

**peter krause** is an assistant professor in the Political Science Department at Boston College. His research and writing focuses on international security, Middle East politics, political violence, and national movements. He spoke with Boisi Center associate director **Erik Owens** after his presentation

**owens:** Where were you on the day of the marathon bombings last year?

**krause:** I live on the marathon route in Coolidge Corner, and I have watched it for several years on Beacon Street. Last year, I watched the race for an hour, and then returned to my office in McGuinn to

grade papers. Around 3:00pm, I received

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**owens:** You've studied several foreign environments where terrorism is prevalent. What can you draw from these case studies for an American context, especially in terms of prevention and response?

**krause:** By comparison, I often examine other environments and see if they have a democratic government, the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, the freedom to assemble, or the freedom to feel like you can make a difference and have a stake in society. These factors play a huge role in whether a person will turn to violence to get across a political point.

In terms of the United States, we have many marginalized communities and individuals, but we do much better than many other societies in the world, and I think that's one of the reasons that terrorism is not a major issue here. America is a place where a lot of people have enough food to feed their families and feel that their interests are represented by their elected officials and by their government. This makes a large difference.

From Tocqueville onward, people who studied American society found it to have a strong civil society and decent social capital. These kinds of nongovernmental community bonds make a big difference.

People who commit terrorist attacks are oftentimes socially ostracized or isolated from the community. The United States is not perfect at integrating immigrants, but we are improving, and do it better than many other countries.

America also strikes a balance between being a security state and a police state. In America people don't feel that the state is incredibly overbearing, uses violence extensively, or locks people up without charge.

In places like Egypt there has been backlash, not only in the form of violence, but also through popular support and indifference to violence. Disaffected peo-

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more Americans are killed in mass shootings than by terrorism.

Finally, the political aspect makes a difference in terms of what people think is being attacked. Mass shootings can be indiscriminate, unknown, and uncontrollable. Unless there is some broader cause, the shooter is not necessarily acting against America. However, under terrorism, you have environmental terrorism and groups who have political motives, involving the United States or not.

The Boston Marathon attacks and 9/11 were about American foreign policy to some extent. People took these attacks more personally, because they are Americans. I'm an American citizen. Even though I was not wounded or even present at these attacks, they were against my country. This type of sentiment riles people in a way that a mass shooting against random individuals does not.

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