COUNTERING TERRORISM OR COUNTERING RELIGION? IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

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Abstract
In a bid to counter terrorism and all forms of violent extremism, governments around the world have had to adopt stricter measures, some of which tend to limit the religious freedom of populations in many parts of the world. Bearing in mind the transnational character of many terrorist groups, this practice tends to be counter productive and may be working against the long-term goals of global counterterrorism, which is to create an environment that will be inhabitable for terrorists in any part of the world. Depending largely on existing sources, this article examines, in a descriptive analysis, the impact of religious freedom restriction on the war against terror. This paper uses Grim and Finke's data on religious freedom across key countries in the war against terror like France, Britain, Germany, UK and Australia to ascertain that there is restriction on religious liberty among these countries. We make mention of the USA also but not in as much detail as the others. The egalitarian theories of religious freedom provide a framework for this study. We argue that these key countries may be fighting a war on terror but they are losing the war at home by clamping down on religious freedoms in whatever variation, in the name of counterterrorism, with implications for the rest of the world. While we acknowledge that the protection of this human right is difficult in the context of the global threat of violent extremism and terrorism, we find that the protection of this fundamental freedom is crucial in the long-term victory over terrorism.

Key Words: Religious Freedom, Counterterrorism, Terrorism, Religion, Global War on Terror

Introduction
Religious freedom could be defined as the right of citizens to believe and practice, those beliefs and teachings of their religion, publicly or privately without any interference from any person or authority (Aliyu, 2013). It also includes the right to use religious symbols and own places of worship, propagate religion through peaceful and constitutional means (Aliyu, 2013). The right to religious freedom is indivisible and cannot be claimed for one particular group at the exclusion of others (Anzaki, 2016). So we can expect that this freedom could include the right not to belief as well. The global need for a comprehensive approach to counter the spread of terrorism and violent extremism has given rise to several strategies that we call counterterrorism or countering violent extremism (CVE). However as Richards (2015) rightly observes the frequent and interchangeable use of terms such terrorism, radicalization and extremism has resulted in approaches and attitudes that regard certain sections of the population as "the problem" by virtue of their beliefs or religious ideology.

Religion poses a challenge to heterogeneous societies, when extremist views test the limits of religious freedoms; and tend to contradict the very foundation of liberal democracy, especially in the context of counter extremism (Ahdar and Leigh, 2010). Typically, debates about the most effective methods to combat terrorism and other forms of violent extremism pit supporters of military and police force against the advocates of economic and social policy (Loayza, 2016). Some scholars' question whether the suppression of

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religious freedom is linked to religiously motivated violence or terrorism while others suggest that religious freedom can produce support for democratic governance and consequently counter religious extremism and terrorism (Religious Freedom Project, 2017). Some researches on religion and counterterrorism show that religious freedom can complicate counterterrorism efforts and argue that security concerns are more important than the protection of religious freedom or other rights; others demonstrate that religious freedom is the critical piece for addressing terrorism and insist that promoting religious freedom is more preferable than support for repression (Religious Freedom Institute, 2017).

Religion involves transcendent values treasured more than life itself. It generates loyalties that run deeper than ties to any earthly sovereign. Because religious differences are deep and non-negotiable, they lead to intractable conflicts. Religious freedom is described as a tool that has emerged to quell religious violence. The idea that religion must be tamed, is rooted in the myth that religion has trans-historical and transcultural features that make it distinct from secular features of society. It is argued that part of religion's essence, rooted in the irrationality of religion is a peculiarly dangerous inclination to promote violence. For this reason religion must be tamed by submitting it to, and restricting its access to, public power. However, religions are no more inclined to violence than secular ideologies and institutions such as nationalism, Marxism, capitalism and liberalism. They are not more absolutist, divisive or irrational than secular counterparts and there is really no convincing way to separate religious and secular violence.

The United States, like many other state actors, is the greatest campaigner for liberal freedoms but it has not made a lot of effort to integrate religious freedom into counterterrorism strategies or its democracy programs around the world. While it may be argued that this is the responsibility of individual states to adapt policies in a manner that is context-specific, global collective efforts are required to advance the importance of religious freedoms in counterterrorism, particularly those countries at the forefront of fighting terrorism. In practice, counterterrorism through military force is ill equipped to stamp out any religious driven violence that is driven by ideology (Thomas, 2015). Governments have been clamping down on religious liberty in the name of counterterrorism, on national security grounds and as a necessary step to preventing terrorism (Saiya, 2017). But as Thomas (2015) rightly observes, the best strategy to eradicate extremist strands is one that allows for a plurality of religious views and perspectives to have a voice in the public square and even in conflict prone areas in order to de-escalate the violent extremism that is born out of religious oppression and marginalization.

Literature Review
The literature on religious freedom has been very well developed but very divisive particularly in relation to counterterrorism. Farr (2011) opines that religious freedom can be an antidote to religion-related extremism, and even terrorism, since religious extremist ideas flourish where there is a closed religious orthodoxy. Farr (2011) also suggests that when all religious actors and ideas enjoy equal access to public life, liberal political theologies emerge and the appeal for terrorism will be significantly reduced. Roman (2015) rightly observes, on the other hand, that there are conflicting goals and courses of action in counterterrorism operations, in terms of the need to limit the freedom of terrorists and terrorist groups while at the same time maintaining individual freedoms, democracy and human rights. He rightly acknowledges that it is difficult to preserve and continue to affirm democratic principles of religious tolerance and freedom when confronted with the horror of groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Nevertheless, efforts need to continue to ensure that segments of society do not feel excluded or targeted. Some will argue however that democracy is not the answer given that places like Haiti, Serbia and the DR Congo have more religious freedom than the US even though they are not 'exactly traditional strongholds of democracy' (Green, 2014).

In his article McKenna (2016) and Pellot (2014) identify Burma, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, China, Eritrea, Iran, as the worst countries for religious freedom with restrictions on religious freedom. Arguably, the concept of freedom may have different interpretations across cultures from African, Asian, Middle-Eastern to European given that there may not be a universal yardstick (Aliyu,

2013) to measure the 'freeness of freedom'. As Aliyu (2013) succinctly observes, China and America are democracies but there are different and vary in their conceptualization of human rights and freedom. Notwithstanding, this variation in perception, the idea of freedom is about being able to choose, do, say or be something without any impediment; and if religion or religious liberty, the idea that one could be free to believe and free to express his/her belief publicly without reproach, is at the core of our humanity, then no coherent or comprehensive strategy whether it is related to counterterrorism or not will be complete without taking into account this basic and crucial facet of the human condition (Thomas, 2015).

Religious freedom is a fundamental human right that is protected by many constitutions, however in practice religious liberty is not a reality in many societies (Lipton, 2002). Regardless of constitutional provisions for religious freedom, they are not often respected, particularly in plural societies. Many scholars agree that religious restrictions in such plural societies have consequences. With regards to the idea that contemporary terrorism, or Islamic terrorism, occurs mostly in Muslim majority countries or societies (Aziz, 2017), many States have adopted measures that make Muslims feel targeted and marginalized. However, terrorism is not peculiar to Islam and Richards (2015) has rightly observed that terrorism can be carried out even by non-violent ideologies such as animal rights groups, anti-abortionist campaigners. It is for this reason that terrorist groups, Islamic or otherwise, cannot take ownership of the phenomenon of terrorism.

Terrorism is therefore best conceptualized as a particular method of violence, whether it is ideologically sanctioned or not (Richards, 2015b). The conception of freedom of religion or belief according to Dworkin (2013) is divergent among people, and it is adapted differently into practice, creating identities and a wide scope for justification and interpretation. There are different interpretations and applications of constitutional provisions in different countries and since these constitutions give little direction about how to explain and apply these provisions, the result is inconsistency, inequality and unfairness in a bid to justify the right outcome in context-specific scenarios (Evans, 2017:18).

In defense of Islam and from an Islamist perspective, Aliyu (2013) points out that in the letter of the Koran, provision is made for the inevitability of plurality, multiplicity of religions, prohibition of coercion in religion and freedom of choice. He maintains that while rights come with responsibilities, those who act contrary to these prohibitions misapply the Koran and the Bible as the case may be. Regardless, there is a real problem with religious freedom under Islam given that the fundamental beliefs of Islam stress intolerance towards other religions and preach violence against those who will not convert to Islam, Islamic extremists are also particularly hostile to Moslems who convert to any other religion (Strategy Page, 2015). In response to the rise of Islamic terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and ISIS, world leaders have made attempts to prevent Muslims from coming into their countries. Even individuals have publicly declared that Australia should close its borders to Muslims to prevent terrorism (Collingburn, 2016).

Scholars have argued that while countries that promote religious freedom are more stable, economically vibrant and peaceful, the failure to protect this freedom breeds instability, terrorism and violence (Tillerson, 2016). For this reason, Islamophobia, the dislike or prejudice of Muslims or Islam has consequences as it is undermining counterterrorism efforts regardless of attempts to implement Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programmes around the world. For Collingburn (2016), extremism has nothing to do with ethnicity or religion. Jackson (2007:398) observes that current literature exhibits a tendency to draw attention to inaccurate cultural stereotypes regarding Islamic terrorism. In a situation where communities become divided, the role of authorities is not to deal with the tensions of division by removing the 'cause', in this case religion may be the culprit, but their role is to ensure that the competing groups respect and tolerate each other (Tillerson, 2016).

Henne (2017b) finds that states more strongly identified as Islamic were generally less cooperative on counterterrorism than states that were more secular. The Muslim states that were most cooperative were the states that most repressed Islamic movements (Egypt, Uzbekistan), they had stricter control over their

societies and could repress or ignore dissent to their cooperation with America. On the other hand states that had more powerful Islamic movements like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had troubled counterterrorism policies as their opposition to policies threatened regime stability.

Grime and Finke (2010) suggest that restrictions on religious freedom are highly correlated with and appear to be a significant factor in causing religious violence however, religious freedom, in their study, tends to be correlated with peace and stability. Many scholars agree that the fundamental conditions for peace do not include homogeneity in society because everyone cannot be the same in terms of identity, ethnicity or religion. What is non-negotiable is the assurance that one's own dignity and world-view will be protected and that one can live in peace with equal treatment as an added benefit.

Bhamra (2016:6) in addressing the challenges of justice in plural societies, suggest that new legal responses to diversity were necessary. As Locke (1689) rightly posits, respecting difference breeds loyalty, stability and peace. On the other hand, we could argue that coerced toleration is a source of religious violence rather than peace. As Akbaba and Tydas (2011) argue, religious discrimination leads to the generation of grievances which in turn encourages ethnoreligious minorities to engage in some opposition against the state. There is also a need for deep integration of constitutional and human rights principles that require respect for conscience given that the constraints of the rule of law are not enough. Religion is often associated with intolerance and persecution (Ahdar and Leigh, 2010). Writing on the religion and the politics of tolerance, Eisenstein (2008) argues that religious people are politically tolerant, contrary to the widespread belief that the reverse is the case. She observes that Christianity does build democracy and argues that in practice because of the difference between the institutional and behavioral, one can pursue absolute separation of church and state (institutional) but cannot do the same for religion and politics (behavioral) (Eisenstein, 2008:6). Although some states appear to be religious states, many of them like the US do not take religion very seriously as Farr (2008:110) observes, arguing that the US should put the promotion of religious freedom at the center of its foreign policy given that it is vital not only to liberty and stability abroad, but to its national security.

Fox (2015) observes that the different conceptions of religious freedom can be divided into two main categories, namely, those who focus on the free exercise of religion in terms of the right to practice religion and maintain religious institutions; and those who focus on treating all religions equally, also known as the level playing field model. He observes further that although these two models exist, neither model is common among democracies and states that have constitutional provisions protecting religious freedom (Fox, 2015). Although Buckely and Mantilla (2013) focus their study on the nexus between development and religion-state relations, they contribute to this discourse by arguing that because development increases state ability to formulate and implement policy effectively, it will be associated with greater state regulation of religion. They draw data from over 160 countries and demonstrate that the effect of economic development on state regulation of religion is consistently positive and substantively significant (Buckely and Mantilla, 2013:328).

While religious freedom is said to be the ultimate counterterrorism weapon (Seiple, 2008), many states, including the democratic ones, have subtly suppressed religion in a bid to fight and conquer terrorism. Although Aziz (2017) argues that with democratization comes more religious freedom and less terrorism given that sensitive policy issues will be more open to debate leaving no room for resort to violence to address grievances, in practice this is not the case for many democracies. The idea, as Henne (2017) suggests, is that more religious freedom will decrease the likelihood of transnational terrorism hence there will be little or no need for counterterrorism. Aziz (2017) rightly argues that a truly democratic environment will produce credible voices that would be able to persuade potential recruits away from terrorism rather than be dismissed as government stooges. If the exclusion of religious actors and religion from politics can encourage a turn to violence and extremism as observed by Philpott et al (2011) why then are governments not paying attention to this in their counterterrorism efforts? The answer could be that religious freedom tends to be more

threatening to authoritarian regimes than terrorism. For many states dealing with this threat, counterterrorism coordination with western nations is a secondary concern as staying in power indefinitely is the primary concern of these states and their authoritarian regimes (Aziz, 2017).

Saiya (2017) observes also that often governments pursue counterterrorism policies that restrict religious rights in the misguided belief that the most effective way to combat terrorism is to limit or suspend religious freedom. Saiya (2017) agrees that policies that restrict religious freedom and discriminate against entire religious groups are often counterproductive. Many democratic countries with low levels of government regulation of religion also have low levels of government favoritism of religion, and those with high levels of government regulation also have high levels of favoritism as well (Driessen, 2014 :232). However Grim and Finke (2006) observes that there could be some exceptions to this where there is a high level of regulation with low levels of favoritism. As long as governments could contain regulation at an acceptable rate, they can offer more or less favoritism to religion without risking democracy (Driessen, 2014:232). What counterterrorism needs is to isolate terrorists from the larger population they depend on for supply and survival but targeting religion gives terrorists the support base to bloom and carry out more atrocities (Saiya, 2017). Finke and Martin (2014:687) find that social restrictions and government favoritism towards particular religions are persistent predictors of the governments' restrictions. Collett et al (2006) observe that because societal problems are huge and religious institutions often do not have the resources to deal with these problems they seek help from the government.

The implication is that when governments have an official religion they could offer assistance to religious groups along these lines and this could create feelings of exclusion among other groups. While some could argue that proper institutions may be able to regulate the nature of government support to avoid negative repercussions, it is difficult in the context of fighting terrorism to be unbiased in these kinds of support. It is for this reason that scholars like Hellyer (2014) rightly state that unless religious authorities, institutions and personalities are able and willing to speak to power and be truthful in a non-partisan and non-divisive fashion, the narratives they promote against radical extremists will suffer a critical flaw. Finally, while we may like to suggest that the answer lies in religious freedom, we must mention in line with Henne (2017b) that although religious freedom may eventually undermine extremism and reduce terrorism, we acknowledge there are limitations this important human right may place on counterterrorism over all.

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this paper we use Egalitarian theories of religious freedom. For scholars like Dworkin (2013) traditional theistic beliefs are just one subset of morally respectable beliefs. As such if we accept any conviction concerning religion as the meaning and importance of human life, then we can interpret freedom of religion as protecting the right of each to live in accordance with their conception of the life well lived. Freedom of religion follows from the key liberal value of ethical independence and government must never restrict freedom just because it assumes that one way for people to live their lives is intrinsically better than another (Dworkin, 2013:130). Although Dworkins views are essentially from a liberal perspective his views are in defense of the personal beliefs of individuals, whatever they may be. In line with these arguments most other egalitarian theories of religious freedom basically agree that whatever we conventionally call religion should be perceived as a subset of a broader category of morally acceptable beliefs and practices; that traditional believers do not have a special a priori right to be exempted from general laws; and that the state must guarantee the equal status of all citizens (Laborde, 2014:1256).

Eisgruber and Sager (2007:52) interpret the religious clauses as not providing for special unique legal treatment for religion above and beyond that granted to comparable commitments and practice. Also Taylor and Maclure (2011:75) argue that individuals with 'conscientious meaning-giving commitments' should be considered for exemption from burdensome laws on the same basis as traditional religious believers. The strength of these egalitarian theories lies in the idea that they correctly make a comparison between religious

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freedom and other liberal freedoms, they are rooted in the value of equality and nondiscrimination; and they suggest that the protection of religious freedom and practices should be the same as it is for secular freedoms (Laborde, 2014:1257). It is against this background that this paper argues that religious freedom should not be sacrificed on the altar of counterterrorism.

Methodology

This paper explores theory and practice of the religious freedom of some key countries involved in the global war on terror to show whether or not they are deviating from countering terror to countering religion. We depend on the International Religious Freedom Dataset for this analysis. Data is presented for UK, France, Germany, Australia and Russia. These five countries are selected for this analysis based on their global role in prosecuting the war on terror as the key countries. The objective is to show whether their counterterrorism policies have been repressive to religious freedom and discuss the implication this has had on their cause. The USA is omitted because the dataset used unfortunately did not have entries for the USA. Statistical data used for this analysis is from the International Religious Freedom Dataset which presents three standardized indexes namely: Government Regulation of Religion Index (GRI), Social Regulation of Religion Index (SRI) and the Government Favoritism of Religion Index (GFI). The International Religious Freedom Dataset produced by Grim and Finke (2006) converts the narrative information found in the United States Department's International Religious Freedom (IRF) reports into more than 100 different variables describing religious freedom in over 190 countries. We extract information for France, Germany, Russia, United Kingdom and Australia and present them in tables for easy reference, under the three standardized indexes.

The government regulation index taps into the state's regulation of the practice, profession, or selection of religion; government favoritism refers to the state's granting of privileges, support, or favorable sanctions to a single religion or a small group of religions; and, social regulation provides a measure of restrictions placed on the practice, profession, or selection of religion by other religious groups, associations, or the culture at large (Grim and Finke, 2006).

From the International Religious Freedom Dataset, the Government Regulation Index GRI_AG is further broken down into six (6) more categories to describe the nature of government regulation. The GRI_A_AG measures whether or not foreign or other missionaries were allowed to operate where 0 = Allowed with no limits reported, 0.5 = Allowed, but within restrictive limits and 1 = Prohibited. The second category is the GRI_B_AG which shows whether proselytizing, public preaching, or conversion was limited or restricted. Again 0 = No, 0.5 = Yes, but for all religions; and 1 = Yes, but only for some religions. The third category listed as GRI_C_AG shows if the Government interferes with individual's right to worship. Here 0 = No, 0.5 = Some interference; and 1 = Severe interference. The fourth category is the GRI_D_AG which measures how freedom of religion is described, where 0 = Law/Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government 'generally respects' this right in practice; 0.333 = Law/Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice, but some problems exist, e.g., in certain localities; 0.6667 = Limited and/or rights not protected or restricted, while 1 = Does not exist. The GRI_E_AG measures if the International Religious Freedom Report for the countries under study mentions that the Government 'generally respects' the right to religious freedom in practice. 0 = Yes, 0.5 = Yes, but exceptions or restrictions are mentioned; and 1= The phrase 'generally respects' is not used. Finally the GRI_F_AG measures whether the Report specifically mentions that the government policy of these countries contributes generally to the free practice of religion, where 0 = Yes, 0.5 = Yes, but exceptions are mentioned; and 1 = No.

For the Societal Regulation Index (SRI), SRI_A2AG measures the nature of societal attitudes toward other or non-traditional religions where 0 = Open and tolerant; 0.5 = Isolated discriminatory and 1 = Either a or b; where a = Negative just in certain regions or just towards certain religious brands, or b=Hostile. The

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SRI_B2AG category measures social attitudes towards conversions to other religions where 0 = No problems reported, 0.5 = Some tension, 1 = either A or B where a = Negative and b = Hostile. The SRI_E_AG category measures the situation regarding social movements in relation to religious brands in the country. Where 0.0 = [Either A or B] where a = Social movement(s) do not exist that seek national or regional hegemony for a religious brand through nationally coordinated means or b = All social movement(s) that are reported either promote religious freedom or are amicable and do not intimidate people from (other) religious brands; 0.333 = [Either A or B]: where a = Social movement(s) exist that seek national or regional hegemony for a religious brand through unconnected, but regionally coordinated means, or b = Social movement(s) exist that campaign against certain religious brands, but they are uncoordinated at either national or regional levels; 0.666 = [Either A or B]: where a = Social movement(s) exist that seek national or regional hegemony for a religious brand, but they are uncoordinated at either national or regional levels or b =Social movement(s) exist that campaign against certain religious brands through unconnected, but regionally coordinated means; and 1 = [Either A or B]: where a = All social movement(s) that are reported either promote religious freedom or are amicable and do not intimidate people from (other) religious brands, or b = Social movement(s) exist that campaign against certain religious brands through nationally coordinated means.

For the Government Favoritism Index (GFI) the GFI_A_AG measures the balance of Government funding (including 'in kind' such as funding buildings) to the religious sector where 0 = No funding, 0.333 = A proportional balance, 0.666 = Has imbalance and 1 = Only goes to one religion or belief. The second category the GFI_B_AG measures the extent to which there is a favored and/or established Religious Brand where 0 = None or all religious brands are treated the same; 0.333 = Cultural or Historical legacies only, e.g., former established religious brand inherits buildings or properties; 0.666 = Some religious brands have privileges or government access unavailable to other religious brands; and 1 = [Either A or B] where a = One religious brand has privileges or government access unavailable to other religions; or b = One single State or Official (Established) Religious Brand/Religion. The third category is the GFI_C_AG that measures how the Government subsidizes religion [including 'in kind' to organizations run by religions, e.g., hospitals, schools, etc.] where 0 = No subsidies or equal to all (e.g., all are tax exempt); 0.2 = Subsidies not mentioned, but subsidies are implied by level of government support for a particular religion; 0.4 = Cultural or historical legacies only (e.g., religion inherits cathedrals from previous Government spending); 0.6 = Only some religions are excluded from available subsidies; 0.8 = Only an approved set of religions receive government subsidies; and 1 = Only one religion is subsidized (including 'in kind' subsidies). Finally the GFI_D_AG measures whether the Government fund some things related to religion where 0 = No; 0.5 = [Either A or B] where a =The Report does not mention funding, but it gives support that probably includes funding; or b = Yes, but equal funding for each religion; and 1 = Yes, but funding is not equal for all.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This section presents the data extracted from Grim and Finke's (2006) dataset and presents them in a tabular form. There are three tables each one representing the various indexes.

Table 1:   Government Regulation Index (GRI)

Country	GRI_AG	GRI_A_AG	GRI_B_AG	GRI_C_AG	GRI_D_AG	GRI_E_AG	GRI_F_AG
United Kingdom	1.204	0.167	0	0.167	0.222	0.167	0
France	4.445	0.333	0.333	0.333	0.333	0.5	0.833
Russia	6.482	0.333	1	0.833	0.556	0.5	0.667
Germany	3.333	0.167	0.333	0.333	0.333	0.5	0.333
Australia	0.463	0	0	0.167	0.111	0	0

Source: International Religious Freedom Dataset, Grime and Finke (2006)

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In Table 1 above, for the GRI_A_AG we find that all the countries listed allow foreign or other missionaries to operate in their countries within restrictive limits except for Australia that is reported to have no record on limits on the operation of foreign missionaries. Furthermore, for the GRI_B_AG category, we find that while public preaching/conversion/proselyting is not limited at all in the UK and Australia, it is limited /restricted slightly in France and Germany. However it is limited for only some religions, in Russia, and not others. The GRI_C_AG which measures government interference with individual's right to worship shows that all five (5) countries are within the little to no interference range as they all fall below 0.5. In terms of how religious freedom is described, the GRI_D_AG shows that at 0.556 Russia falls within the category where there are legal/constitutional provisions for religious freedom that are generally respected by the government in theory but in practice some problems exist. The same goes for France, Germany and the UK. Australia is the only country that is close to having a system where the law/constitution provides for religious freedom and the government respects the right in practice. The GRI_E_AG category reveals that the religious freedom report for Australia shows that religious liberty is highly respected but for the UK, France, Russia and Germany, this right is respected with exceptions and restrictions.

However, in discussing the Government Regulation Index (GRI) we observe that the lack of uniformity in defining what constitutes religious freedom poses a challenge for making definitive statements in these countries. For these countries at the forefront of fighting terrorism, too many gray areas in relation to what constitutes religious freedom leaves much to be desired. As Bennett (2017) rightly observes, Russia has, subtly, introduced various laws and regulations restricting religious freedom. Restrictions on religious freedom limit the tools at our disposal in the war on terror. This is not to suggest that governments should not, for the sake of order, ensure that people do not infringe on the rights of others in their religious practice. But as Akbaba and Tydas (2011) rightly argue, religious discrimination leads to the generation of grievances which in turn encourages ethnoreligious minorities to engage in opposition against the state. When the opposition is violent, it could result in formation of terrorist groups that could complicate the situation.

Alam and Husband (2013:235) observe that Britain's counterterrorist policies after the 2005 bombings on the mainland were targeted at its Muslim populations and this scapegoating of Muslims has been counterproductive and has resulted in a breakdown of trust between large sections of the Muslim population in Britain and State agencies. Also Bonino (2013) finds that state treatment of Muslims as suspect communities facilitates the reproduction of widespread Islamophobia that penetrates the social fabric of society and demonizes Muslims. Clearly, counterterrorism policies that alienate any group of people in society may feed and sustain terrorism (Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011:151). In America also, Kaplan (2007) observed that there was a sharp increase in the number of hate crimes after 9/11 although this dropped after a period of 9 weeks. The increase could be attributed to the declaration of the war on terror. In France, Gessier (2010) observes that the political climate after 9/11 has fostered a virulent Islamophobia and produced offensives against the local Muslim community. Gessier (2010:39) argues that while France is not more Islamophobic than other parts of Europe, the trend is the desire to rescue or emancipate Muslims from their '*Muslimness*' which is seen as old-fashioned. He observes that Islam is theoretically tolerated and protected in France, what he calls "cold tolerance" all in a bid to gradually encourage Muslims to abandon their community attitudes (Gessier, 2010:42) and become more french. Australia is the only country that is close to having a system where the law/constitution provides for religious freedom and the government tends to respect this right, in practice. However, we cannot ignore recent hostilities towards Muslims in the Australian media (Collingburn, 2016).

Whereas there are constitutional provisions to guide the exercise of religious freedom, these provisions are subject to interpretation and their application to specific situations may vary (Stone, 2007:14). For this reason having constitutional provisions for these rights in theory are only a first step, what is important is they are interpreted and applied to protect religious freedoms.

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Table 2:   Social Regulation Index (SRI)

Country	SRI_AG	SRI_ADAG	SRI_A_AG	SRI_A2AG	SRI_B_AG	SRI_B2AG	SRI_C_AG	SRI_D_AG	SRI_E_AG
United Kingdom	3.111	3.333	0.889	1	0	0	0	0.333	0.333
France	4.667	5	0.889	1	0.111	0.167	0	0.667	0.667
Russia	7.556	8.222	0.778	1	0.222	0.333	1	1	0.778
Germany	4.222	4.556	0.889	1	0.111	0.167	0.333	0.667	0.111
Australia	2	2.444	0.445	0.667	0	0	0	0	0.556

Source: International Religious Freedom Dataset, Grime and Finke (2006)

For the Social Regulation Index (SRI), on Table 2, which measures the attitudes of society to religious freedom, the SRI_A2AG category shows that the nature of societal attitudes towards other or non-traditional religions in the UK, France, Russia and Germany are either negative in certain regions or just towards some religious brands; with or hostile. Only Australia shows some level close to tolerance but also records some isolation and discrimination. The SRI_B2AG which measures attitudes towards conversion, shows that in the UK and Australia there have been no problems reported. However, for France, Germany and Russia there have been some problems though not significant. The SRI_E_AG category measures attitudes towards social movements and shows that for the UK, social movements exist that seek national or regional hegemony for, or campaign against a religious brand through unconnected but, nationally or regionally, coordinated/uncoordinated means. In France, Russia and Australia we see that at 0.667, 0.778 and 0.556 respectively, there are uncoordinated social movements that seek national or regional hegemony for or campaign against a religious brand through regionally coordinated means.

A look at the Social Regulation Index (SRI) on Table 2, shows that the countries under study all have some level of discrimination and hostility towards other religions at the societal level. No matter how fantastic government policies are, implementation is done among the people, and if societies are marked by intolerance and hostility towards those that are different, we could be breeding marginalization and discontent, which are all feelings that are conducive for extremist recruitment. Research shows that since 9/11, many Australian Muslims feel isolated, insecure and fearful due to verbal insults, social marginalization and discrimination (Collingburn, 2016). As Thomas (2015) rightly observes, the best way to eradicate extremist strands is to allow for a plurality of religious views and perspectives to have a voice in the public square and even in conflict prone areas in order to de-escalate the violent extremism that is born out of religious oppression and marginalization. If these democracies allow for such a hostile ad intolerant environment, then the whole argument that Aziz (2017) makes about the link between democratization and religious freedom giving rise to less terrorism will be defeated. The situation in these democracies makes it hypocritical to try to institutionalize a way of life around the world that is not working in their own societies. It is expected that when sensitive policy issues can be open to free debate, it tends to close all gaps towards violent reactions as the effective way to address grievances in a just and fair environment, but if this is not evident in the very developed democracies, what hope is there for developing democracies where the terrorist threat is more severe.

Table 3:   Government Favoritism Index (GFI)

Country	GFI_AG	GFI_A_AG	GFI_B_AG	GFI_C_AG	GFI_D_AG	FUNDEXAG	GFI_E_AG
United Kingdom	4.989	0.333	0.778	0.467	0.667	3	0.25
France	4.978	0.444	0.222	0.6	0.833	4.667	0.389
Russia	6.4	0.444	1	0.867	0.667	2.667	0.222
Germany	6.256	0.667	0.556	0.6	1	3.667	0.306
Australia	0.222	0	0.111	0	0	0	0

Source: International Religious Freedom Dataset, Grime and Finke (2006)

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In Table 3 the Government Favoritism Index (GFI) data shows that for the GFI_A_AG measure, the balance of government funding to the religious sector in cash and in kind is proportional in the UK at 0.333 but is not proportional in Germany at 0.667 where there is an imbalance. For France and Russia, at 0.444 they hang between proportional and imbalanced. For Australia, there is no record of government funding to the religious sector. The GFI_B_AG measures the extent to which there is a government favored or established religious brand. Only in Russia do we find that there is a state or official religion and consequently that one religion enjoys privileges and government access that are not available to other religions. The UK, at 0.778, also shows that some religious brands have privileges or government access unavailable to others. France, Germany and Australia fall between 0-0.556 where none or all of the religious brands are treated the same and only cultural or historical legacies enjoy government attention but not for religious reasons. The GFI_C_AG category measures the extent of government subsidy for religion and reveals that Australia has no record of government subsidizing religion. For France and Germany at 0.6, only some religions are excluded from available subsidies; and for the UK at 0.467 religions inherit cathedrals from previous government spending. In Russia at 0.867, again only approved set of religions receive government subsidies. Finally, the GFI_D_AG measure shows that for Australia, there is no report that government funds anything related to religion. France, Germany, Russia and the UK have scores ranging from 0.222 to 0.306 meaning that there is some sort of support but may not be in terms of clear funding.

The Government Favoritism Index (GFI) on Table 3, reveals that only Australia has no record of funding religious activities. Britain, Germany and France have varying degrees of funding in this regard. Russia has a state religion and obviously will commit more to it than others. The debate over government funding of religion throws up a lot of challenges about the relationship between religion and the state with many disagreeing on what is actually permissible (Pew Research Center, 2009). Collett et al (2006:119) rightly observes that because of religions role in politics, ultimately, the engagement of government in solving societal challenges through churches or religious groups could have implications for social services and/or politics. If this observation is anything to go by, then this pattern of involvement could have implications also for the war on terror. The first line of the first amendment in the United States constitution states that "congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (Green, 2014) however, in practice the Pew Research Center finds that there are moderate restrictions on religious practice compared to most other countries, although levels of hostility have increased since 2009. On the whole, some may argue that restrictions in these freedoms are necessary given the threat of terrorism. In line with this, Skitka et al (2004) and Doty et al (1991) argue that the belief that the in-group is under threat increases political intolerance and also increases the willingness of populations to accept the curtailment of civil liberties. But this may not always be the case.

Many democratic countries with low levels of government regulation of religion also have low levels of government favoritism of religion, and those with high levels of government regulation also have high levels of favoritism as well (Driessen, 2014:232). However Grim and Finke (2006) observe that there could be some exceptions to this where there is a high level of regulation with low levels of favoritism. As long as governments could contain regulation at an acceptable rate, they can offer more or less favoritism to religion without risking democracy (Driessen, 2014:232). However, what they risk is creating feelings of prejudice among the other groups who are excluded from these favors and this in itself could be counterproductive.

Conclusion

The GRI, SRI and GFI measures that have been described above show that there is some degree of religious freedom in all five (5) countries, but there are subtle levels of restrictions on these freedoms. Although religious freedom in many populations is crucial for societal cohesiveness and stability, some counter terrorism strategies target the religious rights of citizens in ways that create instability and prolong conflicts, thereby creating enabling environments for terrorism to take root and thrive. While religion arguably plays a significant role in armed conflicts (Basedau et al 2011), suppressing religion robs counterterrorism efforts of

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the tools to develop credible narratives to contain extremist ideologies. As Richards (2015) rightly argues, when we target particular sections of our societies in a bid to fight terrorism we exclude the very people that are best placed to dissuade others from joining extremist or terrorist groups. Although we can argue that desperate times call for desperate measures there needs to be a clear understanding that the enemy is terror and not religion. The fundamental human rights of populations have to be protected around the world for a total triumph over terrorism otherwise terrorism would have won. States will be wasting a lot of time and resources targeting a particular group of individuals, in a bid to fight terrorism, because they are different. This behavior tends to only enable terrorist recruitment in the long run because people will feel targeted and will react to find acceptance in groups that will have them. Furthermore, populations will resist national laws and refuse to cooperate with counterterrorism efforts if they feel marginalized as a result of their beliefs. The result will be tensions and more insecurity rather than peace. Already, one of the problems identified in this war is the lack of trust between populations in the Middle East and the West, between local populations and security agencies particularly in regions with high levels of human right violations. Since terrorists hide behind the fact that their religion is under attack more evidence-based grievances among targeted populations could push them to seek redress among extremists and this would increase the support base of terrorist groups. We do not suggest that more religious freedom could have prevented the rise of terrorist groups around the world but we observe counterterrorism could be easier with lesser restrictions on religious freedom. The war is against terror, after all, and not against religion. Regardless of the problems that exist with allowing religious freedom, counterterrorism policies that encourage respect for religious freedoms could in turn create room for moderate ideas to denounce extremist ideas (Henne, 2017). Furthermore, there is a common view among critics of secular liberalism that liberal neutrality is itself a religion even though it claims to be neutral (Laborde, 2014). And so while global efforts are made to institutionalize democratic liberal principles and increase respect for human rights in a bid to fight extremist ideologies and terrorism, it will be a mistake to restrict religious freedom in a manner that infringes on the right to belief and practice ones beliefs. This is to avoid creating marginalized societies because while we may seem to succeed for a while, we may all be back to the same place when these groups begin to adopt violence to be or to feel free. Religious liberty may not destroy terrorism but it will isolate terrorists, isolate their fundamentalist ideas, as Farr (2011) observes, and make it possible to effectively counter terrorism in the long run.

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