

Chapter 2 America's Homegrown Jihadists and Foreign Fighting

Abstract

Chapter 2 offers another component of analysis on America's homegrown terrorism. Although the news media frequently report on American-born citizens who fight abroad for their jihadist Islamic beliefs, the public is less informed about why these American jihadists choose to fight abroad rather than to attack seemingly more easily accessible targets at home. To examine this pressing but largely understudied issue, Chapter 2 considers eleven alternative explanations: ethnic ties to the target country, eight personal characteristics of the perpetrator, counterterrorism capabilities of the target country, and the perceived legitimacy of foreign fighting over domestic fighting. Based on an original dataset of 235 American jihadists collected since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, this chapter conducts a series of logistic regression analyses to find an answer.