

THE ELUSIVE LINE BETWEEN LIBERTY AND SECURITY: A STUDY OF AMERICAN PERCEPTION

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Abstract

In the United States, as well as in Israel, the immutable question of balancing liberty and security remains as relevant and significant as ever. However, while both countries face this same philosophical dilemma, both countries also face significantly disparate security challenges. This research project was designed to measure both American and Israeli perceptions of civil liberties and legitimate security to determine if they significantly differed, and if so, why. We examined these perceptions via online quantitative surveys and later through volunteered qualitative responses. Our Israeli response ($n = 20$) was insignificant; however, our American response ($n = 273$) provided multiple insights to American perceptions of various issues. First of all, our data indicate the American public responds more favorably to online surveys than does the Israeli public. Further, if our sample size is representative of the American public, a significant majority of Americans agree with strong security measures by the government or military in public access areas, in public transit, and in airports. Conversely, a majority of Americans disagree with the use of phone-taps, email monitoring, or the storage of that information as a legitimate security measure by the government or military, at least when justified by “reasons of national security.” There exists a significant distrust of the American government by many Americans, and the phrase “reasons of national security” is likely to engender much of that distrust. Finally, by contrast, there exists relatively little apprehension in the American public to theoretical domestic action by the military. These perceptions inform the political and ethical challenges which our democracy faces on a daily basis and work to facilitate further discussion of the critical balance between liberty and security.

Key Words: civil liberty, security, perceptions, America, Israel, phone-taps, monitoring, government, military, distrust.

Introduction

Given the questions that policy makers and civilians face every day in balancing liberty and security in any given democracy, our research was created and designed to explore two primary questions. The first of these questions is, “Do perceptions of civil liberties and legitimate security reach by the government in society differ between Americans and Israelis?” The second question is, if so, “What are some of the disparities in daily life between the two cultures which may contribute to these contrasting viewpoints?”

To best answer these questions, we decided to construct a quantitative survey to be administered through open-source online social media platforms. The survey consists of 25 questions, including demographic information, and allows responses on either a “yes/no” basis or on a Likert scale. In order to avoid any issues with primary and secondary languages, we translated the English survey to Hebrew, so that it could be more easily received in Israel. Since survey respondents are human subjects, we applied for and received formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) certification for the research, and completed the relevant Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) modules. Finally, once approval and translation were complete, we administered our surveys via open-source social media to collect as large a sample as possible.

Methodology

Initial Process

The initial research proposal and design differed significantly from the final design for a few reasons. First of all, the research was initially intended to be a standalone analysis of Israelis’ views of civil liberties and legitimate security. It was not until later the comparison and contrasting study of American views were added to the question, in order to give a more illuminating analysis and an insightful

juxtaposition. Once the contrasting aspect of the study was added, the question of demographic samples was addressed and it was initially decided that for logistic and administrative reasons, the sample size of survey participants would be limited to college-age (18-30) males and females in both countries.

The decision to limit the sample was also made because the process of administering of the survey was initially proposed to take place on-site in Israel. In fact, the research received a modest grant to fund the travel to include on-site information gathering, and the trip was initially planned for the summer of 2014. Given that our contacts in Israel were mostly located in or around university campuses, limiting the sample to college-age students made the most sense for practical purposes. However, following some logistical setbacks including the Israeli/Hamas War (“Operation Protective Edge”) in the summer of 2014 and the subsequent travel restrictions and bans by the FAA, the on-site aspect of the research was delayed until early 2015. Unfortunately, the research completion deadline remained December of 2014, so the administering of the study as an on-site project needed to be reconsidered—effectively rendering the demographic sample restriction unnecessary.

Working Hypothesis

In asking the initial research questions and crafting the subsequent survey questions, it should be noted that we were operating with a working hypothesis. The primary research question of this project is, “Do perceptions of civil liberties and legitimate security reach by the government in society differ between Americans and Israelis?” Given our collective experience working with Israelis, traveling in and around Israel, and living in Israel, our collective hypothesis for this question is, “yes”. We believe that given the substantially increased security presence in Israel (relative to the security in the U.S.) which exists in daily life, it is unlikely that Israelis view the balance of civil liberties and security in the same way that Americans do.

Therefore, our alternative hypothesis is that perceptions of civil liberties and legitimate security reach are significantly different between Israelis and Americans.

Survey Design: Primary question

“Do perceptions of civil liberties and legitimate security reach by the government in society differ between Americans and Israelis?”

To answer this question, we needed to find an effective way to address participants’ feelings about security and governmental reach in daily life. The easiest way to do this – theoretically – would be to ask participants’ opinions on various controversial matters involving government and security, and allowing them an in-depth response of their feelings. However, this option was not feasible logistically, and would realistically take the form of qualitative results, which was not our goal. Another more reasonable option would be to ask participants the same question but by couching it with an inquiry of blanket agreement/disagreement (e.g. “Do you agree with...”), allowing them to respond in turn with a yes or no. This method would provide us with qualitative data; however, given the spectrum of opinions on the matter, a black and white response may be too optimistic on our part and would likely cause many respondents to simply opt-out of answering the question.

To find a solution we ended up compromising between the two ideas; instead of completely open qualitative questions or closed yes/no quantitative questions, we decided to ask to what degree the participants agreed/disagreed with various ideas. In effect, we used a Likert-type scale with five options ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, placing “neutral” in the center. This effectively solved both problems by allowing gradations of responses in a quantitative way. It also allowed for a parallel structure of questioning, a function that is useful both in embedding the survey into electronic survey fields and in collecting results. And, as a final additional plus, it eased the burden of translation.

After deciding on a format, the content of the questions needed to be created. Because we landed on a Likert scale model, we were left with the task of presenting

statements (situations, ideas, etc.) for the participants to agree or disagree with. In writing these, we decided to include ideas which commonly arise commonly in conversation of the topic (in the United States) as well as controversial situations which have been covered by the news media frequently in the previous year. These include situations that involve government monitoring of emails, government use of phone-taps, the use of profiling as a security measure, and questions of airport security. By including these topics (as well as others), we intended to present an idea to the participant which they have at least heard about, and at most have already discussed and formed a strong opinion.

Finally, the wording of the statements for each question was carefully considered. We settled on using intentionally ambiguous wording when presenting a given scenario and including three distinct, important elements in each question. To outline these, we will examine a question from the survey itself. Question 8 from the survey reads: “Phone-taps of civilians, by the government or military, are legitimate when done for reasons of national security.” This statement contains three distinct parts: 1) an action (phone-taps) occurring domestically, 2) by the government or military, 3) for “reasons of national security.” Each question in the survey is written in this fashion, with the actions ranging from phone-taps to armed military patrols. Each question, aside from two, did not specify if it was the government or military conducting this task, and each action is only justified with “reasons of national security.”

We chose this wording specifically because in many cases due to classified documentation or multiple other reasons, the only justification a citizenry will receive from its government for increased security measures is the citing of “reasons of national security.” We predicted that this would be a contentious point among survey respondents. Additionally, we predicted that the joining of government and military, especially among American respondents, would be particularly contentious, given the strong rule of law which exists preventing the military from acting on domestic soil.

Survey Design: Secondary question

“What are some of the disparities in daily life between the two cultures which may contribute to these contrasting viewpoints?”

The secondary research question naturally follows the first, asking what aspects of life contribute to the difference that may/may not have been determined. To answer this question, we wanted to operate along the lines of our working hypothesis and pursue survey questions which would indicate the level of “threat” in participants’ daily life. The idea was to determine whether an increased threat level in society was a causative factor for participants who viewed security more favorably (as an increased security presence in society would be a natural consequence of an increased threat).

To do this, we decided to again use the Likert-type scale format for entering answers but this time with a different spectrum of variables. Because the questions in this section of the survey did not elicit a level of emotion, but rather a factual response, we changed the scale to range from “Very Often” to “Never”, with “Occasionally” in the middle. Then, we came up with questions which explored how often certain events take place in the participants’ home town/city. These events ranged from seeing armed military patrols in public to how often terrorist attacks or foreign military strikes have occurred locally (exploring the current or past level of threat).

Survey Design: Demographics

After the decision was made to remove the restriction of the sample to individuals between ages 18-30, the question then arose of who should be included in the sample. Because the research question itself did not deal more with one demographic than another, this decision was a matter of practicality, resultant our method of distribution. Since the distribution method we eventually decided on was open-source, and in effect also did not significantly lend itself any more to one age-group than another, it made sense to allow anyone 18 years of age or older

participate. In fact, the only limiting factors we included in the survey were an Israeli or American nationality and an approval of participation for anyone serving actively in the Israeli armed forces. As a result, the demographic information we gather at the beginning of the survey includes questions about active military status, age, gender, nationality, and religious affiliation.

Survey Design: Explanation and disclaimers

Following the Institutional Review Board policy, the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative guidance, and for the benefit of the participants, we included a few explanations and disclaimers prior to the start of the survey. First, we included a brief description of what the study is intending to determine and what the purpose of our research is. Then, we included disclaimers stating the survey includes no more than minimal risk, and the only foreseeable discomfort to participants may be discussing or thinking about subjects which are emotionally sensitive. We also emphasized multiple times that participants could opt-out of the study at any point, for any reason, or they could also simply choose not to answer any question. Additionally, we stated that participants must be over 18, and that if they wished to take the survey, it should require only five minutes of time. Finally, we stated that the information participants provide is completely confidential and will not be disclosed for any reason.

To ensure that all participants understood these terms and agree to them, we included two mandatory questions at the very start of the survey which were required to continue. These asked, in effect, if the participants agreed to allow us to use the information they provide in the survey, and if the participant understands they may quit the survey at any point, for any reason. Both of these questions required a “yes” answer, and if they were left blank or not answered affirmatively, the respondent was not allowed to continue in the survey.

Distribution

We intended to use surveys to gather our data from the beginning of the project – however, it was not until after the initial postponing of the travel to Israel that we were forced to reconsider if the surveys would be administered in-person or online. Given that the dates for travel to Israel were not fixed but the research deadline was, we decided to use electronic surveys as a method of reaching Israelis without needing to meet them in person. For the sake of homogeneity in our research, we elected to use electronic surveys in the United States as well. This decision came with the added bonus of potentially generating a much larger sample size than we would have been able to generate on foot. However, it also simultaneously created the problem of administering the online surveys in a way that would reach a variety of demographics.

Our initial idea of reaching out to campuses in Israel would potentially generate an adequate sample size, but it would most likely limit the demographic of the sample to university-age students. Additionally, it would include the logistical hurdle of seeking permission from each university to allow us to seek their staff and students' help in sharing the survey. Instead of tackling these difficulties, we elected to use a less conventional but more open-source medium: social media. Our idea was that given the number of global users and traffic on websites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, etc., we could efficiently spread and share the surveys to as many people in as many demographics as possible. Since the websites are not limited to any single country, utilizing them also bridged our international gap. Theoretically, given the number of “followers” and “friends” certain people and pages have on these websites, a single “share” of the survey could generate hundreds (or thousands) of responses. Though we did not anticipate a sample of this size for our survey(s), the potential was alluring. Thus, we decided to use social media as our distribution method.

Literature Review: Internet-based research

There have been many reports and articles posted in recent years which discuss social media's role in academic research. After the lucrative success of countless social platforms, websites like ResearchGate followed the lead but exist exclusively to allow the collaboration of information between researchers in a given field. Even in what some might consider a niche community, they have become immensely popular. The pros and cons of sharing research via social media have been discussed at length, detailing the best websites to circulate results, the most effective methods of increasing readership, etc. However, nearly all the existing literature only discusses social media's role in *sharing* research and completely overlooks the topic of social media's role in disseminating surveys and *collecting* research.

Example: Deborah Lupton, of the University of Canberra, published in 2014 an extensive report on the use of social media by academics. Her research generated responses from 711 academics from all over the world and included quantitative and qualitative analyses of respondents' use of social media [2]. The responses shed light on many of the upsides of the use of social media in academia, namely: an increased reader base, higher circulation between colleagues, better reach to multiple demographics, expanding topics beyond academic spheres, etc. They also touched on the downsides of social media: a potential lack of credibility, increased risk of breaching confidentiality, researchers' privacy issues, personal boundaries between researchers and subjects, etc [2]. While largely insightful on the whole, Lupton's report completely avoids the topic of utilizing social media as a tool through which to disseminate research.

Similarly, in her article for *The Guardian*, social media manager for NYU's Graduate School Amanda Alampi cites numerous examples of collaborative research through social media platforms. She explains that social media can play a role in "every step of the research process: helping faculty get a pulse on movement in their industry, providing feedback during research and then assisting in the promotion of the published work" [1]. Richard Van Noorden, of *Nature: International weekly*

journal of science surveyed thousands of academics to help determine their use for social media in research. His results were similar to Lupton's; most used ResearchGate, followed closely by the regular suspects (Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Their main use for the websites was to, again, collaborate with fellow researchers to help build projects and disseminate their results to a larger audience [4]. Neither of the above studies mentions the use of social media as a tool for disseminating studies and collecting research.

One notable exception is a study conducted by Featherstone, Hamm, and Hartling (2014), from the University of Alberta's Department of Pediatrics. Their study used Twitter and Facebook, among other means, to recruit participants for various activities conducted by the health center. By doing so, they determined what portion of respondents was recruited through the websites and consequently determined the website's effectiveness in recruiting participants for various activities. They found that Facebook was most effective as a recruiting tool for studies, while Twitter was an effective method of drawing attention to their center's activities online [3]. While the study was relatively small, and only partially pertained to our research, it was the primary academic study we found which attempted to gauge the effectiveness of employing open-source social media websites to recruit participants for research.

Timeline

Our survey was submitted for approval to the IRB and received the ruling of "exempt" on September 30th, 2014. We began distribution of the surveys through social media on October 10th, 2014. We closed the surveys and therefore finished collecting data on December 1st, 2014, having collected responses for a total of 52 days.

Findings

Sample Size: Israelis

Our first and most immediate finding upon closing the surveys was that the Hebrew survey received significantly less responses than the English survey. Over the course of 52 days the survey saw multiple “shares” and messages on Facebook, including posts by both Americans and Israelis encouraging others to respond, multiple posts in “groups” with hundreds of members, multiple emails to Israeli professors and students, and multiple messages to Israeli contacts and friends. However, the survey received only 20 total responses. The various possible explanations for the low number of responses to the Hebrew survey will be explored in the analysis section of this paper; regardless, a sample size of 20 is statistically not significant enough to represent the Israeli population.

Sample Size: Americans

In contrast with the Israeli survey, the American survey received a far greater volume of responses. Over the same timeline and similar online exposure, the English survey received a total of 739 responses. Although a majority of respondents did not complete the survey, a total of 273 did, resulting in a final sample size of 273. This sample is statistically significant enough to potentially represent the population of the United States for analysis in this paper. However, due to the insignificant sample size of the Israeli survey, a contrasting analysis cannot be completed as was initially planned. Instead, as the results of the American survey are interesting and significant as standalone data, they will be explored exclusively hereinafter in this paper.

Descriptive Statistics

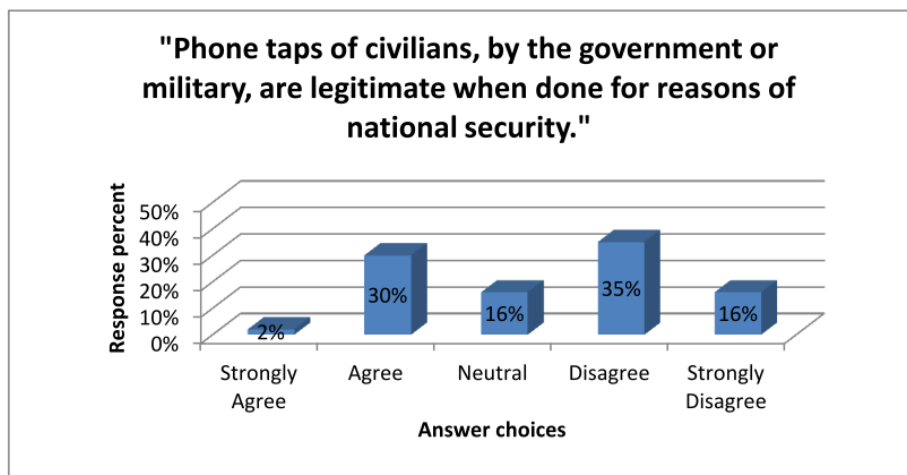
Demographic information about the American sample was collected through six questions, and the demographic breakdown of the sample is as follows:

- Active duty military—0% Yes; 100% No
- Ever served in military or sworn law enforcement position—8% Yes, 92% No

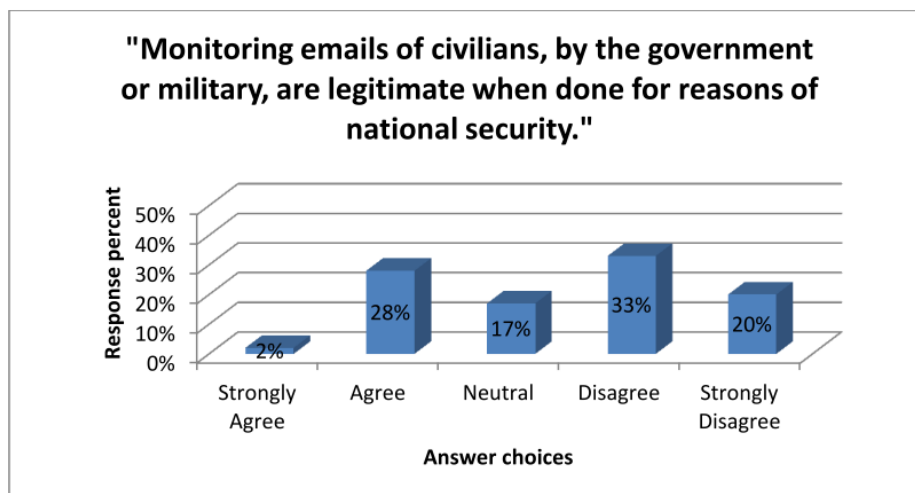
- Age—Range 57 (Min 19, Max 76); Mean 45.4
- Gender—38% Male, 62% Female
- Nationality—95% American; 5% Assorted other
- Religious Affiliation—47% Christianity; 41% Non-religious; 13% Assorted other

Quantitative Results

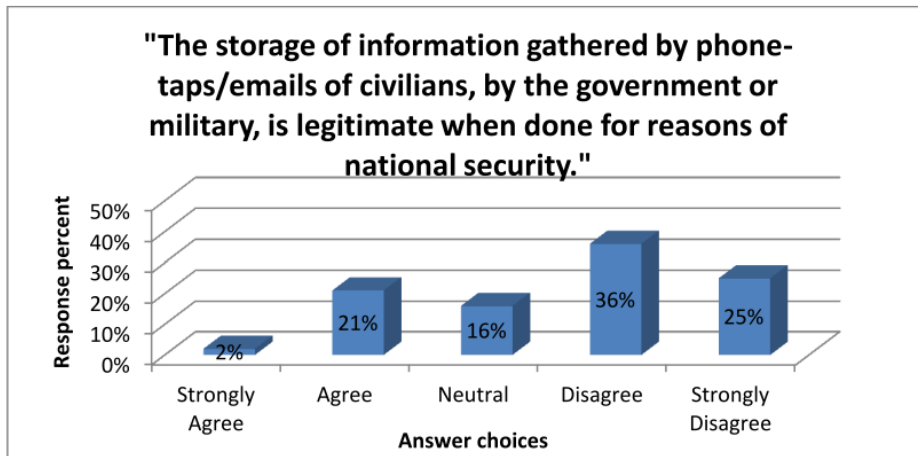
The following graphs are illustrations of responses to each question on the survey. The title of each graph is the exact question text as it appeared on the survey. The graphs do not appear here in the same order the questions were originally asked and instead are grouped for a more coherent illustration of responses.



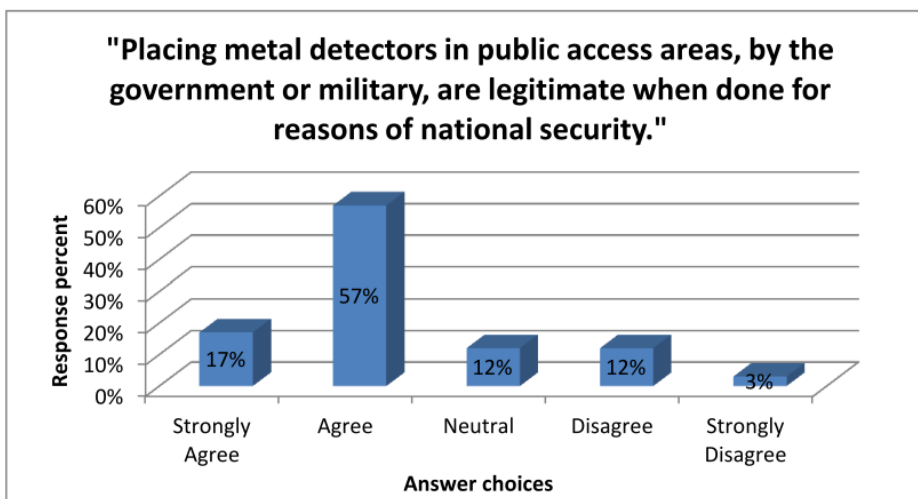
This chart illustrates that 2% of respondents strongly agree, 30% agree, 16% are neutral, 35% disagree, and 16% strongly disagree that phone-taps of civilians, by the government or military, are legitimate when done for reasons of national security.



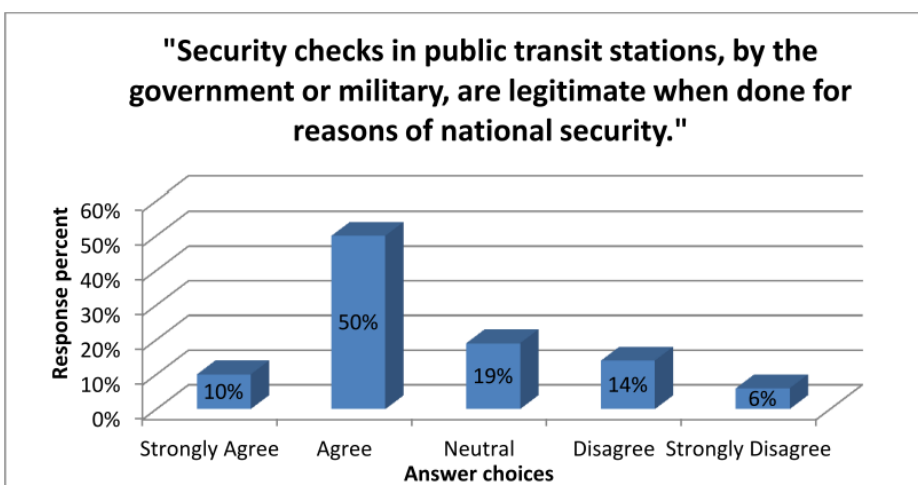
This chart illustrates that 2% of respondents strongly agree, 28% agree, 17% are neutral, 33% disagree, and 20% strongly disagree that the monitoring of emails of civilians, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security.



This chart illustrates that 2% of respondents strongly agree, 21% agree, 16% are neutral, 36% disagree, and 25% strongly disagree that the storage of information gathered by phone-taps/emails of civilians, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security.

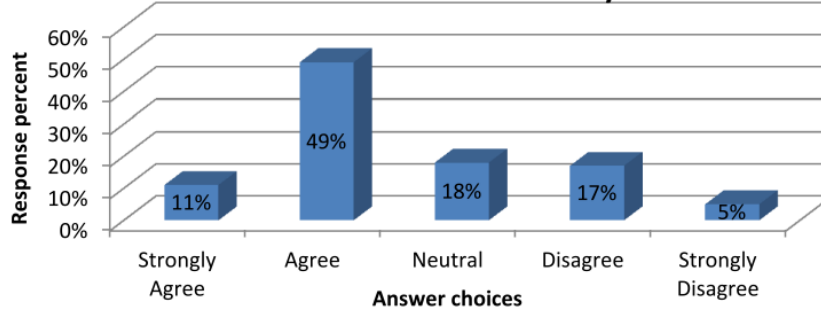


This chart illustrates that 17% of respondents strongly agree, 57% agree, 12% are neutral, 12% disagree, and 3% strongly disagree that placing metal detectors in public access areas, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security.



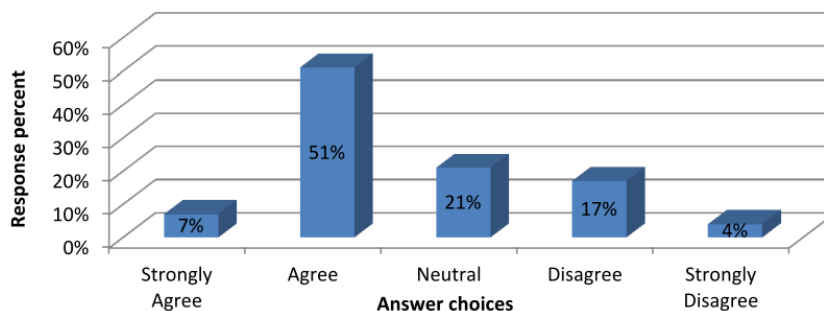
This chart illustrates that 10% of respondents strongly agree, 50% agree, 19% are neutral, 14% disagree, and 6% strongly disagree that security checks in public transit stations, by the government or military, are legitimate when done for reasons of national security.

"Thorough questioning in airports, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security."



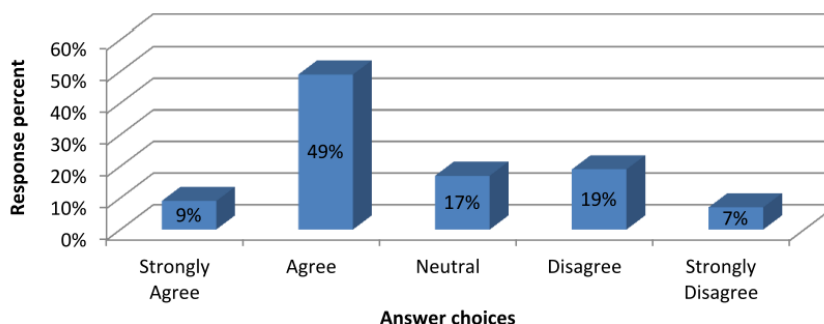
This chart illustrates that 11% of respondents strongly agree, 49% agree, 18% are neutral, 17% disagree, and 5% strongly disagree that thorough questioning in airports, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security.

"Removal of luggage contents, followed by piece-by-piece examination in the airport, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security."



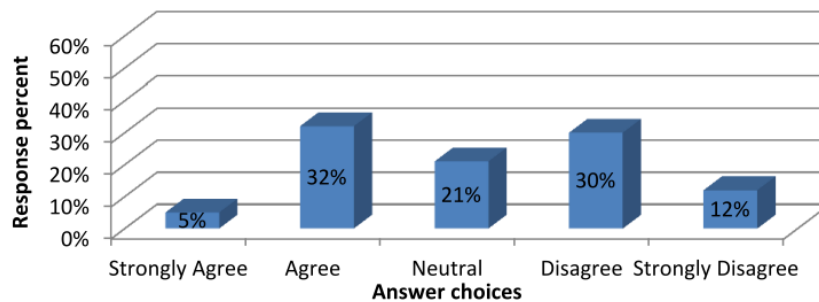
This chart illustrates that 7% of respondents strongly agree, 51% agree, 21% are neutral, 17% disagree, and 4% strongly disagree that removal of luggage contents followed by piece-by-piece examination in the airport, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security.

"Checking personal bags (purses, backpacks, shoulder bags, duffel bags) in public access areas, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security."



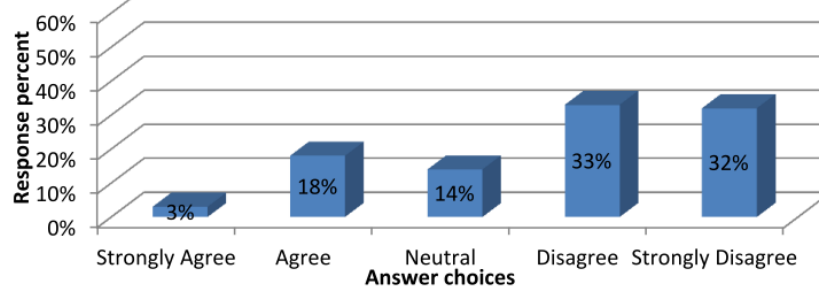
This chart illustrates that 9% of respondents strongly agree, 49% agree, 17% are neutral, 19% disagree, and 7% strongly disagree that checking personal bags (purses, backpacks, shoulder bags, duffel bags) in public access areas, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security.

"Human intelligence operations aiming to collect relevant data in your town/city routinely, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security."



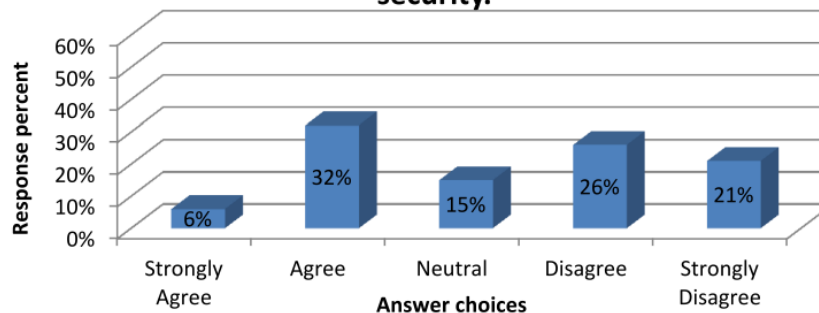
This chart illustrates that 5% of respondents strongly agree, 32% agree, 21% are neutral, 30% disagree, and 12% strongly disagree that human intelligence operations in local towns/cities, by the government or military, are legitimate when done for reasons of national security.

"The use of profiling (ethnic, racial, gender, religion, age, or any) to determine whether a person is a threat, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security."

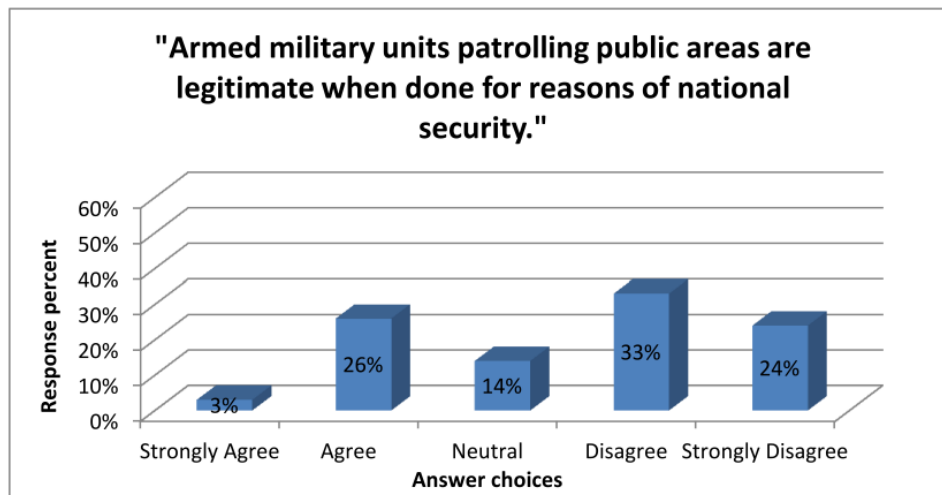


This chart illustrates that 3% of respondents strongly agree, 18% agree, 14% are neutral, 33% disagree, and 32% strongly disagree that the use of profiling to determine whether a person is a threat, by the government or military, is legitimate when done for reasons of national security.

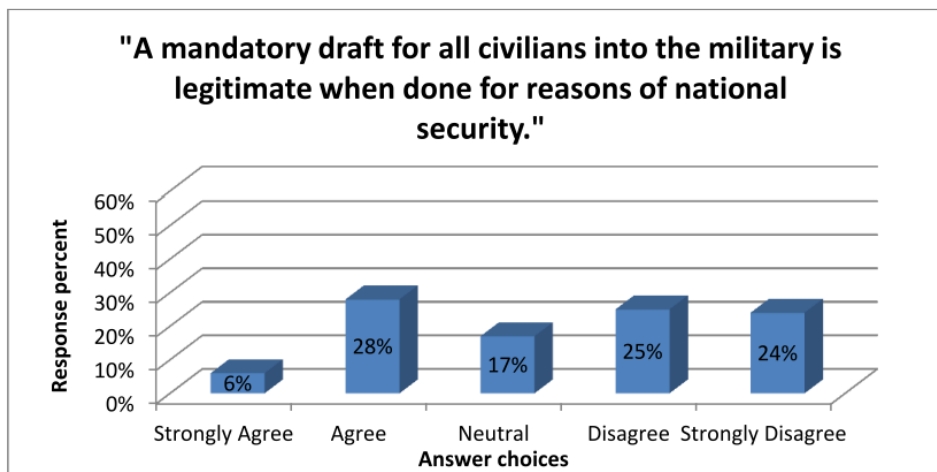
"Military checkpoints on public roadways are legitimate when done for reasons of national security."



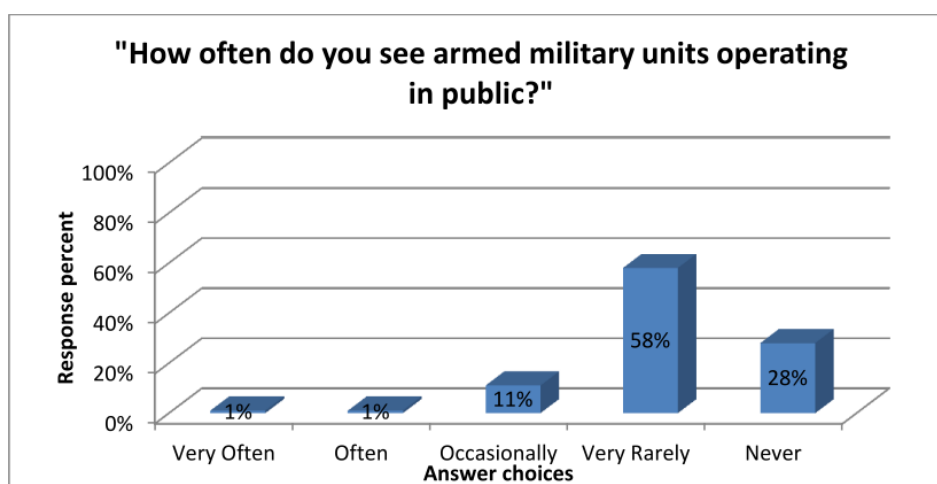
This chart illustrates that 6% of respondents strongly agree, 32% agree, 15% are neutral, 26% disagree, and 21% strongly disagree that military checkpoints on public roadways are legitimate when done for reasons of national security.



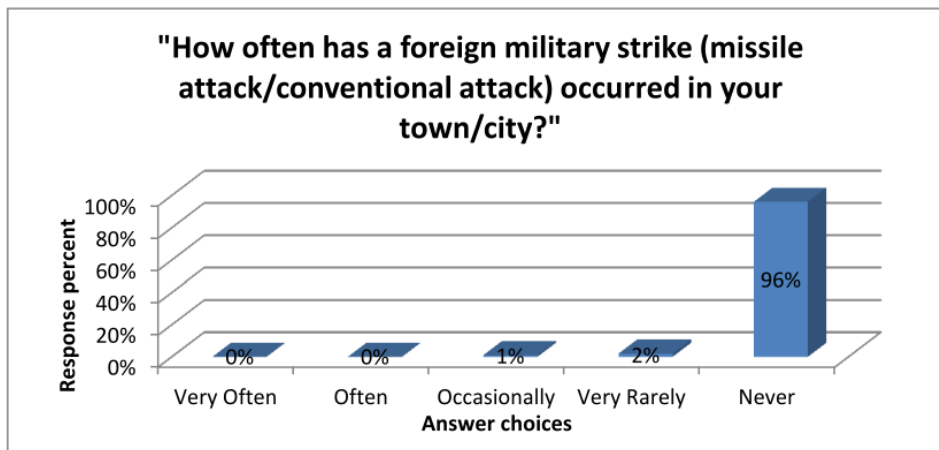
This chart illustrates that 3% of respondents strongly agree, 26% agree, 14% are neutral, 33% disagree, and 24% strongly disagree that armed military units patrolling public areas are legitimate when done for reasons of national security.



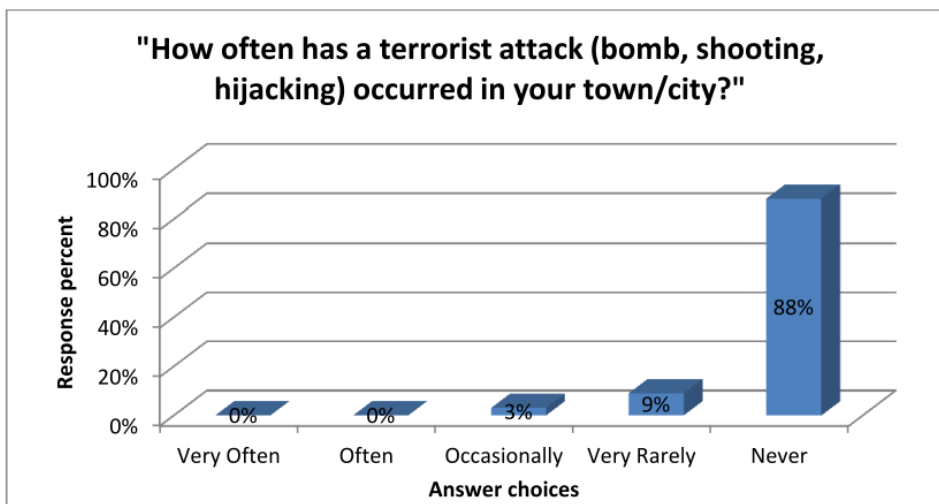
This chart illustrates that 6% of respondents strongly agree, 28% agree, 17% are neutral, 25% disagree, and 24% strongly disagree that a mandatory draft for all civilians into the military is legitimate when done for reasons of national security.



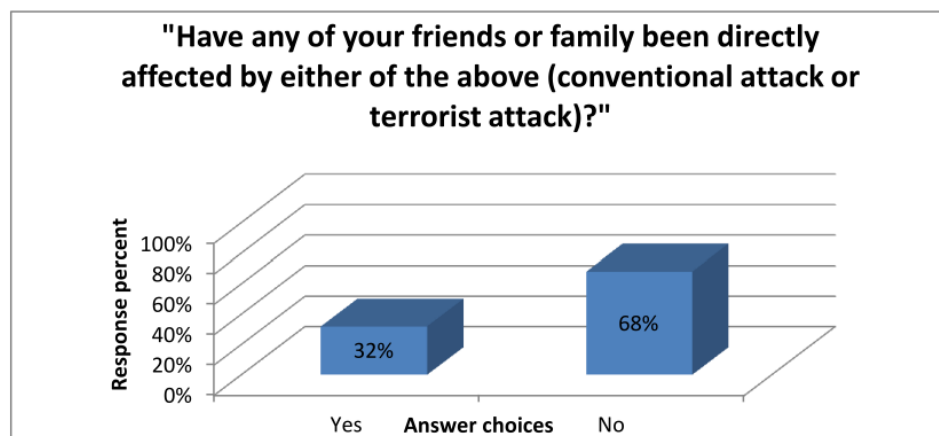
This chart illustrates that 1% of respondents very often, 1% often, 11% occasionally, 58% very rarely, and 28% never see armed military units operating in public.



This chart illustrates that 0% of respondents very often, 0% often, 1% occasionally, 2% very rarely, and 96% never have had a foreign military strike in their town or city.



This chart illustrates that 0% of respondents very often, 0% often, 3% occasionally, 9% very rarely, and 88% never have had a terrorist attack in their town or city.



This chart illustrates that 32% of respondents have and 68% do not have any friends or family who have been directly affected by a military or terrorist attack.

Qualitative Results

Although our survey did not require the respondents to provide any qualitative data about these issues, many chose to voluntarily do so via emails, messages, or posts. Qualitative data can often reflect a respondent's feelings about an issue much more thoroughly than can quantitative data, so these responses were valuable. The following excerpts are all statements made by respondents after taking the survey:

"I started to do this but found I couldn't because it frames questions inappropriately, specifically requiring me to join government and military rather than keeping them separate. For example, I agree government through police, FBI or TSA etc. may conduct surveillance of citizens as court approved, but not the military. The questions don't allow me to make that distinction."

"I completed this survey but answered "Neutral" for all questions because the answer was always "It Depends" on the conditions of when "national security", like "for health and safety" is invoked."

"The definition of "National Security" may be very different for a country operating under constant real fear of attack and constant occupation of another people versus the U.S. where very tenuous versions of "need for national security" has been used as an excuse for a lot of questionable behavior [sic]. Even ignoring the current situation, the McCarthy era defended blacklisting as needed for national security."

"I took this survey, however many of my answers were neutral and somewhat meaningless because many of them (especially on the first page) are highly dependent on the situation and if a government body, etc. is operating on some previous evidence or randomly fishing for information. It also is dependent on whether there have been recent attacks, particularly high international political tensions, or if the government has reason to be concerned that there is a heightened security threat, etc. Such generic simplistic questions, as were on the first page etc, can not [sic] take these factors into account – you would have to present a scenario."

“Questions needed to be more detailed for me to feel comfortable answering, i.e, would have liked to see variables such as having probable cause or not.”

“I did not like this at all. the excuse national security is defined by whom? are the courts involved? This is bogus.”

“My answers depend a lot on whether the perceived security threat is real, or an excuse to circumvent checks and balances. since this distinction was not investigated in the survey, I answered against all the intrusions into our liberties without due process. National Security should not be a reason to throw away the freedoms we are trying preserve, particular when the government is free to define it arbitrarily. Never trust the government.”

Analysis: Phone-taps/email monitoring

On the issues of civilian phone-taps and the monitoring of emails, the data we recorded indicate that Americans are mostly against these measures. Although in each issue there was still a fair spread of responses, each saw more respondents disagree with the measures than those that agreed. Specifically regarding the use of phone-taps, only 32% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed while 51% disagreed/strongly disagreed. Regarding the monitoring of civilian emails, 30% agreed/strongly agreed while 53% disagreed/strongly disagreed. Finally, regarding the storage of information from either of the two aforementioned, only 23% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed while 61% disagreed/strongly disagreed. Thus, the number of Americans who disagree with the implementation of these security measures far exceeds the number of those who agree.

These results were not necessarily surprising, especially given the public outcry and contention which surrounded the revealing of National Security Agency (NSA) programs by Edward Snowden. Phones and emails are considered to be very private devices, and it is not surprising that a majority of Americans do not want the government/military listening to conversations.

Analysis: Security in public access areas / public transit

By contrast with the above, on the issue of security measures in public areas and in public transit, a significant majority of Americans agree they are necessary for reasons of national security. For example, the issue of metal detectors in public access areas received the strongest majority in the entire survey with 74% of respondents agreeing/strongly agreeing, whereas only 15% disagreed/strongly disagreed. Similarly, regarding the issue of security checks in public transit stations, 60% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed while 20% disagreed/strongly disagreed. Finally, regarding the security measure of checking personal bags in public access areas, 58% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed, whereas 26% disagreed/strongly disagreed. These data indicate strongly that a significant majority of Americans are in favor of stronger security measures in public access/public transit areas. These results are not especially surprising given that the space in question is public access, and also due to public transit being perceived as a relatively common target for crime/terrorism.

Analysis: Airport security

Similar to the above results, increased security in airports were perceived largely as legitimate security measures. On the issue of thorough questioning in airports, 60% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the measure and 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Additionally, regarding the security measure of removing luggage contents and examining pieces individually, 58% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed while 21% disagreed/strongly disagreed. These data indicate that a majority of Americans support increased security measures in airports.

These findings were particularly surprising given the contention which surrounds airport security. Specifically, following the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) recent introduction and use of full-body scanners which was met by relatively loud public outcry and widespread media coverage/criticism, the

idea that most Americans would agree with even more security is seemingly surprising.

Analysis: “Reasons of national security”

Although the quantitative results did not cover the vagueness in wording of “reasons of national security”, multiple respondents offered qualitative data on the issue. Of these responses, which were numerous, all were adamantly opposed to such vague justification for increased security. Multiple respondents directly cited periods of time during which the government has used that phrase as justification for more nefarious means, and some even became incensed at the thought. Two responses, specifically, embody these reactions: “This is bogus” and “Never trust the government.” This reaction seems to indicate that Americans do not, on the whole, fully trust their government when it comes to these issues. Many do not trust the government at all, while some are simply skeptical, and further still, some will not judge whether increased security is necessarily unless doing so on a specific case-by-case basis. This sentiment is mirrored in countless polls of public sentiment in recent years which indicate Americans’ trust in institutions and the government is at an all-time low—certainly, the above data indicate that as well.

Analysis: “Government or military”

By contrast to the outcry engendered by the term “reasons of national security”, there was virtually no outcry about the joining of “government or military” in each of the questions. This was a surprising result, especially given the strong rule of law which exists in America that prevents the military from operating domestically. However, only one respondent offered any sort of objection to the joining of government or military, writing that he would have agreed with an action by the government, but not the military. This response, we had predicted, would be a very common one—at least as common as those responses to “reasons of national

security.” However, such was not the case, and it was in fact the only response we received.

Perhaps even more surprising are the data collected on this issue in the survey. Two questions were asked which dealt specifically with actions taken by the military alone—not the government. The first of these was the issue of military checkpoints on public roadways, to which 38% of respondents agreed/disagreed while 47% disagreed/strongly disagreed. The second of these was the issue of armed military units patrolling public areas, which 29% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed with while 57% disagreed/strongly disagreed. Although these questions see more respondents disagreeing than agreeing, in each case there are nearly one-third of all respondents agreeing. In other words, one-third of Americans agree with certain military action being taken on domestic soil for reasons of national security.

Analysis: Difficulties surveying Israelis

Finally, while the unfortunate outcome of the Israeli study—too few respondents – resulted in a lack of quantitative data to compare with the American study, it provided a valuable insight about Israeli culture. That is, the Israeli public, at least relative to the American public, does not respond as willingly to survey based research. An Israeli professor of history offered this bit of insight as to why:

“The problem is Israelis are over surveyed. Sometimes there are binges of phone surveys although at the moment that is not the case. But there are times when it is once a week.”

Therefore, perhaps the initial method through which we were going to collect data, in person and face-to-face, would have seen better results for the Israeli sample.

Conclusions

This research has culminated in multiple insightful conclusions about Americans, Israelis, and various perceptions of legitimate security and civil liberties. First of all, our data indicate the American public responds much more favorably to

online surveys than does the Israeli public. Further, if our sample size is representative of the American public, a significant majority of Americans agree with strong security measures by the government or military in public access areas, in public transit, and in airports. Conversely, a majority of Americans disagree with the use of phone-taps, email monitoring, or the storage of that information as a legitimate security measure by the government or military, at least when justified by “reasons of national security.” There exists a significant distrust of the American government by many Americans, and the phrase “reasons of national security” is likely to engender much of that distrust. Finally, by contrast, there exists relatively little apprehension in the American public to theoretical domestic action by the military. These perceptions inform the political and ethical challenges which our democracy faces on a daily basis and work to facilitate further discussion of the critical balance between liberty and security.

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