members of radical groups tend to be socially connected to existing group members in one way or another. Individuals whose friends and family object to radical teachings, on the other hand, are less likely to radicalize since participation and radical activism would entail a social cost (ibid, 54). In addition to social connections, radical leaders, such as radical imams, also play an important role in persuading individuals to radicalize. Due to the limitations of this paper, however, socialization and agency is not addressed, but should instead be noted as additional possible explanations of the causes of homegrown Islamist radicalization in the West.

Identity crises, feelings of relative deprivation, rational choice, cognitive openings, and social movement theory, as well as western foreign policy, all contribute to explaining the causes of radicalization. In the decade since 9/11, the religion of Islam has become closely associated with radicalization and terrorism in the minds of many Westerners. Following this logic, it would seem that religiosity prior to radicalization would be another contributing factor; however, more often than not, the opposite has been found to be true. In fact, studies have shown that many of the second and third generation Muslims in the West who actively radicalize had relatively secular upbringings; they have cultural and familial ties to Islam, but were not overtly religious themselves. In fact, many members of these groups reported feeling alienated from
Muslims in general after having joined these groups (ibid, 105). This finding suggests that Muslims who have a firmer grasp on the teachings and beliefs of Islam are less likely to be persuaded by radical imams, who communicate a distorted version of the Islamic religion.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper uses the comparative case study method to investigate the probable causes of increased susceptibility to Islamist radicalization among British and American Muslims. A few factors determine the choice of the UK and the US as the cases to be examined. First, according to David Collier, it is often important to use comparable cases when employing the comparative case study method since the researcher is able to hold constant a larger number of variables, thereby facilitating the analysis of other variables that differ across the cases while also decreasing the number of variables to be studied (1993). The UK and the US are both industrialized, liberal, democratic states with predominantly Christian backgrounds; furthermore, both of these states are firmly anchored in the culture associated with the western world. Despite these comparable characteristics, British Muslims have been observably more susceptible to homegrown radicalization than have American Muslims. In order to look more closely at probable environmental causes of radicalization, the case studies in this paper are divided into three sections. Each section corresponds to one of the hypotheses proposed above in the literature review.

4. EVIDENCE

The general consensus among scholars is that there is no identifiable terrorist identity or personality; anyone can become a terrorist. Consequently, security agencies
have sought to identify the sources of terrorism in order to combat the threat at its source, and increasing focus has been given to the radicalization process. Although radicalized individuals do not necessarily become terrorists, radicalization has been found to be a necessary step toward committing an act of terror (Sageman 2008, 17-8). Consequently, identifying the sources of radicalization is vital for addressing the root causes of terrorism.

It is important to note that a number of factors can drive an individual to radicalize (Richards 2007, 36). Such factors include social alienation, which often leads to an identity crisis; in this instance, individuals radicalize in order to feel included in an alternative group, thereby establishing an identity for themselves. Feelings of relative deprivation, which can be caused by discrimination, lower incomes, fewer job opportunities, or lower levels of education than other members of their same society, can also contribute to the radicalization process. Finally, an inability to influence political processes through reasonable and peaceful means has been identified as an impetus for individual radicalization. The presence of some or all of these elements likely increases an individual’s susceptibility to radicalization.

4.1 IDENTITY

In order to understand the probable causes of radicalization and also the reasons why homegrown radicalization is more prevalent in the UK than it is in the US, it is important first to look more closely at both the Muslim populations in each of these countries, and also at the interactions between these individuals and the societies in which they live.

Demographics and Immigration

In total, the UK has a Muslim population of 1.6 million, which constitutes about
3% of the country’s population. 60% of the British Muslim population is under the age of 30 (Zimmermann et al. 2009). South Asian Muslims (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Indians) account for close to 65% of the entire British Muslim population (Abbas 2005, 4); therefore, many scholars argue that “the characteristics of the British Muslim population are predominantly those of the Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian Muslim population living in Britain” (ibid, 23). Muslims are the second largest religious group in the UK, after Christians, at 2.7%, and the largest religious minority in the UK (ibid, 20-3) (see Appendix A).

Muslims first started immigrating to the UK in large numbers in the years immediately following World War II, the partition of India in 1947, and the creation of East and West Pakistan. The partition and its religious underpinnings made the process particularly violent, thereby plunging the subcontinent into turmoil and displacing ten million people. In an attempt to reconstruct following the devastation of World War II, the British government began to encourage members of the former British colonies, especially those displaced individuals in the subcontinent, to immigrate to the UK in search of economic opportunities (Abbas 2005, 8-9).

The majority of Muslim workers coming to the UK at this time were from South Asia (Pakistan, India, Bangladesh), though some also came from Northern Africa and the Middle East (Euro-Islam, UK). From the onset, Muslim immigrants to the UK were not well received by the general British population. Since these individuals were recruited to work jobs that were in decline, their positions in society were considered inferior to those of the native British citizens. In addition, the white indigenous population believed that these immigrant workers would return to their native countries once reconstruction work
ended. In fact, an economic recession in the 1950’s severely decreased the demand for labor, both domestic and immigrant, with the result that the British government encouraged these Muslim immigrant workers to leave the UK and return home (Abbas 2005, 9). Many, however, opted to remain in Europe where they had better chances for economic advancement. The children and grandchildren of these postwar workers largely comprise the second and third generation Muslims living in the UK today (Sageman 2008, 98-100).

Since then, immigration to the UK has been predominantly postcolonial and largely undesired. British immigration policy tends to be “a negative control policy to keep immigrants out” (Joppke 1998, 11). For example, the UK Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 restricted automatic entry into the UK to Commonwealth citizens only (The Change Institute 2009). One unintended result of the 1962 Act was to encourage the family members of immigrant workers to also start coming to the UK in an attempt to establish a presence in the country before the ban on immigrants could become firmly entrenched. Amendments to further restrict immigration from the former colonies were put in place in 1968 so that by the end of the 1960’s, immigration into the UK from the South Asian region had more or less ceased (Abbas 2005, 10).

The circumstances under which Muslim immigrants began to arrive in the US differ considerably, with two legislative acts making it significantly easier for Muslims to immigrate to the US. The 1952 McCarran-Walter Act relaxed the quota system originally instituted in 1924. In addition, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act encouraged family reunification and the import of skilled labor. Together, these two laws encouraged larger numbers of Muslims to immigrate to the US; individuals from Palestine, Egypt,
Iraq, Syria, and South Asia (Pakistan in particular) immigrated to the US. While the first wave of Muslim immigrants also came to the US in search of economic opportunity, the second wave consisted of numerous individuals with advanced professional degrees and others who came in hopes of obtaining higher education (Sebian).

Although there are no official statistics (US law prohibits the government from asking about religious affiliation in the census), it is estimated that there are between 1.4 and 3 million Muslims living in the US. Thus, Muslims constitute somewhere between 0.5% and 1% of the total American population, as opposed to the 3% in the UK (Jenkins 2011, 8;). 37% of American Muslims are second or third generation Muslim immigrants; the rest (63%) are first generation immigrants (Pew 2011). It has been found that the rates of naturalization are highest amongst the earlier Muslim immigrants; nevertheless, over 75% of all American Muslims are American citizens. “Of those who arrived before 1990, 92% are naturalized” (Sebian).

While the initial Muslim immigrants to both the UK and the US were in large part motivated by economic opportunity, the British government sought to curtail immigration after the initial influx, whereas legislation in the US encouraged the import of skilled, as opposed to unskilled, labor from the Muslim world. The US sought to control, rather than ban, Muslim immigrants. The US has considerably more control over Muslim immigrants due to geography. Geography, coupled with the Schengen Zone, which allows for free movement across borders within the EU, makes it easier for individuals to cross national borders once they have entered the EU; as a member of the EU, this limits the amount of control that the UK has over who crosses its borders (Sageman 2008, 98).

One result of the higher levels of control that the US has over the Muslim
immigration process is that Muslim immigrants to the US have been, on average, better educated and from a higher socio-economic class than Muslim immigrants to the UK. This is demonstrated by the demographics of the second wave of Muslim immigrants to the US, which tended to be upper-middle class professionals seeking further education. Since the descendants of these original immigrants comprise the Muslim populations in the UK and the US today, American Muslims typically come from wealthier backgrounds than do British ones.

**Attitudes of the host population**

The related identity factor is the attitude of the members of the host countries toward immigrants. A national identity, while often based on factual historical events, is typically an elaborated story around which a nation’s founding is based, espoused by a nation’s citizens, and serves to identify who ‘belongs’ to any particular nation. By defining what it means to be British or American, the national identities influence who will be accepted as a member of these nations. The attitudes of the host populations toward Muslim immigrants in these countries are in many ways related to these nations’ defining identities.

Historically, Britain, along with many other European states, was created around a “defining essence” or national identity. For the UK, this historical narrative draws on the stories of Horatio Nelson and the 1st Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley. Both Nelson and Wellington are remembered for their military roles leading the British to defeat the French during the Napoleonic wars of the early 19th century. Other symbols that represent what it means to be British include the Church of England, the Monarchy, and the Empire. In fact, many British citizens still view the end of Empire as a tragedy for the UK. This is
problematic since the majority of British Muslims are descendants of immigrants from former British colonies, who view the end of the British Empire as their liberation from colonialism (Abbas 2005, 82). One important consequence of this belief in a national identity is the creation of an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) that encourages the exclusion of outsiders, including Muslims living in the West. In reality, much like the US, the formation of the British nation was a result of “mass migrations and mixed ethnic groups,” though the British are often reluctant to admit this (Sageman 2008, 94). In contrast to the British insistence on a national identity, Americans evoke the ‘melting pot’ metaphor. While the validity of this idea is perhaps as questionable as the stories about Nelson and Wellington, it nevertheless serves to promote “the acceptance of foreigners and their eventual integration in society” (ibid, 95).

These differing conceptions concerning nation formation contribute to the diverging attitudes of the British and Americans toward Muslims living in the UK and the US. In addition, general fear of Islamist militancy has been on the rise in the West, with negative views of Islam compounded by the 2001 and 2005 terror attacks. The fact that British Muslims were responsible for the 2005 bombings, whereas American Muslims were not involved in the 9/11 attacks, has made anti-Islamism even more prevalent in the UK than in the US. In the UK, this anti-Islamism has led to a rise of xenophobic, right wing movements against British Muslims (Abbas 2005, 14). Between 2005 and 2006, positive opinions about Muslims decreased from 72% to 63% in the UK (Pew 2006).

Although religious freedom exists in the UK, “the everyday norms and values of British South Asian Muslims have been questioned” (Abbas 2005, 4). In particular, there has been some tension surrounding overt displays of religiosity on the part of Muslims in
the UK. For example, in 2004, the British Judicial Committee of the House of Lords “ruled that freedom to manifest religious beliefs was not absolute, and could be restricted” in a case centered on a 15-year-old girl’s right to wear the hijab to school in place of her school uniform (Euro-Islam, UK). The High Court of England and Wales upheld this, and these rulings have set precedents that suggest that British society is not yet ready to fully accept Muslims (ibid).

In the US, although tensions between non-Muslims and Muslims certainly exist, there is a general belief that new groups of immigrants will work hard, embrace American values, and will eventually become fully American. Each time a new group is incorporated into American society, the meaning of what it means to be an American is inevitably altered “in ways that, historically, have enriched the nation” (Jones et al. 2011, 3). Throughout history, as alluded to above in the discussion of the melting pot metaphor, an American pattern has emerged concerning the incorporation of new groups into the country. “The American pattern has been to battle fiercely over the inclusion of new groups, to ask whether this or that new group can ever ‘Americanize,’” but, eventually, the new group commits to the American values and principles and subsequently becomes fully ‘American’ (ibid, 37). If this pattern is taken to be legitimate, it seems that the Muslim community is only the most recent in a series of immigrant groups that will one day be fully assimilated into American society.

The current youngest generation of Americans is the most religiously and ethnically diverse generation ever seen in the US (ibid, 4). Religious freedom is an important concept firmly established in the First Amendment of the Constitution (Sebian). In the past few decades, “the large flow of immigrants … has accustomed younger
Americans to a more diverse society” (Jones et al. 2011, 27); American Muslims have benefited from these factors. Even in the wake of 9/11, American beliefs in religious freedom and acceptance of diversity seem to have maintained their strength. Evidence suggests that “even Americans uneasy with diversity accept it in important ways as a norm” of American society (ibid, 25).

Opinion polls support this view of American acceptance of diversity as 88% of Americans have a strong belief in religious freedom and religious tolerance, even for unpopular religious groups (ibid). More specifically, 54% of Americans agree that American Muslims constitute an important part of the U.S. religious community. 58% hold a favorable view of American Muslims, while 60% feel that Muslims are too often automatically assumed to be terrorists. Despite these positive findings, it is important to note that 40% of Americans report that they never interact with Muslims, while 6%, 24%, and 28% say that they interact with Muslims once a day, occasionally, and seldom (respectively) (ibid).

**British and American Muslims’ attitudes toward Western society**

Negative feelings of Muslims living in the West are in many ways influenced by the attitudes of their host societies, with the general trend that British Muslims have a more negative view of the society in which they live than do their American counterparts.

Opinion polls have found that Muslims in Europe (Germany, Spain, France, and the UK) have an overall more positive view of Westerners than do Muslims living in predominantly Muslim countries. “British Muslims, however, are the most critical of the four minority publics studied and they come closer to views of Muslims around the world in their opinions of Westerners” (Pew 2006). Evidence of this relatively negative view of
and experience with British society is exemplified by a 2004 survey from the Immigration History Research Center (IHRC) in which 80% of British Muslims reported having experienced discrimination because of their religion (Al-Lami 2009, 3). In addition, 57% of British Muslims believe that their relations with non-Muslims deteriorated in the wake of 9/11 (Wiktorowicz 2005, 88). In contrast, Muslims “in the United States [are] said to be different and less critical than [those] in Europe” (Al-Lami 2009, 3). It was found that 48% of Muslims in the UK think that ordinary Americans are friendly toward American Muslims, while another 32% believe Americans to be neutral toward American Muslims; only 16% of American Muslims think that American society is unfriendly toward them. Furthermore, American Muslims are happy with their lives with 82% being very satisfied with their lives, 79% rating their communities as positive places to live, and 56% of American Muslims (compared to 23% of the general American public) being happy with the way things are going in the US (Pew 2011).

Social Alienation

The overall more negative view that British Muslims have toward their society may be due in part to the failure of the UK to effectively integrate these individuals. British immigration policies, which promote multiculturalism, by and large do not encourage or facilitate the assimilation of these immigrants into British society (Wiktorowicz 2005, 88). Furthermore, since many of the Muslim immigrants who came to the UK following World War II believed that they would only be there temporarily, they made a minimal effort to integrate into British society (ibid, 55). The US, in contrast, has been much more successful in this area. This is exemplified by the considerable discrepancy between British and American Muslims; for the most part, American
Muslims are middle-class and integrated, unlike British Muslims (Euro-Islam, UK).

Alienation from society has been identified as one significant cause of radicalization, and is therefore important to consider and understand. This general feeling of alienation is exemplified in a number of ways. Among British Muslims, there is a “widespread perception that they are not accepted by British society, despite government programs to support multiculturalism” (Wiktorowicz 2005, 88). As a result, many British Muslims feel that, no matter how hard they try, the majority population will never accept them as fully “British” (The Change Institute 2009). Furthermore, a 2001 census outlined the segmentation of British society that is in sharp opposition to British claims of multiculturalism, finding that “while some of the ghettos and pockets of people were created naturally, others were a result of segregation” (Al-Lami 2009, 5). Partly as a result of this alienation from society, 81% of Muslims living in the UK describe themselves as Muslim first, British second. In contrast, only 47% of Muslims in the US describe themselves as Muslim first, American second (Sageman 2008, 85).

The US, conversely, does not have a formal integration policy, “and this paradoxically may be why it appears not to need one” (ibid, 103). Rather, integration in the US tends to be a bottom-up process aided by civil society, a trend discussed further below. On the whole, public opinion polls have found that American Muslims have been relatively well integrated into American society, and are in general happy with how their lives are going. Furthermore, over 60% of American Muslims assert, “most Muslims coming to the U.S. today want to adopt an American way of life rather than remain distinctive from the larger society” (Pew 2011, 33).
Change of Identity

Kinnvall and other scholars argue that globalization and Westernization have created an identity crisis for Muslims living in the West. These individuals often question what it means to be a Muslim living in western society (Al-Lami 2009, 5). Higher levels of Islamaphobia are “causing many young people to feel unsupported by the British system and culture” (The Change Institute 2009, 7). In response to this identity crisis and social alienation, some individuals choose to seek out like-minded individuals who are experiencing the same problems in life. British Muslims feel more alienated from western society than do their American counterparts. Predictably, then, identity crises also seem to be more prevalent for Muslims living in the UK; feelings of alienation and lack of identity are particularly strong for the younger generations of Muslims in the UK. “Many younger 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} generation Muslims across Europe have expressed a ‘double alienation’ both from the attitudes and culture of their parents and grandparents … and from Western cultural ideals and expressions of indigenous neighbours” (Richards 2007, 36).

Feelings of alienation and rootlessness, as theorized by Kinnvall, have contributed to increased religiosity amongst these Muslim youth living in Western Europe. This increased religiosity is exemplified by a British study, which found that 74% of young British Muslims prefer that young Muslim women wear the veil, whereas only 25% of British Muslims over the age of 55 feel this way (ibid). Islam is attractive to many young Muslims living in the UK because it helps them to establish an identity. In the words of Husain, a former British Islamist: “Cut off from Britain, isolated from the Eastern culture of our parents, Islamism provided us with a purpose and a place in life … it gave one a
sense of belonging, a sense of connection not just to the structure here in Britain, but also a cause globally” (as quoted in Al-Lami 2009, 6). It is extremely important to note, however: “the popularity of politicized Islam does not imply a strict adherence to the religion’s practices and rituals, precisely because what is important is not spiritual or moral guidance. Instead, what attracts is the idea of … group solidarity in connection with social exclusion” (Abbas 2005, 169).

American Muslims have been much better assimilated into American society and often end up adopting American individualism. By embracing individualism, Muslim Americans are much less likely to adopt collective identities hostile to their host society; the same cannot be said for British Muslims. This individualism is exemplified by a survey that asked Muslims in the US and in Europe about their perceived reasons for economic adversity. While American Muslims answered that it was because they did not try hard enough, European Muslims attributed economic difficulties to never having been given a chance because they are Muslims (Sageman 2008, 97).

Most western Muslim youth who turn to religion in search of identity are not exposed or attracted to their parents’ version of Islam, which they often view to be “archaic, backward, and ill informed” (Wiktorowicz 2005, 99). Instead, western Muslim youth tend to encounter the Salafi interpretation of Islam, which is favored for the emphasis it places on political activism (ibid). Furthermore, it has been found that the majority of young Muslims in the West that adhere to religious extremism are recent converts “who have superficial knowledge of the theological underpinnings of Islam” (Al-Lami 2009, 3). This incomplete knowledge of the religion, coupled with the fact that most second and third generation Muslims do not speak Arabic and, therefore, are unable
to read the religious texts, makes it easier for radical imams preaching in the UK to win over these individuals. Even the older generations of British Muslims are cognizant of the influence that extremist and violent interpretations of Islam are having on the younger generations within their communities. Many within this older generation believe that “unless the community actively engages internally with its young generation, external forces will dominate and determine the future direction of the community” (The Change Institute 2009, 9).

Qitan Wiktorowicz surveyed members of al-Muhajiroun, a UK-based Islamist transnational movement “that supports the use of violence against western interests in Muslim countries and the establishment of an Islamic state through a military coup” (Wiktorowicz 2004, 2). Through his interviews with members of al-Muhajiroun, Wiktorowicz found that “most of its members had initially experienced a severe identity crisis prior to their participation” that was subsequently exacerbated by feelings of discrimination or abuse by the British society in which they live (Al-Lami 2009, 5). Inclusion in these jihadist groups offers Muslim youth a much-needed sense of belong and provides an identity of empowerment to counterbalance the negative effects of discrimination and alienation from society (ibid).

Conversion and adherence to Islamist beliefs precipitates a change in identity for these Muslim youth living in the West. At the beginning of this process, these youth slowly begin to move away from their former identity toward their new one that is “defined by Salafi philosophy, ideology, and values” (NYPD 2007, 30). During this process, individuals identify and associate with like-minded individuals while at the same time alienating themselves from aspects of their former identity. Consequently, “the
group becomes the individual’s new world. The group members become their new family” (ibid, 37). By becoming a part of this radical movement, individuals transfer all of their loyalty, once reserved for friends and family, to the group, thereby creating the phenomenon of in-group love and out-group hate.

**Radicalization**

Due to the extremist teachings of these Islamist movements, membership in jihadist groups often corresponds with individual radicalization. Since alienation from society often drives individuals to join these groups, this trend seems to suggest a positive correlation between alienation from society and susceptibility to radicalization. Since British Muslims feel more alienated from society than their American counterparts, this may contribute to explaining why higher levels of radicalization have been observed in the UK than in the US. It has been found that, “assimilation makes it less likely for Muslim Americans to believe they are part of a war against Islam, while exclusion … makes it more likely for Muslim Europeans to believe this notion” because it resonates with their own personal experiences (Sageman 2008, 96).

Polls have also found British Muslims to be more sympathetic to the jihadist cause than their American counterparts as 12% of British Muslim youth support terrorism, 13% considered the London 7/7 bombers to be “martyrs”, and 7% feel that suicide attacks against civilians in the UK are justifiable (Zimmerman 2009). In contrast, only 4% of American Muslims feel that support for Islamist extremism amongst American Muslims is on the rise, while 64% asserted that there is little to no support for extremism amongst American Muslims and 48% felt that their religious leaders have not done enough to combat Islamist extremism in the US. Furthermore, only 1% of American
Muslims (in contrast to 7% of British Muslims) feel that suicide attacks against civilians are legitimate means by which to defend Islam from its enemies. 81% of American Muslims say violent tactics are never justified, and 70% have very unfavorable views of al Qaeda (Pew 2011).

American Muslims have access to the same jihadist teachings that British Muslims do; however, the difference in the threat level of homegrown terrorism resulting from domestic radicalization may come in part from the fact that, for American Muslims, the terrorist message “does not resonate with their beliefs or personal experience” in the way that it does for British Muslims (Sageman 2008, 108). Due to at least perceived support from American society in general, American Muslims, unlike Muslims living elsewhere in the world, are better able to differentiate between the US government and American society in general, thereby rendering them less susceptible to having anti-American feelings (ibid, 98). As seen above, the vast majority of American Muslims have negative views toward jihadist movements such as al Qaeda. In fact, Muslim family members and close friends account for between one-third and one-half of the reports to American officials of potential radicalization and recruitment within the American Muslim community (Jenkins 2011). This further highlights the lack of support that American Muslims have for Islamism.

When considering the role of identity in the process of radicalization, this paper hypothesized that an individual who experiences social alienation is more susceptible to radicalization. As was demonstrated in the introduction, homegrown Islamist radicalization has been more prevalent in the UK than it has been in the US. The evidence collected suggests that British Muslims are exceedingly more likely to feel
alienated from British society than American Muslims are from American society, therefore suggesting a significant correlation between identity crises resulting from social alienation and susceptibility to radicalization. However, the causes of radicalization are multi-faceted. As such, identity alone cannot account for increased susceptibility to radicalization; therefore, it is also beneficial to look at the role of feelings of relative deprivation as a probable cause of radicalization.

4.2 RELATIVE DEPRIVATION

Related to potential identity crises created by social alienation, feelings of relative deprivation among Muslims living in the UK and the US may increase the likelihood of radicalization. Feelings of relative deprivation can occur as a result of discrimination, levels of education, economic factors, or domestic counterterrorism laws and institutions.

Discrimination

Alienation from society is a prevalent concern and a daily reality for many western Muslims, and especially for British Muslims. Often, this alienation is accompanied by discrimination, both real and perceived. Prior to the 1970’s, the Church of England was the only religious group in the UK afforded legislative protection. With the Race Relations Act of 1976, discrimination based on race or ethnicity was made illegal in the UK. While this act protected South Asians from discrimination based on their race, “no such protection with regard to their religion or beliefs” was included (Abbas 2005, 53). To fill this gap, the Human Rights Act, which came into effect in the UK in 2000, prohibits religious discrimination and provides for freedom of religion. Nevertheless, many maintain that discrimination is still a problem in the UK (ibid, 41).

Farhad Khosrokhavar, an Iranian-French sociologist, describes:
The general sense of humiliation felt by Muslim youth in the West because they are treated and/or perceived as ‘different’ and ‘inferior’. ‘Even those who are not excluded economically and are relatively well-integrated may still experience’ a more or less covert racism and find it profoundly humiliating. (Al-Lami 2009, 5)

Discrimination against Muslims was exacerbated in the days immediately following September 11, 2001 when a London Afghan taxi driver was attacked and left paralyzed, and a Sikh petrol station owner was murdered in Arizona. Both men resembled Osama bin Laden, at least in the eyes of their murderers (Abbas 2005, 14). The increased levels of Islamaphobia in the West in the past decade have further aggravated perceptions of being considered different or inferior. Many British Muslims blame the media for the ongoing Islamaphobia in the West. The language used to describe Muslims often suggests violence (‘fundamentalist’, ‘extremist’, ‘radical’), and “Arabic words have been appropriated into universal journalistic vocabulary and have been invested with new meaning, which is generally extremist and aggressive”; jihad is a particularly relevant example here (ibid, 12). The discourse of Islamaphobia and Islamist terrorism, along with the practice of racial profiling, leads to feelings of relative deprivation among Muslims living in the West (Jackson 2006).

**Education**

Educational attainment is emblematic of relative deprivation. More specifically, if individuals have trouble accessing the same levels of education as those around them, they are more likely to experience feelings of relative deprivation. British Muslim educational level achievements are consistently lower than those of the general, non-Muslim, British population. According to the Department of Education and Skills, “in 2002, the proportion of Muslim children achieving five or more A – C grades in subjects taken for the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) … was lower than for
white, Chinese and Indian groups” (Abbas 2005, 32). The differing achievement levels have in part been attributed to a lack of support from the British government for Muslim secondary schools (ibid, 32-3).

In addition, individuals of South Asian decent in the UK have encountered substantial discrimination by the “old” universities (the universities founded prior to 1992), best evidenced by acceptance rates (Euro-Islam, UK). When comparing students of equal merit, Muslim students were accepted 40% of the time, whereas non-Muslim applicants were accepted 54% of the time (Abbas 2005, 32). The educational levels of British Muslims in relation to other religious groups in the UK exemplify these discriminatory educational policies. Over 40% of British Muslims are classified as having no or unknown levels of educational qualifications, a percentage higher than that of all other religious groups in the UK. Furthermore, only a little over 20% of British Muslims have education above the high school level, a number significantly lower than that of all other religious minorities in the country (ibid, 26).

The gap in levels of education does not appear to be as wide in the US. In general, it has been found that American Muslims attain educational levels that are roughly equal to those attained by the general American public. 14% of American Muslims have graduated from college, a number only slightly below the 16% of the general American public. Furthermore, 10% of American Muslims have pursued graduate study, compared to 9% of the general American population (Pew 2011). The same trends were similarly found among terror suspects in the US, where 47% of the 176 American jihadists apprehended between 2001 and 2011 had graduated from high school, compared to 44% nationally, and the number of these individuals who had at least started college was
above than the national average (Jenkins 2011, 10).

Thus, “many believe that the threat of homegrown terrorists in the United States is lower than that in Europe since the majority of American Muslims are ‘much better educated and economically better off’” (Al-Lami 2009, 3). However, while economic wellbeing and educational attainment may be contributing factors in determining susceptibility to homegrown radicalization, these explanations alone are insufficient, as the correlation between them and radicalization is unclear. High levels of education and economic wellbeing do not automatically preclude an individual from radicalizing and being recruited to jihadist terrorism, something that is demonstrated by the American jihadists whose levels of education were comparable to the national averages. This demonstrates the above assertion that there are a number of factors that contribute to the process of radicalization; the outcome is often an individualized one.

Economic Factors

Economic factors such as job opportunities and levels of income, both of which are influenced in part by levels of education attained, also have a bearing on whether or not individuals experience feelings of relative deprivation. According to the Pew Research Center, European Muslims are more prone to perceive themselves to be victims of economic discrimination and exclusion than are American Muslims. Differences in both job opportunities and income levels support these complaints.

In the UK, Muslims have higher rates of unemployment than all other religious groups (Euro-Islam, UK). Similarly, Pakistani Muslims in the UK, which constitute 43% of all British Muslims, are the most economically disadvantaged ethnic group in the country. When Muslims first immigrated to the UK following World War II, many of
them found employment in textile and manufacturing industries. When these industries began to decline, the Muslim population in the UK suffered economically (The Change Institute 2009). Today, close to 25% of British Muslims over the age of sixteen are classified as long-term unemployed, compared to just 3.4% of the general British population (Richards 2007, 36).

American Muslims, on the other hand, are all around better off economically than their British counterparts (Al-Lami 2009, 3). 41% of American Muslims are classified as being employed full-time, a percentage only slightly lower than the national average of 49%. The unemployment rates are also similar, with 43% of American Muslims classified as unemployed, compared to 40% of the general American public (Pew 2011). The discrepancy between employment levels of British and American Muslims can in part be attributed to the fact that, in the US, there are few laws that dictate the process of hiring and firing employees. Conversely, “in Europe, long traditions of social protection are incorporated into statutes making it almost impossible to fire an employee without undergoing a lengthy and costly legal process” (Sageman 2008, 100). European employers are often reluctant to hire immigrants, and even their descendants, due to the difficulty of firing employees, thereby creating more chances for hiring discrimination against Muslims (ibid, 100-01). In addition, there have been instances of Muslim employees in the UK being fired after having attempted to pray during the workdays, while Muslim women have been denied employment due to their insistence on wearing traditional Islamic dress (Abbas 2005, 40).

Along with these lower rates of employment, it has also been found that British Muslims who are employed have an average income that is lower than that of the general
British population. 61% of British Muslims have incomes of less than £20,000, compared to 39% of the general public, while only 13% of British Muslims have incomes over £40,000, compared to 23% of the general British population (Pew 2011). British Pakistani and Bangladeshi men are 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed than is a white British male (40% versus 12%). Furthermore, those British citizens of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origins who are employed earn an average of £150 per week less than white males. 68% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi British households live under the poverty line (versus the national average of 23%) (Wiktorowicz 2005, 90).

The majority of American Muslims, in contrast, is middle-class and has incomes comparable to the average incomes of Americans in general (Martin 2009, 244). In 2011, 14% of American Muslims reported household incomes at or above $100,000, compared to 16% of the entire US population. In addition, 35% of American Muslims have incomes lower than $30,000, compared to 33% of the general American population. Furthermore, 46% of American Muslims describe financial situations as great, as opposed to only 38% of the general population feeling the same way (Pew 2011).

The disparity between the economic opportunities available to British Muslims versus those available to American Muslims is significant when considering the causes of radicalization. Discrimination can lead to alienation of and social unrest within the British Muslim population. Employment and other forms of discrimination are particularly problematic “if the unemployment is linked to real or perceived racism in the job market” that “may also lead to embitterment among young Muslims about their medium and long term prospects, which could feed into more radical responses” (Richards 2007, 36).
Divergent National Approaches to Counterterrorism

In addition to educational and economic discrimination, Muslims in the UK and the US have also been faced with other forms of relative deprivation as a direct result of 9/11, particularly associated with counterterrorism efforts. Although both states subsequently sought to address the threat posed by international Islamist terrorism, their tactics were noticeably different. While these attacks “prompted a drastic shift in the American conception of national security, they did not have a comparable effect on European views” (Stevenson 2003, 78). British counterterrorism can best be described as a preventative, domestic, police and law-enforcement approach driven above all by current available intelligence. The US, on the other hand, favors a preemptive, militaristic approach to fighting terrorism (ibid, 88). One result of these diverging approaches has been that British Muslims are more directly confronted with counterterrorism initiatives in their daily lives than are American Muslims.

An important factor in determining this difference is each country’s strategic culture, which “is based on the understanding that states are predisposed by their historical experiences, political systems and cultures to deal with security issues in a particular way” (Rees 2005, 906). In the latter half of the 20th century, the UK, unlike the US, was faced with what is commonly referred to as “old” terrorism, referring to ethnic or nationalist terrorists who tended to use some restraint in their violent tactics that left them room to negotiate with the opposing government. Consequently, there were a number of political means, such as the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 with Northern Ireland, which the British government could use to deal with groups such as the
Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) (Stevenson 2003, 75-6). These experiences play a role in determining the British approach to counterterrorism today.

The US, on the other hand, does not have a significant history of addressing domestic terrorism. Rather, al Qaeda is a transnational threat that differs significantly from the IRA and similar groups in that it “has potentially thousands of members and no interest in bargaining with the United States or its allies” (ibid, 77). Due to these factors, the US has adopted a militaristic approach to fighting terrorism, characterized by President Bush’s first National Security Strategy, published in September 2002, which calls for the US “to use its ‘unparalleled military strength’ … to defeat the threat posed by ‘terrorists and tyrants’”; this strategy emphasizes the necessity of military preemption abroad in order to fight terrorism (Daalder et al. 2002, 1-2).

The different strategic cultures suggest that British Muslims are more directly affected by counterterrorism measures than are their American counterparts. The police approach adopted by the British government means that counterterrorism initiatives are primarily domestic, manifested as counterterrorism legislation and law enforcement policies often seemingly directed against British Muslims (discussed below). Although the US has also implemented counterterrorism legislation at home, the militaristic strategy has placed significant emphasis on fighting Islamist terrorism abroad.

**Domestic Counterterrorism Legislation**

Following 9/11, there was a proliferation of counterterrorism legislation in the West, much of it viewed as directly targeting Muslims. Due to the law enforcement nature of British counterterrorism, such legislation has been arguably more extensive and prevalent in the UK than it has in the US.
Before 2000, British antiterrorism laws were primarily designed to combat the threat of violent Irish nationalist groups. As such, these laws were mainly concerned with attacks launched within the UK itself, not those planned in the UK but executed abroad. Consequently, the laws in place before 2000 were ill equipped to address radical Islamist terrorism. Under pressure from the international community, which began to accuse the UK of providing a safe haven for Islamist terrorists, the British government passed the Terrorism Act of 2000, which “was also intended to address concerns about the presence of international terrorist groups by redefining terrorism to include actions inciting and supporting violence in other countries” (Wiktorowicz 2005, 61-63). Within one year of being enacted, the 2000 Terrorism Act led to the arrest of ninety-three, primarily Islamist, international terrorists (ibid, 63).

The next significant British antiterrorism act, the Anti-Terrorism, Crime, and Security Act of 2001, came into effect shortly after 9/11. This act allowed the British government to deport non-British suspected terrorists without trial. In addition, the 2001 Act gave the British government the power to hold “suspected terrorists indefinitely without charges or trial” while also restricting the right to judicial review (ibid). While indefinite detention would usually be prohibited by Article 15 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the British government was able to side-step this by declaring a state of emergency (ibid).

The Nationality, Immigration, and Asylum Act of 2002 gave the British government the power to revoke an individual’s citizenship “‘if the Secretary of State is satisfied that the person has done anything seriously prejudicial to the vital interests of a) the United Kingdom or b) a British territory overseas’” (ibid, 66). In addition, in 2006,
largely in response to the 2005 London bombings, the Terrorism Act gave British police the power to arrest and detain terror suspects for twenty-eight days (later augmented to forty-two days by Gordon Brown) without trial (Euro-Islam, UK).

Shortly following 9/11, as British citizens learned of British Muslims travelling to the Middle East to train with and fight for the Taliban, there were calls for treason acts, such as the Treason Act of 1351, to be reinstated. Although the treason act was never reenacted, it was seriously debated within the government. Calls for enforced loyalty to the British state put the British Muslim community on the defensive (Wiktorowicz 2005, 71). The British Muslim community also felt targeted by the various antiterrorism acts put into place following 9/11 and 7/7. Many felt that the incorporation of “‘Muslim’ concerns into legislation that dealt with ‘anti-terrorism, crime, and security’ was…indicative…of the institutional view of Muslims in relation to 9/11” (Abbas 2005, 54). These antiterrorism acts have served to further exacerbate feelings of relative deprivation amongst British Muslims.

American Muslims have also felt victimized and targeted by security policies enacted by the American government since 9/11. No single piece of American counterterrorism legislation has been more controversial than the 2001 Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (USA Patriot Act). The Patriot Act expanded the American government’s powers in a multitude of areas, including those concerning: wiretapping abilities; the power to seize financial assets intended to support terrorists; and increased the power of the Attorney General to detain and deport “non-citizens with links to terrorist organizations” (McCarthy 2002, 435-39). After it was enacted, civil rights
groups and immigrant organizations opposed the Patriot Act, insisting that it was “an overboard and unjustified infringement of privacy, association, and due process rights” (ibid, 436).

Although the Patriot Act significantly expanded the authority of the executive branch and the powers granted to security bodies, Congress “tempered the authority with provisions for congressional and judicial oversight to check executive discretion” (ibid, 439). This judicial and congressional monitoring was possible in the US, but not in the UK, due to the American federal form of government (discussed below). For example, originally, the Bush administration proposed that the government should be allowed to hold non-citizens suspected of terrorism indefinitely. Congress, even in the weeks and months directly following 9/11, felt that this was too extreme and chose to limit the detention period to seven days. At the end of this seven-day period, the U.S. government was required to bring either immigration or criminal charges against the detainee (ibid, 448-49). This is significantly less extreme than the British Anti-Terrorism, Crime, and Security Act of 2001, which allowed for indefinite detention and severe limitations of right to judicial review.

Although Congress and the judiciary checked the executive’s powers, the Patriot Act, much like the counterterrorism acts in the UK for British Muslims, “highlighted American-Muslims fears of how they were perceived and treated, feeling that domestic security and surveillance legislation was directed toward them,” thereby contributing to feelings of relative deprivation (Martin 2009, 234-35). However, the stipulations of the Patriot Act, while undoubtedly a curtailment of civil liberties of Americans, were in many cases less extreme than the multiple acts enacted in the UK following 9/11 and also
7/7. The difference in the number and extremity of acts in the UK as opposed to the US can be attributed to a couple of factors. First, as demonstrated above, the UK has adopted a law enforcement approach to counterterrorism, whereas the US devotes significantly more resources to fighting terrorism abroad. In addition, the fact that the London bombings were perpetrated by British Muslim citizens, whereas American Muslims had no involvement in 9/11, explains why the British government would feel the need to impose tighter domestic restrictions than the US. Finally, the unitary British government does not provide the system of checks and balances found in the US.

**Law Enforcement Policies & Discrimination**

Police discrimination, in many ways linked to counterterrorism legislation enacted since 9/11 and 7/7, is yet another form of discrimination experienced by British and American Muslims. In Europe, the vast majority of police are Caucasian. Consequently, the UK and other Western European countries often have white police officers patrolling ethnic communities comprised of South Asian and North African Muslims. Since these police officers are not considered to be a part of the community, this situation often leads to resentment, distrust, and suspicion among the members of these ethnic enclaves (Sageman 2008, 92). Distrust of these Caucasian police officers by British Muslims is aggravated by certain practices of the British police. According to Jenkins, “police in European countries are seen to have a freer hand in making arrests, and in some countries, they can hold suspects for longer periods without bringing charges against them” (2011, 8). As seen above, in the UK, police have the power to detain and interrogate suspects “in anticipation of violence rather than in response to the action” (Euro-Islam, UK).
Increased police powers, along with recent anti-terrorism statutes, have particularly targeted Muslims living in the UK. The Institute of Race Relations found that a disproportionately high number of Muslims have been stopped and searched by UK police in recent years. Furthermore, as seen above with the Terrorism Act of 2006, police can arrest terror suspects and detain them for up to forty-two days without trial. A significant number of Muslims have been arrested for terrorism violations, but were subsequently turned over to immigration authorities without ever being prosecuted for the alleged terrorist offenses. Also, due to expanded police powers resulting from anti-terrorism laws, several Muslims have been arrested for crimes such as credit card fraud (ibid). Furthermore, British Muslims are overrepresented in prisons, comprising 10% of the total prisoners (Abbas 2005, 45). In addition to these increased powers to arrest and detain, after it was discovered that the 7/7 bombings were carried out by suicide bombers, the Metropolitan Police in London adopted the “shoot to kill” policy in an attempt to counter the threat of future suicide attacks. The “shoot to kill” policy “involves authorizing police officers to shoot a suspected suicide bomber dead if they believe the suspect is about to detonate a bomb” (Wilkinson 2005, 26).

As seen above, ever since the 7/7 bombings in London, the British police have augmented their powers in the field of counterterrorism. Although this has led to increased security in the UK, there have also been several costly mistakes made in the pursuit of public safety. For example, London police shot two Bangladeshi Muslims who were later found to have absolutely no ties to terrorism. In addition, “there have been many instances of arrests, followed by later releases without explanations” of British Muslims (Sageman 2008, 93). Instances such as these have further alienated the British
Muslim population and have exacerbated the already low levels of trust that these individuals had in British police officers. Trust is so low that “56% of British Muslims say they do not believe Arabs carried out the terror attacks against the U.S., compared with just 17% who do” (Pew 2006, 4).

Police discrimination against Muslims in the past decade has not been isolated to the UK. Since 9/11, there have been instances of American law enforcement officials discriminating against Muslims living in the US. 9% of American Muslims report that the police have singled them out. Similarly, 30% of American Muslims say that they have been subject to additional security measures in airports in the years since 9/11, and 19% feel that they have been subject to discrimination, racism, and prejudice in the past decade. However, according to Sageman, “acts of support from the rest of the society mitigate this anger against police scrutiny and societal prejudice” (2008, 92). While in 2011, 28%, 22%, and 21% of Muslim Americans reported having had people be suspicious of them, having been called offensive names, and having been singled out by airport security, respectively, 37% reported that someone had expressed support for them, thereby affirming the idea that American society’s general support of its Muslim population helps to mitigate feelings of discrimination (Pew 2011).

Furthermore, in contrast to the largely Caucasian make-up of the British police, ethnic minorities tend to be better represented in the local police forces in the US and are therefore better integrated into the local communities in which they work. Consequently, ethnic minorities in the US are more prone to trust police officers, thereby allowing these officers to serve as trusted intermediaries between local communities and the police departments (Sageman 2008, 93).
The Effects of Feelings of Relative Deprivation

This study predicted that individuals who experience feelings of relative deprivation, either real or perceived, are more susceptible to radicalization. Since radicalization has been more widespread in the UK than in the US, it might be expected that British Muslims have cause to experience higher levels of relative deprivation than American Muslims. Based on the evidence collected, it seems that British Muslims are more relatively deprived when it comes to factors such as educational attainment and economic opportunities, especially in terms of employment and income levels; these contextual factors existed prior to 9/11.

The discrepancy between British and American Muslims is less pronounced, however, when considering counterterrorism legislation and law enforcement policies put into place since 9/11. Muslims in both countries have been subject to increased discrimination and Islamaphobia in the past decade, though British Muslims have been so to an arguably greater extent. However, as seen above, American Muslims feel that general support from American society helps to mitigate these feelings of relative deprivation caused by discrimination. This suggests that the lower levels of social alienation experienced by American Muslims (discussed above) aids in lessening feelings of relative deprivation. Although the discrepancy between British and American Muslims is less pronounced when it comes to feelings of relative deprivation, a difference does still exist, thereby suggesting a correlation between feelings of relative deprivation and increased susceptibility to radicalization. The link between support from society and lessening of feelings of relative deprivation also serves to reinforce the importance of social alienation as a factor in determining susceptibility to radicalization. While both
social alienation and feelings of relative deprivation contribute to explaining susceptibility to radicalization, neither of these factors accounts for the role of politics as a possible cause of radicalization.

4.3 RATIONAL CHOICE

In many cases, terrorism is a rational act chosen as the best available means by which to effect political change. When legitimate and peaceful attempts to influence domestic political structures fail, it is logical to pursue other means that are more effective at compelling the government to address grievances. Often, western Muslims do not have access to adequate political opportunities or representation; therefore, radicalization as a step toward terrorism becomes a rational choice. In many ways, American Muslims (and Americans in general) are more capable of influencing their government than are their British counterparts; this may in part accounts for the observably higher levels of radicalization in the UK.

Comparing and Contrasting Unitary and Federal Governments

The British unitary government inherently has fewer points of access than does the American federal one. The different types of government structure begin to explain the more limited access to political opportunities that exist in the UK than in the US.

The unitary form of government is much more centralized than the federal one. The centralized nature of a unitary government is often favored for its efficient organization of power. In the case of the British government, Parliament sits at the center of the system. In many ways, Parliament is an insider’s club in that political bargaining takes place within this group, amongst the political elites, and is therefore not open to all. In the past, in order “to get into the club one had to be born right or attend the right
schools and then occupy the right positions in politics, the military, the church, and the public service” (Elazar 1997, 246). Although the post World War II democratization process in the UK gave the periphery a greater role in choosing members of Parliament, its influence on the political process was otherwise relatively limited (ibid, 248). Due to the centralized, club-like nature of the British unitary government, “the British parliamentary system has displayed a relative weakness for representing … ethnic minority interests,” including those of British Muslims (Martin 2011, 3).

The American federal government, in contrast, is much more decentralized, and, therefore, provides more points of access by which to influence the decision-making process. In the US government, there is no central authority; power is diffused both through the separation of powers and also through the existence of both a national government and also local ones that maintain their power within the federation (Elazar 1997, 239-46). Factions, which facilitate the bargaining process between the public and the government, or between different branches within the government, are another instrumental aspect of American politics; “factions develop and are replaced as situations change and either compete or cooperate with one another to secure their political aims” (ibid, 242). One other way in which the federal system increases Americans’ abilities to influence political opportunity structures is through the system of representation in which “legislator responsiveness to constituency preferences is often seen as the cornerstone of American representative democracy” (Martin 2009, 230). The diffusion of power, multiple points of access, and legislator responsiveness of the American federal system all provide opportunities to access and influence the political structures in the US.
Political Representation and Participation

Political representation and participation also measure to what extent Muslims in the UK and the US have access to political opportunities. In the UK, the majority of British Muslims have the right to vote and hold public office. In addition, British Muslims’ voting activity has increased significantly in the past two decades. Nevertheless, their political representation and participation remains relatively low, particularly at the national level (Abbas 2005, 38).

There are two basic types of political representation: descriptive, which occurs when the demography of the constituents and the representatives in Parliament align, and substantive, in which the interests of the representative and their constituents align. In terms of descriptive representation, Muslims have historically been, and continue to be, underrepresented in British politics. The first Muslim Member of Parliament (MP) was not elected until 1997, and the first woman Muslim not until 2010 (Martin 2011, 3). Furthermore, in the May 2005 elections, there were forty-eight Muslim candidates from three major national parties; only four of these forty-eight were elected. This has led some observers to suggest that British national parties are unwilling to put Muslim candidates in winnable seats (Abbas 2005, 39). Consequently, British Muslims are often dependent on non-Muslim MPs to represent their interests (Martin 2011, 14).

In addition to being descriptively underrepresented in British politics, Muslims in the UK also often lack substantive representation. First, it is interesting to note that some among the British Muslim elite have felt that they are not substantively represented even by the few Muslims who have been elected to Parliament. This phenomenon has been in part attributed to the fact that the British Muslim population is incredibly ethnically diverse. As a result, British Muslims are often dependent on non-Muslims to advocate their interests in Parliament (ibid, 3). Unfortunately, research has shown that “a negative relationship between parliamentary actions and the characteristics of a member’s
constituency is frequent, particularly when minority interests are the subject of legislative action” (ibid, 5). Despite this general trend, it has been found that MPs with largely Muslim constituencies were more likely to vote against antiterrorism legislation in the UK (ibid, 1). Nevertheless, while this is a step in the right direction, Muslims are overall disillusioned with political parties’ attitudes toward Muslim issues and feel that these national parties “have a long way to go to provide the scale of representation for Muslims in the political institutions commensurate with their numbers in the population” (Abbas 2005, 39).

In response to this lack of Muslim political representation at the national level, there are a number of Muslim organizations that have emerged in the UK, the most prominent of which is the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). Although the MCB purports to represent British Muslims’ interests, no single organization is capable of effectively representing the UK’s incredibly diverse Muslim population. Nevertheless, the national government tends to view the MCB as their primary interlocutor with the British Muslim community (Wiktorowicz 2005, 101). Doubt about the MCB’s relevancy to all British Muslims is supported by a 2005 Populus Poll which found that barely more than half of respondents were even aware of groups such as the MCB. The 2005 poll “further found that these umbrella groups barely represented the majority of Muslims’ views and that Muslim religious leaders promoted by the British government commanded little or no support at all” (Zimmermann et al. 2009, 24). These findings further demonstrate that British Muslims lack adequate political representation at the national level.

British Muslims tend to be better represented and more influential at the local level of government than at the national level (Abbas 2005, 39). There are a number of
other Muslim organizations that have emerged that are considered to be more representative of the British-born (i.e. younger) generations of Muslims in the UK. These groups, which include the Muslim Society of Britain (MSB), Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), Islamic Society of Britain (ISB), and Young Muslims UK, “function away from the mosque, which remains the domain of first-generation elder males, engage with the British state and participate in society” (ibid, 67).

Closely related to political opportunities is the extent to which Muslims living in the UK participate in various forms of civil society. On the whole, it has been found that the British Pakistani population in particular “has made limited use of the mainstream civic institutions such as leisure centres and other voluntary sector services” (The Change Institute 2009, 11). In lieu of these mainstream civic institutions, this segment of the population has favored separate facilities created in large part through private funding (ibid). Trends such as these demonstrate that British Muslims are less involved in civil society than their American counterparts, thereby detaching them from society and perpetuating the feeling of being on the outskirts of society.

One result of the lack of political representation for British Muslims and the limited involvement in civil society has been that the Muslim youth have felt marginalized from politics, both at the local and national levels. At the local level, influential political positions are often “reserved for the community elites or elders who are often ‘of a different make-up and outlook to those they seek to represent.’ Hence, Muslim youth find that they have no voice or legitimate outlet for their frustration” (Al-Lami 2009, 7). This sense of political marginalization serves to make radical Islamist teachings more appealing. In fact, there is evidence that while both members and non-
members of radical groups agree that Muslims are underrepresented in British politics, non-members have confidence in the British political system as a whole, whereas members of radical Islamist groups do not (Wiktorowicz 2005, 104).

American Muslims are better represented in the political sphere than are British Muslims. Two national groups, the American Muslim Alliance (AMA) and the American Muslim Taskforce on Civil Rights and Elections (AMT), both seek to involve Muslims in politics by encouraging potential candidates to run for office and also by mobilizing Muslim voters (Sebian). One principle means by which these groups mobilize Muslim voters is through increasing awareness of ongoing debates in Congress. For instance, many Arab Americans registered to vote for the first time after learning about the Patriot Act (Martin 2009, 235). Furthermore, studies demonstrate that higher rates of voting on the part of American Muslims have had an impact on representatives’ actions in Congress. For instance, it has been found that “the percentage of Muslim-Americans in a Congressional district has a positive and statistically significant effect on the probability that a representative’s votes coincide with Muslim-American preferences regarding surveillance and domestic counter-terrorism legislation” (ibid, 2011, 5).

In addition to national Muslim groups such as AMA and AMT, a wide range of local and regional organizations, which seek to promote and protect the political, social, and religious interests of Muslim Americans, have been formed. These advocacy groups have become exceptionally more active since 9/11, “providing direct services, developing professional and community networks, and providing policy and public opinion advocacy on behalf of Muslim Americans to guarantee the civil rights of Muslim Americans and to offset negative stereotypes” (Sebian). In sum, although tensions do exist, the American political system “has coped reasonably well with integrating American Muslims” (Martin
A perception of a more open civil society and greater access to political opportunity structures in the US lends itself to greater participation in society and in politics by all Americans, both Muslim and non-Muslim alike. When Muslim Americans participate in various aspect of civil society, they become better anchored, and therefore feel more invested in, American society (Sageman 2008). As a result, “American Muslims are … less inclined to join radical groups given the American grassroots voluntarism that allows them to vent some of their discontent in local politics” (Al-Lami 2009, 7).

The third hypothesis put forth in this paper was that individuals who lack access to political opportunity structures are more susceptible to Islamist radicalization. In addition to exhibiting observably higher levels of radicalization, the evidence collected also demonstrates that British Muslims have less access to political opportunity structures than American Muslims. This suggests a correlation between a lack of access to political opportunity structures and increased susceptibility to radicalization.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper examines probable environmental and contextual causes of radicalization among British and American Muslims, and seeks to understand why the difference in levels of radicalization exists between the UK and the US. Toward this goal, this paper examined three explanatory factors, which are believed to have a positive correlation with radicalization, and the extent to which they are present in both of these countries. The three independent variables were: social alienation experienced by British and American Muslims, feelings of relative deprivation among these Muslim populations,
and the extent to which political opportunities are available to British and American Muslims. This paper also used three theories, constructivism, relative deprivation, and rational choice, in an attempt to account for these probable causes of radicalization.

The first hypothesis, which relates to constructivist theory, predicts social alienation, which can sometimes lead to identity crises, increases the likelihood that an individual will become radicalized. To investigate the relationship between social alienation and radicalization, the identities of Muslims living in both the UK and the US were considered. More specifically, the types of Muslim immigrants, the attitudes of the Muslim populations and also of the host societies, as well as the levels of social alienation and identity crises pertaining to Muslims were considered for each of these countries.

The evidence concerning the identities and social alienation of Muslims in each of these countries demonstrated that social alienation is more prevalent for British Muslims than it is for American Muslims. The UK’s geographical location, as well as its colonial history, has first of all made it so that Muslims make up a larger percentage of its population. In addition, Muslim immigrants to the UK tend to be of a lower socio-economic status than their American counterparts. Furthermore, overall it was found that Americans are more willing to accept outsiders than are the British. Predictably, then, it has been found that Muslims are better integrated into American society than they are into British society. Muslim individuals who find themselves on the outskirts of society are more likely to join radical Islamist groups in an attempt to establish an identity for themselves. Since British Muslims are more alienated from society than American Muslims, and since polls and police reports have found British Muslims to be more
sympathetic to the jihadist cause, these findings support the hypothesis that social alienation increases an individual’s susceptibility to radicalization.

Furthermore, constructivist theory, particularly as it pertains to an individual’s mutable identity, is useful in explaining this particular cause of radicalization. More specifically, Catarina Kinnvall asserts that globalization has created identity insecurity for individuals. Such individuals, Kinnvall explains, gravitate toward some sort of collective in an attempt to negate this insecurity. Applied to the case of radicalization, western Muslims who feel alienated from society are drawn to radical Islamist groups, which is one level of radicalization, because of the collective identity and sense of belonging that they offer to an otherwise socially alienated individual. By becoming part of these groups, individuals begin to espouse and internalize the radical beliefs of these groups, another behavior predicted by constructivism.

While constructivism explains the behavior of alienated Muslim individuals, the Copenhagen school, a sub-category of constructivism, accounts in part for the attitudes of the host populations toward Muslims. Through speech acts, Muslim immigrants have been portrayed as a security threat to the West, especially in the decade since 9/11. The securitization of this issue helps to explain the increased instances of Islamaphobia in both the UK and the US. However, the differences between the UK and the US suggest that securitization of this issue has not been as extensive in the US as it has been in the UK. It seems that this difference can be attributed to a couple of factors. First, there is the contrast between the US melting pot myth and the British myth of a defining national essence. In addition, both the US and the UK have been targets of Islamist terrorist attacks. However, British Muslim citizens perpetrated the attacks in the UK, whereas
none of the 9/11 attackers were Americans. This increased securitization would help to explain why British Muslims are more alienated from society than American Muslims.

In sum, these findings seem to support the hypothesis that social alienation increases the likelihood of radicalization. It is important to note, however, that the relationship between social alienation and radicalization is one of correlation, not causation. Since the process of becoming radicalized is attributable to numerous factors and is highly individualized, it is impossible to isolate one specific cause of radicalization.

The second hypothesis put forth by this paper, which is based on relative deprivation theory, predicts that individuals who experience feelings of relative deprivation are more likely to radicalize. To look at the relationship between relative deprivation and radicalization, this paper looked at the effects of discrimination, levels of education, economic factors, counterterrorism measures and strategies adopted by the UK and the US, and law enforcement policies on British and American Muslims.

Based on the evidence collected, it can be argued that British Muslims are more often victims of relative deprivation than American Muslims, thereby further contributing to the explanation of why radicalization is more widespread in the UK. For example, data shows that the employment, income, and educational levels of American Muslims consistently tend to be roughly equivalent to those of non-Muslim Americans. British Muslims, on the other hand, tend to be below the national averages in these areas. In addition, the US military, as opposed to the British law-enforcement approach to counterterrorism has meant that British Muslims are more regularly faced with discrimination by counterterrorism laws than are American Muslims.

One area in which the differences in levels of relative deprivation are not so clear-
cut, however, is in terms of discrimination, especially since 9/11. Although police
discrimination is not as much of a problem in the US as it is in the UK, polls do show that
Muslim Americans have experienced a substantial amount of discrimination based on
their religion in areas such as airport security. The difference between the UK and the US,
then, is found not so much in the levels of discrimination themselves, but rather in the
amount of support shown by the general population. Polls demonstrate that American
Muslims feel they receive much more support from members of American society than
do British Muslims; this support helps to offset the negative effects of discrimination.

Relative deprivation theory argues that conflict ensues when individuals or a
group are not given access to the same resources or rights as other individuals or groups
living in a similar context. For the topic at hand, radicalization, which is a vital step
toward committing an act of terror, can be considered to be the conflict to which relative
depprivation theory refers. Therefore, this theory adequately accounts for why
radicalization has been more prevalent in the UK than in the US; British Muslims have
been shown to experience higher levels of relative deprivation in more areas of life. One
way in which this theory is somewhat lacking, however, is that it does not account for
why the support shown by non-Muslim Americans has in many ways succeeded in
offsetting feelings of discontent and relative deprivation among American Muslims who
have experienced discrimination.

Similar to the data concerning social alienation discussed above, the evidence
about relative deprivation supports the prediction that feelings of relative deprivation lead
to an increased likelihood of individual radicalization. The relationship between these
two variables is also one of correlation, not causation.
The third and final hypothesis put forth by this paper is that an individual who is unable to affect existing political structures through legitimate means will be more susceptible to radicalization. To investigate this hypothesis, the impact that Muslims in the UK and US have been able to exert on existing political structures was examined more closely.

The evidence collected demonstrates that British Muslims overall tend to feel underrepresented in the political sphere and are also on average less involved in civil society than American Muslims. Underrepresentation is, first of all, a consequence of the British unitary system, which provides fewer points of political access than the American federal system. Furthermore, an observed trend has been that British Muslims, especially those of the younger generations, tend to feel that their interests are not represented by politicians to the same extent that American Muslims’ interests are. This has been attributed to the legislators’ responsiveness to constituents that is often viewed as an essential characteristic of the American political system. Nevertheless, the data also seems to suggest that lower levels of participation on the part of British Muslims are at least partially due to personal choice. Whatever the causes, the important aspect here is the perception of British and American Muslims, regardless of whether or not it is based completely on reality.

The third hypothesis corresponds with rational choice theory while also incorporating literature concerning political opportunity structures. As seen earlier, rational choice theory argues that actors make decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis. As such, an increasing number of scholars have argued that terrorism is a rational choice in that it is calculated to be the best means by which to achieve a political goal. As
demonstrated, British Muslims lack adequate political representation. Overall, the data does demonstrate a positive correlation between an inability to impact political opportunity structures and radicalization.

In the course of just a decade, western states have been faced with an evolving threat of radical Islamist terrorism that has transitioned from an international, centralized movement to a decentralized one that relies largely on individual, self-radicalization. As the threat has evolved, relevant countries have consequently been forced to adapt their security policies. As seen with the 2005 London attack, western states are becoming increasingly susceptible to the threat of homegrown Islamist terrorism.

Having identified radicalization as a vital step toward committing an act of terror, security agencies in the West have increasingly sought to address the sources of terrorism by understanding the process of radicalization and developing strategies to mitigate the probable causes of this phenomenon. Based on the findings in this paper, western states would benefit from encouraging better assimilation of Muslims into society, implementing policies that prevent discrimination and allow for unfair access to opportunities for Muslim immigrants and their descendants, and also perhaps finding ways to better incorporate Muslims into domestic political processes. Although terrorism can never be eradicated, addressing the sources of radicalization can help to isolate and minimize the threat.
Appendix A  
Muslims in the United Kingdom by Ethnic Minority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>% Muslim*</th>
<th>% All Muslims</th>
<th>% Minority Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Less than 1</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic group (excluding Chinese)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other black</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Less than 1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Muslim population = 1.59 million (2.7 percent of total population)  
*for those who answered religion question (range is 96-99 percent).  
BIBLIOGRAPHY


BBC. "'Million' march against Iraq war." February 16, 2003.

BBC. “Suicide bombers’ ‘ordinary’ lives.” July 18, 2005.


*The Economist*. "No war in their name—but no jihad against the West either." April 3, 2003.


**References:**

PET (Danish Intelligence Services), Center for Terroranalyse (CTA) “Radikalisering og terror”, available online at: [http://www.pet.dk/upload/radikalisering_og_terror.pdf](http://www.pet.dk/upload/radikalisering_og_terror.pdf)