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IMAGINING TERROR: THE PEOPLE, THE PRESS AND POLITICS

By

Joshua Woods

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Sociology

2008

ABSTRACT

IMAGINING TERROR: THE PEOPLE, THE PRESS AND POLITICS

By

Joshua Woods

After 9/11, public concerns about terrorism in the United States escalated. In the next years, the threat of terrorism prompted several far-reaching foreign and domestic policies, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the massive increases in federal defense spending, upgraded security measures in all areas of the critical infrastructure, reductions in civil liberties and shifts in immigration policy. Given the significance of these changes, it is important to learn more about how the public perceives the threat of terrorism. The general goal of this dissertation is to investigate the social and psychological processes that affect people's responses to the threat. Specifically, I use an exploratory, experimental study to identify the types of news portrayals ("frames") that increase people's worries and risk judgments about terrorism. Drawing on a quantitative content analysis, I also attempt to explain when and under what circumstances fear-inducing news frames appear in the elite press in the United States.

For Roberta Robinson Gabier and Thell Woods, my Mom and Dad

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much has been given to me. I wish to thank the Department of Sociology for providing me with a strong education. Stan Kaplowitz has been a supportive advisor to me throughout my graduate career, as well as an excellent teacher. I am grateful to him for his scholarly support and friendship. While many know that Stan is a talented researcher and statistical expert, few know that he also brings a respectable game on the racquetball court. Toby Ten Eyck served as an outstanding model for my professional socialization and a keen advisor on publications. He also stands as a pillar of optimism, from which many around him benefit. Fred Fico taught me much of what I know about analyzing content and studying the media. He is a first-class teacher and scholar and I am indebted to him for his clarity, encouragement and generosity. There were many other memorable learning moments in my doctoral career, especially during classes with Bernard Finifter, Steve Gold, Alan Rudy and Maryhelen MacInnes, and, of course, during conversations over beer and popcorn with my good friends Chris Oliver, Mike Brennan and Tom Boyd.

I move now to the subject of Vladimir Shlapentokh, who, in my mind, stands alone in many respects, and thereby deserves his own paragraph. Though I never attended one of his classes, he has taught me more about the world than any other professor. Though I served as his editor, it was he who educated me in the art of writing and argument. Though I rarely agree with his ideological standpoints, I highly respect his intellectual integrity and find his unique worldview fascinating. Among his many gifts to me, I am especially grateful to him for demonstrating the joy of curiosity. I would also

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: A Very Different Kind of Threat

After 9/11, the threat of terrorism captured the attention of media, scholars, politicians and the public. In the next years, increased national security concerns played a pivotal role in the ongoing debate and formulation of numerous foreign and domestic policies. In an effort to make sense of the nation's response to 9/11, several scholars suggested that the dangers posed by international terrorist groups were, in some ways, similar to those presented by the Soviet Union, or at least that the two threats led to comparable social, economic and geopolitical circumstances (Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Entman, 2004; Davis, 2006).

Although the likeness here is worth considering, the differences between the Cold War and the War on Terrorism tell us more about the circumstances that emerged after 9/11. First, unlike the Soviet Union, international terrorist groups such as al Qaeda are not controlled by a powerful, centralized government. As Cronin (2002, 119) suggested, the destructive potential of these groups is "unbridled by the interests, form and structure of a state." In the 1990s, al Qaeda looked more like a loosely coupled, multinational business alliance than a typical, top-down organization. Authority was not concentrated at the top, it was scattered, and the framework became even more fractured as the official War on Terrorism began in the aftermath of 9/11 (Hoffman, 2003, 26). The al Qaeda adhocracy may help it, in some ways, disrupt and harm the United States, but it is not the ideal structure for pursuing a long-term offensive aimed at ending U.S. statehood, or confronting its dominance in the world.

As a second contrast to the Soviet threat, terrorist activities are not motivated by a clear and cohesive ideological or religious position. "Terrorism" involves a wide variety of groups and social movements. Pape (2005) develops this contention in his study of suicide terrorism. Based on an investigation of hundreds of attacks, he argues against the popular notion that terrorism is driven primarily by religious zealotry. Among other things, he notes that the world leader in suicide terrorism is the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, a non-Muslim secular group. The organizers of terrorist activities, according to Pape, are not ideological dreamers. Many of them are logical, determined individuals motivated by specific political and economic goals.

If international terrorism was facilitated by a singular organization with a unified set of fervent beliefs and objectives, it would pose an even greater threat to the United States than the Soviet Union. Given its reliance on suicide attacks, the strategy of deterrence, which proved effective during the Cold War, would not have the same effect on such an organization. However, after a careful consideration of numerous terrorist events around the world, one can clearly see that the raison d'être of most terrorist groups and individuals is more local and pragmatic than global and idealistic (Page, 2005).

In fact, the ideological inconsistency of international terrorism has even been reflected in the Bush Administration's official statements about the threat. In the first days after 9/11, President Bush framed the conflict in religious terms. He referred to the perpetrators as "Islamic extremists" (2001a) and the war on terrorism as a "crusade" (2001b). In the next months, however, he curtailed his references to Islam and relied instead on phrases such as "good versus evil" and framed the enemy as "haters of

freedom." Although this phraseology contained emotional or moral substance, it lacked a clear intellectual framework.

As the War on Terrorism spread across the Middle East, Iraq in particular, the Administration's statements remained devoid of conceptual and ideological refinement. It suffices to point out that, while the term "terrorism" may be difficult to define, the Administration's chosen catchword "terror" is even vaguer. In a recent search of the White House website (www.whitehouse.gov), I found that the phrase "War on Terror" appeared in roughly three times more articles, press briefs and speeches than the alternative frame, the "War on Terrorism."

The terrorist threat has been around for centuries, generating an abundance of detailed explanations and public knowledge, but the "War on Terror" suggests something new, amorphous and indefinable, if no less menacing. The central political advantage of this frame lies in its flexibility. The less Americans understand about terrorism, the easier it is for officials to shift their definition of the threat and their plans for confronting it.

During the Cold War, in stark contrast, government officials clearly denoted the dangers of communism and its proliferation throughout the world. Setting aside the controversy surrounding the Soviets' real intentions toward international communist organizations, there is no denying that communism itself was understood by most Americans as a coherent, global movement, orchestrated and propelled by the Soviet Union, and determined to destroy capitalism, democracy and the "American way of life." As confirmed by Gallup polls, the "threat of communism" ranked highly on the list of America's "most important problems" throughout the 1950s-1960s.

The Soviets' ideological predilections were a regular topic of discussion for the principal Cold Warriors, from Winston Churchill and John F. Kennedy to Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. In the last year of his presidency, Reagan was still quoting the *Communist Manifesto* in his diatribes on the Soviet threat. For instance, in May 1988, during an interview at the White House with a Soviet journalist, Reagan made a reference to "the declarations of Karl Marx," and suggested that "Communism could only succeed when the whole world had become Communist." He went on to proclaim that "every General Secretary but the present one [Gorbachev]" ... "reiterated their allegiance to that Marxian theory" (*New York Times,* 1988).

The third distinction lies in what is known about the potential consequences of a Soviet versus a terrorist attack. While there is still fervent debate about the general level of safety of American citizens during the Cold War, there is little disagreement about the technical capacity of the Soviet Union to unleash its nuclear arsenal and cause massive death and destruction in the United States and its allies (Johnson, 1994; Mueller, 2005; Shlapentokh, 2001).

The available information about terrorism is far less reliable. Putting aside for a moment the Bush Administration's inaccurate assessment of Saddam Hussein's terrorist links and weapons of mass destruction, estimating the risk of terrorism has always been extremely difficult. The extraordinary character of the 9/11 attacks only intensified the uncertainties surrounding this threat. Since mid September 2001, "the realm of the possible" has been stretched far beyond most foreign or domestic dangers of the past, manmade or otherwise.

A cloak of ambiguity covers not only the magnitude of a future attack, but also the potential type and variety of assaults. In contrast to the centralized danger posed by the Soviets, the number of terrorist threat scenarios is virtually limitless. As Slovic (2002) suggested, 9/11 represented a "new species of trouble," an unbounded threat that could not be assessed with quantitative risk analysis. Unlike natural hazards such as hurricanes and earthquakes, the threat of terrorism has no fixed geography. And unlike common hazards such as crime, car accidents and illness, the number of major terrorist attacks in United States history is so small that robust statistical estimates are not possible.

These limitations have been noted by several risk experts and highlighted in a number of government reports. For instance, in a lengthy account by the Office of Homeland Security (2002), the assessment of terrorism risk was portrayed as "difficult," because "our society presents an almost infinite array of potential targets that can be attacked through a variety of methods." In a report on the terrorist threat to the food supply, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (2003) stated plainly that "it is difficult for the FDA to predict with any certainty the likelihood that an act of food terrorism will occur." In its otherwise assertive report on the risk of terrorism, the RAND Corporation conceded to similar difficulties (Willis et al., 2005).

Terrorism and the Media

The lack of clear information about terrorism has not limited the public's demand for it, nor the willingness of news media to produce and disseminate such information. Both before and after 9/11, the media discussed numerous aspects of the threat, including the nation's porous international borders, the vulnerability of the food and water supply

and the weakness of security in almost all areas of the country's critical infrastructure, such as airports, seaports, chemical factories and the postal system. There were public debates on whether an airplane could breach a nuclear power plant. Commentators, experts and politicians talked about the threat of dirty bombs, nuclear and chemical attacks, cyber-terrorism, bio-terrorism and corporate sabotage (Chapin 2002).

The media routinely reported changes in the Department of Homeland Security's Advisory System, which described the risk with vague, color-coded modifiers, such as "severe," "high" and "elevated" (Gray and Ropeik 2002). In many cases, government officials warned the public of an increased risk without identifying a particular city or region of the country (Friedman 2005; Zimbardo and Kluger 2003).

There has also been a great deal of public debate over the possible strategies of the terrorists. Would they target only large urban centers and symbolic structures, or would they attack anywhere in order to spread fear and chaos across the country? This discussion took on an important political dimension in the post-9/11 period as public officials grappled over the formula for dispensing federal funds from the Department of Homeland Security.[1] Each state could point to a number of possible terrorist targets, which not only justified the increase in federal funding for first responders and other aspects of the local anti-terrorism effort, but also served as news fodder for local newspapers and broadcasters. For instance, the *Anchorage Daily News* published a series of reports on the terrorist threat to the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, while a Nebraska newspaper, the *Lincoln Journal Star,* offered extensive coverage on the risk of anthrax delivered through the postal system.

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1. See, for instance, articles in the *New York Times* by T. H. Kean and L. H. Hamilton (2005, 23), S. M. Collins and J. I. Lieberman (2005, 20) and Votes in Congress (2005, p. 31).

Terrorism is not a one-dimensional danger. *The* terrorist threat actually consists of a number of qualitatively different dangers. These characteristics are reflected in a variety of media portrayals, which may, in turn, evoke a range of thoughts and feelings. Given the complex and multifaceted nature of this hazard, a systematic exploration of mass mediated portrayals of this danger and the public's response to it is worthwhile. Considering how U.S. foreign and domestic policies have shifted in the face of terrorism, this topic becomes all the more important.

Foreign and Domestic Policy Changes after 9/11

No other twenty-first century threat has had a greater impact on American politics and society than terrorism. In response to the horrific attacks on 9/11, the U.S. initiated two military campaigns, one in Afghanistan and another in Iraq. As these conflicts grew into protracted wars, they claimed the lives of thousands of American soldiers and hundreds of thousands of civilians. At a time when the U.S. needed international cooperation most, its military and political responses to 9/11 coincided with a significant drop in the country's favorability ratings in foreign countries, among both its allies and enemies (Shlapentokh, Woods and Shiraev, 2005).

The perceived threat of terrorism transformed the domestic policy agenda as well. The Bush Administration created the Department of Homeland Security, focused the nation's attention on countering terrorism like never before and increased federal spending on police, firefighters, medical first-responders and a host of new technologies and measures to prevent nuclear and biological terrorism, secure the borders and improve security at the nation's numerous points of critical infrastructure.

The U.S. Congress responded to 9/11 by rallying around the flag and showing widespread support for the Administration's policies, including its plans to violently punish those involved in the attacks. Within three days of 9/11, Congress approved a resolution authorizing the president to take military action. This decision was unanimous in the Senate. Among the 420 representatives in the House, only one member dissented.

A few weeks later, when the bombs began dropping in Afghanistan, dozens of lawmakers issued strong endorsements of the president's actions. For instance, a special joint statement was issued by a bipartisan group of Republican and Democratic leaders who commended Bush for his decision and assured him that "We stand united with the president and with our troops" (Rosenbaum, 2001). One year later, congressional support for the Administration's "solution" persisted as Congress authorized the war in Iraq (the Senate by a vote of 77 to 23 and the House, 296 to 133). The president responded to the vote by declaring that "America speaks with one voice" (Bumiller and Hulse, 2002).

In addition to the geopolitical changes after 9/11, there were significant economic reverberations as well. While 9/11 did not lead to an immediate economic crisis, it did influence long-term economic growth, insofar as resources that may have increased productivity were now being spent on security. As suggested by Gail Makinen (2002, 7), a specialist in economic policy for the Congressional Research Center, "Since it will take more labor and capital to produce a largely unchanged amount of goods and services, this will result in a slower rate of growth in national productivity, a price that will be borne by every American in the form of a slower rate of growth of per capita real income."

A more significant economic impact, however, was seen in the massive rise in federal spending on national defense and homeland security. Between 2001 and 2003,

U.S. defense expenditures increased by 26 percent from $335.9 billion to $422.5 billion (in constant 2005 dollars) (Pena, 2005). By 2007, the defense budget reached $481.4 billion, levels not seen since the Reagan-era buildup of the 1980s (Tyson, 2007; Rosenberg, 2006). Between 2001 and 2007 an additional $661 billion was spent on supplemental emergency funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The main benefactors of this shift in federal spending were private-sector defense contractors. As one financial analyst estimated, the deluge of funding boosted stocks in the defense industry by 114 percent between January 2001 and June 2006 (Cohan, 2006). The big losers were the American citizens who relied on the numerous domestic programs, including programs in education, welfare and healthcare, which were frozen, reduced or eliminated altogether as the Administration shaped the outlays of the federal budget.

Other socially significant effects emerged as policymakers struggled to balance the country's security concerns with the need to preserve the rights and liberties of people living in the United States. In October 2001, the Administration, led by Attorney General John Ashcroft, introduced the USA Patriot Act, which passed in the Senate by a vote of 98 to 1 and by 357 to 66 in the House. Although the legislation enjoyed strong presidential and congressional support and was renewed by Congress in March 2006, the bill generated a great deal of controversy among scholars, civil rights advocates and ordinary people. Three of the act's provisions proved to be particularly contentious: one allowed law-enforcement agencies to search private residences without informing the owners (known as "sneak-and-peak" searches); the second gave federal authorities the right to access the library and bookstore records of anyone connected to a terrorism

investigation; and the third permitted the detention and deportation of non-citizens without due process.[2]

Plan of the Dissertation

The foregoing pages outlined three important points. First, the threat of terrorism is extremely difficult to calculate scientifically; second, media outlets have, nevertheless, widely covered the numerous dimensions of this risk; and third, the events of 9/11 led to major changes in foreign and domestic policy. Each of these points adds to the demand for more research on media coverage of terrorism, public perceptions of this threat and the effects of these perceptions on other social attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.

These research topics are related to a diverse and expansive body of research. To organize this literature and establish a theoretical framework for this dissertation, I use the "centrality model of communication content" (Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 2005, 11). The model places *communication content* at the center of a causal chain. The characteristics of media content are thought to be determined by *antecedent conditions,* including social, political, economic, cultural and other contextual factors. On the other side of the model, the content is thought to have immediate or delayed *effects* on individuals, groups and society. This model, as shown in Figure 1, illustrates the substantive and theoretical framework of the present study. Specifically, each arrow in Figure 1 represents one of the three main parts of this dissertation.

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2. For more about the Patriot Act, see Cole and Dempsey, 2006; Chesney, 2005; Wong, 2006.

FIGURE 1

The Causes and Effects of Mass Mediated Portrayals of Terrorism

Antecedent Conditions: Social, Political, Economic Factors & Events	*Portrayals of Terrorism:* Media Content	*Effects:* Public Perceptions of the Terrorist Threat	*Effects:* Social Attitudes, Beliefs & Behaviors
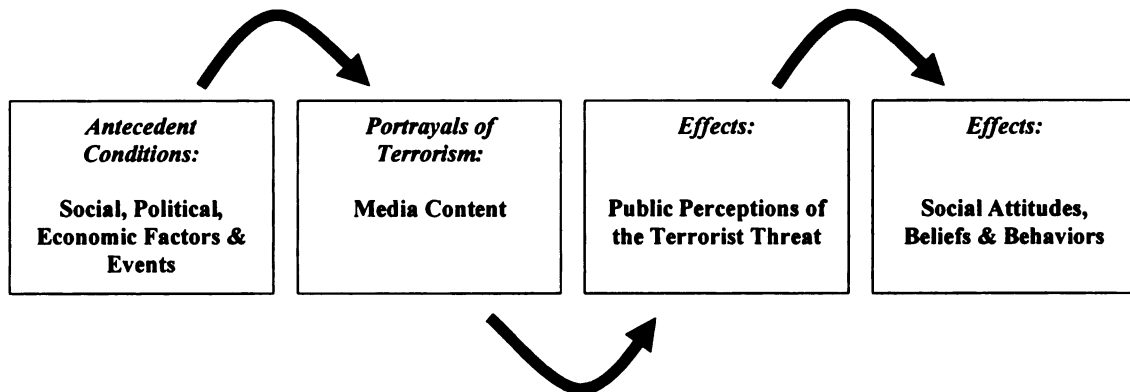
In Chapter 2, I explore the relationship between people's perceptions of terrorism and other social attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Public worries about this threat increased dramatically and remained elevated for several years after 9/11. Numerous studies in the social sciences showed that these new threat perceptions affected a number of general social values, as well as specific attitudes and behaviors. Drawing on a broad range of pre-post 9/11 studies, this chapter attempts to catalogue these supposed effects. Given the scope and diversity of these changes, I suggest that the elevated concerns about terrorism after 9/11 functioned as an "organizing force," not unlike an ideological dimension or belief system, which shaped people's political and social worlds. Chapter 2 investigates the strength and permanence of this organizing force by distinguishing short-term attitudinal and behavioral changes from long-term ones.

Moving to the previous arrow in Figure 1, Chapter 3 addresses the link between media coverage of terrorism and people's perceptions of the threat. After 9/11, several researchers studied the flood of news coverage on this topic and the new role of the

terrorist threat in political communication. Most of this research focused on shifts in the quantity of coverage as the driving force behind public worries about this danger. Chapter 3, in contrast, emphasizes the qualitative variations in this coverage. Using an experimental study, I test whether subjects perceive some news portrayals of terrorism as more threatening than others. As mentioned, there are a great number and variety of terrorism news frames, which prohibits a comprehensive analysis. Chapter 3 provides case study results on three frames. I begin by testing the effects of the term "terrorism" itself. I also look at how linking the threat to radical Islam and nuclear technology influences people's perceptions of the danger.

In order to build on the findings of Chapter 2, I also examine the relationship between perceived threat and two important social attitudes: support for the Iraq War and willingness to give up civil liberties in order to reduce the threat of terrorism. The social and political implications of this experiment, as well as its importance to future research on the perceived threat of terrorism, are discussed.

Chapter 4 covers the final arrow in Figure 1. It attempts to answer the following question: If some news frames worry people more than others, what predicts the use of these portrayals in the press? Drawing in part on the findings from Chapter 3, the first goal of this chapter is to further identify the dimensions of terrorism that are most likely to increase public worries about the danger. Second, I describe how these dimensions were portrayed in newspaper content over an eight-year period centered around the attacks on 9/11. Finally, I explain how these portrayals were associated with other important news topics, including the use of military force, the protection of civil liberties and the image of the Muslim religion.

In the Conclusion, Chapter 5, I summarize the results of the empirical analyses and discuss the importance of these findings. The theoretical, methodological and substantive contributions of this dissertation are discussed, along with a detailed treatment of the weaknesses of this research and a suggested path for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

The 9/11 Effect: How 9/11 Changed the American Mindset

Introduction

The attacks on 9/11 killed 2,992 people, left a smoldering crash site in the

Pennsylvania countryside, severely damaged one section of the Pentagon and wrought

enormous destruction in New York City. According to a report by the Federal Reserve

Bank of New York, 30 million square feet of office space in lower Manhattan were

demolished (Bram, Orr, and Rapaport 2002). It took six years and eight months to build

the World Trade Center and one hour, forty-two minutes to destroy it (Remains of a day,

2002). The character and magnitude of these events had no precedent in United States

history. For a time, no matter where one lived, the attention of almost all Americans was

brought to bear on the threat of terrorism.

Social scientists have examined the possible effects of 9/11—the perceived

terrorist threat in particular—from a wide range of perspectives. Some assessed its

influence on globalization, foreign trade and international relations (Bahgat, 2003;

Kennedy-Pipe and Welch, 2005; Markey, 2007; Brewer, 2006; Rosecrance and Stein,

2006; Daalder and Lindsay, 2003; Denzin and Giardina, 2007; Jackson and Towle, 2006;

Mandelbaum, 2005; Suder, 2004). Others focused on developments at home, such as the

creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the USA Patriot Act and the level of

security everywhere (Webb, 2007; Northouse, 2006; Gerdes, 2005; Etzioni, 2004). Still

others examined 9/11's effect on American organizations, groups, political processes, the

economy, technological changes and social movements (Nguyen, 2005; Williams, 2006; Farnam, 2005; Enders, 2006; Wiktorowicz, 2004; San Juan, 2007).

Without denying the importance of these approaches, this chapter, in contrast, examines the effects of 9/11 on the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of individuals. I begin by describing the substantial increase in public worries about terrorism after 9/11. Next, I review classic and contemporary theories on the possible effects of these threat perceptions on other social attitudes and behaviors. I then develop a framework for categorizing and analyzing these effects in the context of 9/11. After reviewing a broad array of pre-post 9/11 studies, I conclude that the attacks had a number of substantial, long-lasting effects on the thoughts and feelings of many Americans. This claim is most convincing when one ponders the massive scope and variety of small-to-moderate 9/11 effects, rather than the strength of any one change in the public mindset.

Considering the diversity of these changes and their possible implications, I offer a tentative suggestion that the events of 9/11 functioned as an "organizing force," not unlike an ideological dimension or belief system, which helped people quickly make sense of the complex world and draw conclusions about a number of political and social problems. Whenever possible, an attempt is made to determine the strength and permanence of this organizing force by distinguishing short-term attitudinal and behavioral changes from long-term ones.

The Perceived Threat of Terrorism: Before and After 9/11

Perceived threat has two deeply intertwined components: emotional reactions (concern, worry or fear) and cognitive reactions (risk beliefs) to danger. It is also

important to distinguish between threats to individuals versus collectivities. After 9/11, many people perceived an increased threat to their personal safety and the safety of their family and friends. Given the symbolic nature of the attacks, some people also sensed a threat to their individual or collective identity. Unless otherwise specified, I use the term "perceived threat" loosely to describe the range of these thoughts and feelings.

After previous attacks in the United States, including the first assault on the World Trade Center in February 1993 and the Oklahoma City bombing in April 1995, the threat of terrorism captured the country's attention, but did not become a long-term government priority, an enduring narrative in the media, or a permanent concern for most Americans (Woods, 2007). According to national surveys, the percentage of respondents who were very or somewhat worried about being personally victimized by terrorism peaked at 42 percent after the Oklahoma City attacks, dropped to 35 percent one year later (April 1996) and remained at this level until declining further to 24 percent in April 2000 (see Figure 2).[3]

The response to 9/11 was quite different.[4] With the wreckage still shifting in New York City, 58 percent of Americans said that they were very or somewhat worried about being personally victimized by terrorists. A greater percentage (66 percent) believed that a new attack was very or somewhat likely. Almost half the population believed that "Americans have permanently changed the way they live" (49 percent). Large

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3. Gallup Organization, Terrorism in the United States (accessed online July 18, 2007 at: http://www.galluppoll.com/content/?ci=4909&pg=1); see Kuzma 2000.

4. The Gallup Organization has asked the open question "What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?" since the early twentieth century. In the two decades prior to 9/11, "terrorism" never made the list of America's most important problems (see Lewis 2005). After 9/11, terrorism became a top concern (mentioned by 46 percent of respondents in October 2001) and stayed on the list up until the time writing on this manuscript began (see Gillespie 2001).

percentages reported being less willing to "fly on airplanes" (43 percent), "travel overseas" (45 percent), "go into skyscrapers" (35 percent) and "attend events where there are thousands of people" (30 percent).[5] The attacks also increased personal concerns about "opening mail" and "food safety" (Davis, 2007).

Figure 2: How worried are you that you or someone in your family will become a victim of terrorism -- very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not at all worried?
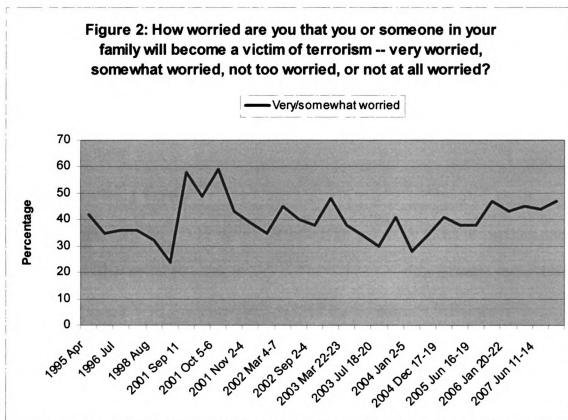
Data from the Gallup Organization (see www.galluppoll.com)

While the intensity of people's emotional and cognitive responses to 9/11 diminished in the years after the attacks, the threat of terrorism did not disappear. In the first three years, rather than declining uniformly, as in the case of the Oklahoma City

5. Gallup Organization, Terrorism in the United States (accessed online July 18, 2007 at: http://www.galluppoll.com/content/?ci=4909&pg=1).

bombings, the percentage of those who were very or somewhat worried fluctuated, falling

23 points by November 2001 only to rise 13 points by February 2003. One year later, the

level of worry assumed a steady upward trend. Between 2005 and 2007, worry levels

exceeded the peak rating after the Oklahoma City bombings. These sustained concerns

may have resulted from the tumultuous events of the time, including the start of the war

in Iraq (March 2003), the Madrid train bombings (March 2004) and the London

bombings (July 2005). In July 2007, 47 percent of Americans were very or somewhat

worried about being personally harmed by terrorists; 40 percent believed that a new

assault was very or somewhat likely.[6]

Effects of Perceived Threat

The next question to address is how these high and stable threat perceptions may

have affected other social attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Over the decades, researchers

from a range of academic disciplines have offered several answers to this question.

According to inter-group conflict theory, higher levels of threat are associated with

increased out-group bashing (Tajfel and Turner 1979), stereotyping and attribution errors

(Brewer 1993). Perceived threat may also activate authoritarian tendencies, such as

greater adherence to conventional values, submissiveness to moral authorities,

identification with powerful figures and rejection of outsiders (Adorno et al. 1950; Doty,

Peterson, and Winter 1991; Duckitt 1989; Feldman 2003).

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6. Gallup Organization, Terrorism in the United States (accessed online July 18, 2007 at: http://www.galluppoll.com/content/?ci=4909&pg=1); see also Moore 2004; Sjoberg 2005. Survey questions that measured "sociotropic threat" (the perceived threat to the United States as opposed to one's self) also showed stability over time. According to a series of nationally representative panel studies, Davis (2007, p. 123) found that the percentage of Americans who were very or somewhat concerned that "the United States might suffer another terrorist attack in the next three months" stayed in a tight range (80 percent to 85 percent) between November 2001 to November 2004.

Other researchers offer different psychological explanations of how people process threat, but make similar predictions about its effects. According to terror management theory (Greenberg et al. 1990), violent attacks, such as those seen on 9/11, heighten people's awareness of "the inevitability and potential finality of death" (Pyszczynski et al. 2006, p. 526). This heightened "mortality salience," in turn, is known to increase authoritarian tendencies and out-group derogation, as discussed above (Greenberg, Solomon, and Pyszczynski, 1997).

In addition to its influence on people's orientations toward outsiders or "deviants," perceived threat also orients people's attitudes toward insiders and themselves. The flipside of inter-group conflict theory holds that threat not only increases out-group derogation, but also in-group favoritism and a desire to protect and affirm one's values and social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel 1982; Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). Perceived threat may reinforce group connectedness, inspire people to see themselves as part of a collective and encourage them to "rally around the flag" (Mueller 1970; Olivas-Luján, Harzing, and McCoy 2004; Landau et al. 2004). An extreme external danger may even operate as a "galvanizing crisis" that generates increased levels of social capital and civic engagement (Putnam 2000).

In summary, people respond to perceived threats by adopting a number of defensive positions, including an increased readiness to commit or condone violence, assert the value and boundaries of their collective identities and take steps to rethink their lives as something more permanent and impenetrable. In the context of 9/11, these general orientations, or "defense mechanisms," may be relevant to a wide range of specific policy-relevant attitudes.

Here lies the subject of inquiry of this review. Did the events of 9/11 have a brief effect on a limited number of public views, or did it produce numerous, long-term changes in the way Americans think and feel? To the extent that the latter can be supported empirically, I suggest that theorizing on the public's response to 9/11 should be expanded beyond the defense-mechanism perspective to include a new conceptualization of perceived threat as an "organizing force," not unlike an ideology or belief system, that helps people understand their political and social worlds.

Methods of Studying 9/11 Effects

Given the extraordinary nature of the attacks and the subsequent shifts in U.S. policies, there has been a big demand for information about the public's response to 9/11. What is more, many researchers saw 9/11 as a unique, if tragic, window of opportunity. It served as a natural experiment for studying a number of important social issues. As a result, a flood of social scientific research poured out of universities and other research centers in the years following the attacks. This review focuses on the empirical findings published between 9/11 and the completion of this text in early 2008.

In order to measure a change in attitudes or behavior, researchers must collect data that are relevant to at least two points in time. The studies in this review produced such data using three different research designs: pre-post, retrospective and experimental studies. Researchers using pre-post studies collected comparable data from both before and after 9/11. Retrospective studies were conducted in the post-9/11 period and relied on subjects to self-report how their views had changed over time. Experimental researchers attempted to simulate the events of 9/11 (or prime theoretically equivalent psychological

reactions) and examined the effects of "9/11" in a controlled environment. While I consider studies based on all three designs as supporting evidence, this review focuses on pre-post research, the most "naturalistic" empirical representation of 9/11 effects.

Nationally representative, cross-sectional surveys conducted by major polling firms at multiple time periods before and after the attacks (using identical or comparable questions) were the most abundant sources of pre-post research on these effects. Much of this information has been reviewed in scholarly books and journals. Almost all of these reviews, however, consist of in-depth discussions on a particular set of post-9/11 changes. This review, in contrast, examines a larger range of 9/11 effects, even if the details offered on each case must be abbreviated.

In addition to the national polls, there were other important sources of empirical data. In many cases, independent survey and experimental researchers working in the pre-9/11 period saw the attacks as a sort of natural experiment and decided, if unexpectedly, to repeat their studies in the post-9/11 period to assess the possible changes in their results. Although their samples were sometimes less representative (based on college undergraduates, for example), the diversity of their topics and the strength of their findings greatly expand our understanding of 9/11 effects.

Quantitative content analysis was also used in creative ways to produce interesting results. Years after the events, this method is now one of our most reliable instruments for producing pre-post data. Any analysis of 9/11 effects that relies only on national polls and disregards the findings produced by independent pollsters, experimental researchers and content analysts will inevitably understate the scope and complexity of America's reaction to 9/11.

Four Changes: An Analytical Framework

In response to the horrifying images of 9/11 that were aired and re-aired by countless media, many people experienced severe psychological distress. The direct impact of the attacks on people's mental and physical health represents the first of four types of 9/11 effects.

The other three categories include less immediate effects. As discussed, perceived threat has the power to bring us together (reinforce in-group solidarity) and tear us apart (strengthen animosity toward out-groups). The manifestations of the first category have been broken into two subcategories: "rally effects" and "pro-social" tendencies. Rally effects (Mueller 1970) include increased levels of presidential approval, government trust and patriotic sentiment. Given the pertinence of these changes to partisan politics, I separated them from the second subcategory, pro-social tendencies, the normative value of which is less controversial. Pro-social tendencies include helping behavior, social trust, civic engagement and collectivism.

In addition to rally effects and pro-social tendencies, Americans also showed a greater willingness to repress, censor and punish other people and groups after 9/11. I refer to these changes as "authoritarian tendencies."

Effects of 9/11 on Mental and Physical Health

In the aftermath of 9/11, some experts warned that a vast number of Americans would suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Gaffney 2006). Although such warnings overestimated actual levels of psychological distress after 9/11, numerous studies showed that the short-term impact was not trivial. New York City residents were

found to be particularly susceptible to psychological harms (Schlenger et al. 2002). Roughly 8 percent of Manhattan residents and 20 percent of those living near the World Trade Center suffered from PTSD (Galea et al. 2002; Piotrkowski 2002). Public health officials reported that people's mental health needs in the state of New York increased significantly after 9/11 (Herman et al. 2002).

The heightened stress was also shown to increase the number of heart attacks, as well as the use of cigarettes and alcohol (Allegra et al. 2005; Vlahov et al. 2004; Richman et al. 2004; Cardenas 2003). Holman et al. (2008) found that stress responses to 9/11 were associated with a significant increase in cardiovascular ailments over a three-year period following the attacks, even after controlling for pre-9/11 health status factors and a number of demographic variables.

Parents and health officials were particularly concerned about the effects of 9/11 on children (Gaffney 2006). A study of New York City public school students found an association between students' exposure to the 9/11 events and mental disorders, including agoraphobia, separation anxiety and PTSD (Hoven et al. 2005). Other studies on New York City youth supported these findings (Agronick et al. 2007; Aber et al. 2004; Mowder et al. 2006).[7]

Although PTSD was shown to be more prevalent in New York City than elsewhere (Schlenger et al. 2002; Ford et al. 2003), several studies found that 9/11 had at least some effect on the psychological wellbeing of people living throughout the country.

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7. A number of other populations were shown to be particularly vulnerable to psychological trauma as a result of 9/11, including people with previous psychiatric illnesses (Franklin et al. 2002; Silver et al. 2002), people who had been victims of crimes or other distressing events (Latino et al. 2006; Saylor et al. 2006), refugees who had been traumatized in their native countries (Kinzie et al. 2002; Hinton et al. 2007), people with pessimistic outlooks (Ai et al. 2006) and people suffering from depression (Moric et al. 2007).

Based on a nationally representative sample, 44 percent of adults and 35 percent of children reported one or more substantial symptoms of stress due to 9/11, which included "feeling very upset," having "disturbing thoughts," "trouble falling asleep" or "angry outbursts" (Schuster et al. 2001). Other national studies confirmed these results (Silver et al. 2002).[8]

Mental health researchers also showed, however, that the various symptoms of psychological harm diminished substantially over time, returning to near pre-9/11 levels in six months or less (Stein et al. 2004; Silver et al. 2002). Ford et al. (2003), for instance, found that reported sadness returned to the baseline within four to six weeks. In sum, a great body of research demonstrated that the effects of 9/11 on physical and mental health in America were diverse and substantial, but short-lived.

Nevertheless, even if the overt symptoms of psychological harm were transitory, social scientists should bear in mind that millions of Americans now store these traumatic events and affective experiences in their memories. When recalled, these thoughts and feelings may have renewed affects on mental health, as well as influence other attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.

Rally Effects

Presidential Approval

One of the most noticeable ways in which Americans pulled together after 9/11 was by supporting their local and national leaders. As shown in Figure 3, President

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8. Based on a national cross-sectional study with comparison groups before and after 9/11, Ford et al. (2003) showed that the percentage of young adults who reported "sadness at least some of the time in the past 7 days" increased significantly for both males and females; female respondents experienced a significant increase in psychological distress.

George W. Bush's approval rating increased dramatically following the attacks, rising from the mid 50s in the weeks before 9/11 to a "record high" rating of 90 percent on September 21-22, 2001 (Gallup 2003, p. 15). Other polls showed that the swell of support for the president cut across party lines, even if it was higher among Republicans (96 percent) and Independents (76 percent) than among Democrats (66 points) (Gaines 2002).[9] Members of Bush's cabinet, the U.S. Congress, as well as some local leaders, such as the former Mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani, also received relatively strong increases in favorability after 9/11 (Gallup Organization 2001a).

Figure 3: George W. Bush's Job Approval Ratings
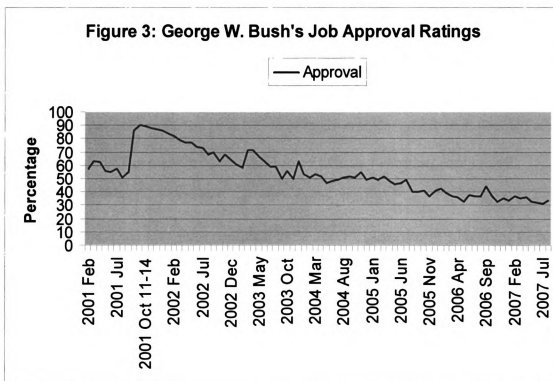
Data from the Gallup Organization (see www.galluppoll.com)

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9. The rally also included different racial and ethnic groups. As Smelser (2004, p. 268) noted, "black Americans, who had given President Bush only 10 percent of their votes less than a year earlier, responded in public opinion polls that 75 percent were now supportive of him."

As shown in Figure 3, Bush's approval rating did not return to its pre-9/11 level for roughly two years or more (Ladd 2007). A number of researchers were surprised by the staying power of this rally (Eichenberg, Stoll, and Lebo 2006). For instance, Gaines (2002, p. 531) referred to it as "exceptional in magnitude and duration," while Collins (2004, p. 54) called it "unusually prolonged." While the ratings of other major figures returned to baseline levels relatively quickly, Bush's post-9/11 boost held at 50 percent or higher well into 2005, which, according to some observers, accounted for his victory in the 2004 presidential election (Landau et al. 2004; Gailliot, Schmeichel, and Baumeister 2006; Abramson et al. 2007).

Trust in Government

Americans also united in support of the United States government as a whole. According to national polls, the public's "trust in government" more than doubled after 9/11, rising from 29 percent in March 2001 to 64 percent in late September 2001 (Chanley 2002; Putnam 2002; Skocpol 2002; Smith, Rasinski, and Toce 2001). The number of Americans who were confident in the federal government's handling of both international and domestic problems rose by 15 percent and 17 percent, respectively.[10]

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10. The Gallup Organization asked respondents, "How much trust and confidence do you have in our federal government in Washington when it comes to handling ['international problems' / 'domestic problems'] -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?" In the September 7-10, 2001 survey, 68 percent of respondents said a great deal or a fair amount on international problems, 60 percent on domestic problems. These numbers rose to 83 percent and 77 percent, respectively, in the October 11-14 survey (Gallup Organization, Gallup's Pulse of Democracy (accessed online August 17, 2007 at: http://www.galluppoll.com/content/default.aspx?ci=27286&pg=1).

Ford et al. (2003) found that the elevated trust in government extended to the state and local levels as well.[11]

While the post-9/11 increases in public trust and confidence in government were significant and remained high for three to five months, levels of trust faded faster than presidential approval, returning to pre-9/11 levels in about one year (Brewer, Aday, and Gross 2003, 2005; Hetherington and Nelson 2003; Rasinski et al. 2002; Burke 2005; Perrin and Smolek 2007).

Patriotism

The outpouring of support for individual leaders and government institutions coincided with a rise in national pride, along with various patriotic feelings, rituals and acts (Moskalenko, Clark, and Rozin 2006). There were dramatic increases in the percentage of people who reported being "very proud" of America for its advancements in "science and technology" (an increase of 26 percent), the "armed forces" (32 percent), "American history" (21 percent), "economic achievements" (32 percent) and "the way democracy works" (34 percent) (Smith, Rasinski, and Toce 2001). These elevated levels of pride were resilient for one year, if not longer (Rasinski et al. 2002).

According to at least two national surveys, a great majority of Americans (74 percent) said that they displayed an American flag on their home, car or person as a result of 9/11 (Skitka 2005; Moore 2003). Flag display was equally prevalent in all regions of

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11. Based on data collected in 23 focus groups, Greenberg (2001) suggested that 9/11 stimulated public preferences for a greater government role in society. Among other things, he found that people wanted to delay the Bush Administration's proposed tax cuts in order to "fund Social Security, rebuild after the terrorist attacks, help the unemployed, and increase support for education" (Greenberg 2001, p. 26). Greenberg, however, did not determine whether this attitude change was long-lasting. Data collection took place within the first two months after 9/11, which only represents the public's immediate reaction.

the country, though less so among blacks, as well as among younger and more educated people (Skitka 2005). A study by Collins (2004) confirmed the high incidence of flag display after 9/11 with direct measures of this behavior.[12]

Figure 4: Presidential Approval and Government Trust Before and After 9/11
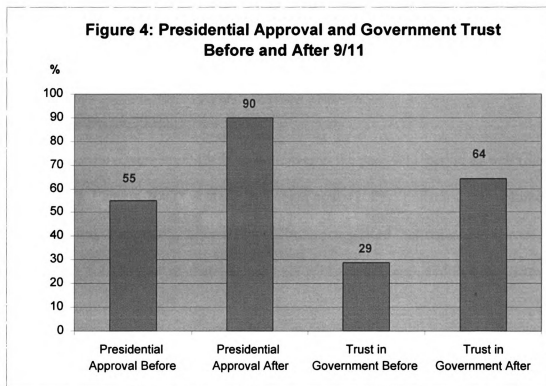
See footnote for notes on the source of this data.[13]

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12. Collins also identified four distinct stages of flag display and other patriotic gestures: "(1) an initial, few days of shock and idiosyncratic individual reactions to attack; (2) one to two weeks of establishing standardized displays of solidarity symbols; (3) two to three months of high solidarity plateau; and (4) gradual decline toward normalcy in six to nine months" (Collins 2004, p. 53).

13. Presidential approval rating data are from the Gallup Organization (percentage who "approved" of George W. Bush's work as president; polls conducted in early September 2001 and September 21-22, 2001). Trust in government data are from *Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post* Polls (percentage who "trust the government in Washington to do what is right"; polls conducted in March 2001 and September 25-27, 2001).

Pro-social Tendencies

Helping Behavior

Americans also rallied around each other after 9/11. According to a survey of 3,512 residents of Connecticut, New Jersey and New York, 50 percent of the respondents attended a funeral or memorial service in the wake of the attacks (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2002). Cash and other gifts, estimated to be worth $1.4 billion, were donated to the victims of 9/11 and their families (9/11 by the Numbers 2002; Independent Sector 2001).

Americans were more likely to volunteer in the post-9/11 period as well (Skocpol 2002, p. 537; Putnam 2002). A study by Penner et al. (2005) confirmed that volunteering rates increased dramatically after 9/11 and further suggested that volunteering rose significantly for all types of charities, not only 9/11-related ones, and that the increase lasted about three weeks.[14]

Other studies showed that after 9/11 people were more likely to perform altruistic behavior (Yum and Schenck-Hamlin 2005) and show kindness, love or friendship toward others (Mikulincer, Florian, and Hirschberger 2003; Peterson and Seligman 2003). There was also a slight increase (4 percent) in the percentage of Americans who believed that "There is much goodness in the world which hints at God's goodness" (Smith, Rasinski, and Toce 2001).

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14. Putnam (2002) also found that volunteering lasted around three weeks. However, according to a two-wave panel study conducted right after 9/11 and then in March-April 2002, 39 percent of respondents indicated that they had done some volunteer work 'in the past month' at both time periods, indicating that volunteer rates may have remained steady for up to six months (Traugott et al. 2002).

Social Trust

According to national surveys, the number of respondents who thought that "most people are helpful" and that "most people try to be fair" rose by 21 percent and 12 percent, respectively (Smith, Rasinski, and Toce 2001). A study by Putnam (2002) showed similar increases in various forms of "social trust," including trust in "people running my community" (8 percent increase), "neighbors" (7 percent), "local news media" (7 percent) and "friends" (8 percent). Americans were also more confident that their fellow community members would cooperate in collective actions, such as efforts to conserve energy or water (Putnam 2002).

While the increased level of social trust was shown to remain steady for several months (Rasinski et al. 2002; Traugott et al. 2002; Burke 2005), there was a gradual return to pre-9/11 levels after roughly one year (Etzioni and Mead 2003; Gross, Aday, and Brewer 2004; Brewer, Aday, and Gross 2005).

Civic Engagement and Collectivism

The outpouring of support for the president, government and one's fellow citizens led some researchers to suppose that 9/11 would stimulate a new era of civic engagement and citizen action, as seen in public responses to major conflicts throughout history, such as the American revolutionary struggle and World War II. In fact, only one year before the attacks, Putnam (2000) predicted that such a civic revitalization could be stimulated by a serious national crisis, such as war or natural disaster. After the attacks, Sander and Putnam (2002) reported that 9/11 had indeed "dramatically led us to rediscover friends, neighbors, public institutions, and a shared fate."

While Putnam's pre-post 9/11 study (2002) confirmed the increases in government trust, social trust and other pro-social tendencies discussed above, it also conceded that these attitudinal changes did not always result in behavioral changes. The events of 9/11 did not, for instance, increase church attendance or membership levels in community organizations and clubs. After 9/11, Americans were actually slightly less likely to have friends over to visit and more likely to watch television (Putnam 2002). Ford et al. (2003) also found no significant pre-post 9/11 differences in people's contact with friends.

Using Putnam's data, Skocpol (2002) made this point even stronger, showing that the average net increase in "civic attitudes" was 15 percent, while the average net increase in "civic behavior" was only 4 percent. Drawing on panel data collected roughly a month after 9/11 and again five months later, Schmierbach, Boyle and McLeod (2005, p. 341) argued that the "civic surge" after 9/11 had been "temporary and superficial."

Other measures of civic engagement place the "resurgence" further in question. As Althaus (2002) suggested, if Americans were more involved in civic life after 9/11, they did not show it by paying more attention to current events. For instance, judging by the size of the TV news audience, the honeymoon of civic revitalization lasted less than one week.[15] A similar trend was seen in newspaper readership. In fact, according to some estimates, readership actually declined slightly in the first six months after the attacks

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15. After the attacks, the size of the evening news audience more than doubled, from 13 percent of American adults in early September 2001 to more than 26 percent in the first five days following 9/11. Nielsen Media Research reported that 79.5 million people watched the news on the night of the attacks; to put this number in perspective, roughly the same number of viewers watched the January 2001 Super Bowl (De Moraes 2001). Within one week, however, the evening news audience returned to near pre-9/11 levels (15 percent) and never rose more than 1.5 percent in the next seven months (Althaus 2002).

(Althaus 2002, p. 519).[16] However, in spite of the lackluster increases in news consumption, people did report being more "interested" in various news stories and may have managed to learn more about national and international issues, particularly those related to 9/11 (Prior 2002; German Marshall Fund 2002).[17]

Akin to civic engagement is the idea of collectivism. Some researchers suggested that 9/11 would soften the individualism of many Americans and encourage them to see themselves as part of a common U.S. collective (Greenberg 2001). This conventional wisdom, however, was not confirmed by empirical research. A study based on surveys conducted before and after 9/11 (March and October 2001) found that the level of "collectivism" was slightly lower in the post-9/11 period (Olivas-Lujan, Harzing, and McCoy 2004). The same study found that "cosmopolitanism" (a value orientation that suggests that all human beings belong to a single community) declined significantly between March 2001 and October 2001 and stayed at the same level until at least April 2002. These findings, as discussed below, may reflect the relative strength of other, contradictory effects of 9/11 that led people to circumscribe their social identities and limit their collectivistic orientations.

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16. Other studies showed that any increase in newspaper readership after 9/11 was quite modest—3 percent, according to Putnam (2002).

17. In the wake of the attacks, for instance, 90 percent of Americans knew which type of anthrax is more difficult to treat ("the kind that is inhaled into the lungs," not "the kind that appears on the skin"). Related to the "war on terror," 85 percent of respondents correctly answered "Pakistan" when asked "which of the following countries shares a border with Afghanistan (Russia/Pakistan/Iraq/ Kazakhstan)" (Prior 2002, p. 525). Respondents did much worse, however, on open-ended knowledge questions (only 34 percent could name the current Secretary of Defense and only 2 percent knew the name of the Prime Minister of Canada) and questions not directly related to 9/11 (responding to a question with two alternatives, only about one half knew that the Republicans, not the Democrats, held the majority of members in House of Representative in Washington).

Authoritarian Tendencies

If numerous studies explored rally effects and pro-social tendencies after 9/11, an even greater share examined the public's increased desire for security and a new harshness in the American mindset. I use the term "authoritarian tendencies" here to loosely categorize a variety of social psychological changes after 9/11, including general shifts in culture and values, as well as specific changes in public opinion, such as greater support for military actions and less favorable attitudes toward ethnic minorities and immigrants.

Culture and Values

Changes in culture and values are generally thought to occur gradually. However, some researchers have argued that large-scale, traumatic events can cause sudden shifts in values and cultural orientations (Ladd and Cairns 1996; Raviv et al. 2000). For example, the Japanese and German cultures were thought to have shifted rather quickly in the aftermath of World War II toward a rejection of dictatorship and militarism.

Several post-9/11 studies greatly advanced this line of thinking. Based on a content analysis of letters to the editor—a sort of mass-mediated sphere of political culture—Perrin (2005) showed that the number of "authoritarian" (Adorno et al. 1950) cultural scripts in U.S. newspapers increased after 9/11. The letters revealed a greater willingness to punish others who violated conventional values, a greater preoccupation with power and toughness and a greater certainty that the world was a dangerous place.

National polls provided only modest support for these findings. For instance, there were small to moderate increases in the percentage of Americans who believed that

the "world is filled with evil and sin" (3 percent) and "human nature is fundamentally perverse" (9 percent) (Smith, Rasinski, and Toce 2001).

A shift in values was also discovered in studies on the electorate's evaluation of political candidates. After 9/11, voters grew more receptive to leaders who emphasized the greatness of the nation, proclaimed their resolve to fight terrorism and win a victory over "evil" (Pyszczynski, Greenberg and Solomon 2003; Cohen et al. 2004; Gaines 2002). In an experimental study, Landau et al. (2004) showed that reminding subjects about the events of 9/11 increased their support for Bush and decreased their support for presidential candidate John Kerry.[18] This finding suggested that Bush's patriotic rhetoric and emphasis on "ridding the world of evil" may have given him an advantage with voters in the 2004 presidential election (see also Gailliot, Schmeichel, and Baumeister 2006; Gordijn and Stapel 2006; Abramson et al. 2007).

Studies also found that the percentage of Americans who thought that "a woman president would do a better job" dropped from 25 percent in January 2000 to 15 percent in September 2003 (Falk and Kenski 2006). Lawless (2004) uncovered a similar pre-post 9/11 trend using several different survey questions related to women and leadership. The permanence of this trend, however, remains unclear.

Among other cultural shifts, "safety, order and stability in society" were valued more after than before 9/11, while the need for "excitement, novelty and a challenge in life" declined significantly following the attacks (Verkasalo, Goodwin, and Bezmenova

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18. The dependent variable (support for either Bush or Kerry) was based on a composite index that included four survey questions, including one that asked the subjects about their intention to vote for the given candidate in the 2004 presidential election. The increased appeal of Bush, and not Kerry, was "not at all limited to conservative individuals and was not the result of an increase in political conservativism" (Landau et al. 2004, p. 1146). The data collection in the Landau et al. study (2004) was conducted between October 2003 and May 2004, indicating that the perceived threat of terrorism may have enduring effects on political attitudes.

2006; see Schwartz, Bardi, and Bianchi 2000). These changes held for roughly five months before returning to near pre-9/11 levels.[19]

There was also a shift in the way Americans valued equality. In the context of organizations, people tended to perceive the difference in power between employees and bosses as more acceptable after 9/11—a tendency that lasted at least six months (Olivas-Lujan, Harzing, and McCoy 2004).[20] Several other studies offered interesting and important insights on 9/11's effect on American culture and values, authoritarian values in particular, though few of them offered pre-post 9/11 data to support their assumptions (Skitka, Bauman, and Mullen 2004; Pyszczynski et al. 2006; Hastings and Shaffer 2005; Crowson, Debacker, and Thoma 2006; Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal 2006).

Military Actions

Several specific changes in public opinion paralleled these general shifts in values. The most apparent among them was the country's nearly unanimous call for military reprisals.[21] Public approval of using "military action against terrorism" hovered

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19. It should be noted that the study by Verkasalo, Goodwin, and Bezmenova (2006) was based on respondents from Finland. On one hand, these results do not directly inform our understanding of 9/11 effects on America. On the other hand, as the authors contend, the study "suggests that even within a relatively 'remote' culture such as Finland, large-scale terrorist attacks may have a significant impact on individual values" (p. 158).

20. According to a study that collected data before 9/11 (March 2001) and at two time points after the attacks (October 2001 and April 2002), this change was significant, substantial and persistent (Olivas-Lujan, Harzing, and McCoy 2004). Several questions were used to measure "acceptance of hierarchy" in organizations; the items that showed the greatest increases in support were: "A hierarchy of authority is the best form of organization" and "The hierarchy of groups in a society should remain consistent over time" (Olivas-Lujan, Harzing, and McCoy 2004, p. 219).

21. Three days after 9/11, the U.S. Congress approved a resolution authorizing the president to take military action. This decision was unanimous in the Senate. Among the 420 representatives in the House, there was only one dissenting voice. A few weeks later, when the bombs began dropping in Afghanistan, a special joint statement was issued by a bipartisan group of Republican and Democratic leaders who commended Bush for his decision and assured him that "We stand united with the president and with our troops." One year later, congressional support for the administration's "solution" persisted as Congress

around 90 percent for no less than six months after the attacks (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002). According to a Gallup poll conducted in November 2001, 62 percent of Americans advocated the start of a "long-term war" and 31 percent of respondents backed "the punishment of specific terrorists"; only 5 percent said that the U.S. "should not take military actions" (Gallup Organization 2001b). A great majority of Americans (65-71 percent) approved a military response even if it resulted in "civilian causalities" and the use of "ground troops" (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002).

Figure 5: Support for War in Iraq and Harsh Anti-Terrorism Tactics
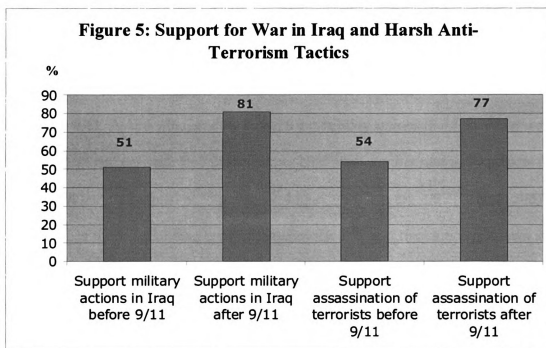
Notes: Iraq data from Everts and Isernia, 2002; before = February 2001, after = October 2001. Assassination data from Huddy, Khatib and Capelos, 2002; before = late 1998; after = October 2001.

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authorized the war in Iraq (the Senate by a vote of 77 to 23 and the House, 296 to 133). The president responded to the vote by declaring that "America speaks with one voice."

Although a call to war had followed previous terrorist attacks, 9/11 proved to be a special case. Responding to comparable survey questions, 60 percent of the public supported a military response to the bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998, while 80 percent supported a military response to 9/11 (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002).

National pollsters also found broad public support for war in the specific cases of Afghanistan and Iraq. Between September 11, 2001 and March 2002, approval of the war in Afghanistan ranged from 65 percent to 77 percent, even when questions mentioned military operations on the ground and potential causalities of American troops and innocent civilians (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002). Other sources of public opinion data showed that a wide majority of Americans backed the Afghan war for at least five years after 9/11. Asked whether they thought the military actions in Afghanistan were a "mistake," 89 percent said "no" in November 2001; this number rose to 93 percent in January 2002 and remained at 70 percent or higher until August 2007 (Carroll, 2007a).

Given the longstanding conflict between the U.S. and Iraq, much is known about public attitudes on this issue. In the decade prior to 9/11, aside from a few, brief spikes in approval, only slight majorities of Americans supported war with Iraq (Everts and Isernia 2005).[22] In February 2001, just seven months before the attacks, only 52 percent of Americans were in favor military actions. One month after 9/11, however, the number jumped to 81 percent. Approval ratings fluctuated in the next months and years, but remained in the high 60s and 70s until June 2004, when it dropped to 56 percent, still four points above the pre-9/11 level (Everts and Isernia 2002).

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22. These ratings were based on general polling questions with dichotomous alternatives, such as "should" or "should not," "favor" or "oppose" and so forth.

The attacks on 9/11 also brought an increase in public support for the assassination of terrorist leaders. Based on roughly comparable survey questions, the number of Americans who approved the assassination of "known terrorists" or "individual terrorist leaders" rose from 54 percent in late 1998 to 77 percent in October 2001 (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002; German Marshall Fund 2002).

In addition to the increased support for harsh anti-terrorism tactics and the use of military force in the "war on terror," Americans also shifted their views on U.S. defense spending. During much of the 1980s and 1990s, a plurality of Americans thought that "too much" was being spent on defense. After 9/11—and for the next five years—a plurality believed that the government was spending "about the right amount" (Carroll 2007b). It was not until February 2007 that public sentiment shifted again, returning to the notion that "too much" was being spent. Meanwhile, between 2001 and 2003, U.S. defense expenditures increased by 26 percent from $335.9 billion to $422.5 billion (in constant 2005 dollars) (Pena 2005). By 2007, the defense budget reached $481.4 billion, levels not seen since the Reagan-era buildup of the 1980s (Tyson 2007; Rosenberg 2006). Between 2001 and 2007 an additional $661 billion was spent on supplemental emergency funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Civil Liberties, Privacy and Security

Another important 9/11 effect surfaced as policymakers struggled to balance the country's security concerns with the need to preserve the rights and liberties of the American people. In October 2001, the Bush Administration, led by Attorney General John Ashcroft, introduced the USA Patriot Act, which passed in the Senate by a vote of

98 to 1 and by 357 to 66 in the House. Although the legislation enjoyed strong presidential and congressional support and was renewed by Congress in March 2006, the bill has generated a great deal of controversy among scholars, civil rights advocates and ordinary people.[23]

As a result, much research was conducted to gauge public attitudes toward civil liberties after 9/11. While less data is available from the pre-9/11 period, a clear pre-post comparison can be made. The most common national polling question asked Americans about their willingness to "give up some civil liberties" in order to "curb terrorism." Two variants of this general tradeoff question measured the public's willingness to give up "personal freedoms" or "privacy" to fight terrorism. Each of these tradeoff measures increased considerably after 9/11.

Although a similar trend was seen in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, the post-9/11 change was much greater. Willingness to make the civil-liberties tradeoff stood at 49 percent after the bombing in Oklahoma. Two years later, as the salience of terrorism diminished, the indicator dropped to 29 percent. After 9/11, public willingness to trade their liberties for security reached 69 percent (or even higher according to some national polls) (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002; see Huddy et al. 2005; Greenberg, Craighill, and Greenberg 2004).[24] Significant increases were seen in the public's response to the "security-freedoms" tradeoff and the "security-privacy" tradeoff

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23. Three of the act's provisions proved to be particularly contentious: one allowed law-enforcement agencies to search private residences without informing the owners (known as "sneak-and-peak" searches); the second gave federal authorities the right to access the library and bookstore records of anyone connected to a terrorism investigation; and the third permitted the detention and deportation of non-citizens without due process. For more about the Patriot Act, see Cole and Dempsey 2006; Chesney 2005.

24. This figure (69 percent) represents an average across six national polls that used comparable questions; the findings from the individual polls included 74, 61, 55, 63, 79 and 79 percent (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002).

(Best, Krueger, and Ladewig 2006). The public also became less "concerned" that the government's measures to combat terrorism would negatively affect civil liberties; such concern dropped from 65 percent before 9/11 to 56 percent after it (Best, Krueger, and Ladewig 2006).

The public's elevated tradeoff willingness was quite stable over time, even if it gradually decreased. For instance, as late as July 2005, the public's willingness to make the civil-liberties tradeoff stood at 11 percent above the pre-9/11 level (29 percent in April 1997 versus 40 percent in July 2005) (Best, Krueger, and Ladewig 2006).[25] "Concern" about the effects of anti-terrorism measures on civil liberties remained below the pre-9/11 levels through February 2006 (Best, Krueger, and Ladewig 2006).

Based on a series of nationally representative panel surveys, Davis (2007) provided further evidence that the public's tradeoff willingness remained mostly stable over time. Public responses on seven of Davis' nine civil-liberties tradeoff measures changed by no more than 5 percent over a three year period. The public's views on such matters as requiring people to carry a national identity card at all times, racial profiling, warrant-less search and seizures, wiretapping and making it a crime to belong to any organization that supports terrorism remained quite high and stable from November 2001 to November 2004 (Davis, 2007, 119). The two measures that showed an "exception"— one regarding the indefinite imprisonment of non-citizen terror suspects and the other on whether teachers should be allowed to criticize the government—shifted in the pro-civil liberties direction by only 10 percent and 15 percent, respectively. Further evidence on

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25. Support for the personal-freedoms tradeoff dropped only 6 percent in the eight months after the attacks and held just above the pre-9/11 level, fluctuating between 61 and 64 percent, until May 2006 (Best, Krueger, and Ladewig 2006).

the stability of the public's tradeoff willingness was provided by Greenberg, Craighill and Greenberg (2004).

Arabs and Muslims

The events of 9/11 had a number of short and long-term effects on Arabs and Muslims living in the United States. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the number of hate crimes against Muslims rose substantially from 33 in 2000 to 546 in 2001 (FBI Hate Crime Statistics 2000-2006).[26] During the immediate backlash, there were four murders, 49 assaults and 109 attacks on Mosques (Human Rights Watch 2002). Another source estimated the number of violent anti-Arab and anti-Muslim actions in the weeks following 9/11 at 520 (American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee 2001). In 2002, according to the FBI, anti-Islamic hate crime dropped considerably to 170 occurrences, but remained well above the pre-9/11 level for at least the next four years. There were 191 offenses in 2006, exceeding the pre-9/11 level by six times (FBI Hate Crime Statistics 2000-2006).

In spite of the Administration's efforts to curb these negative impulses and sentiments, according to numerous national surveys compiled and analyzed by Panagopoulos (2006), the image of Arabs and Muslims in the public eye declined considerably in the years after 9/11. For instance, in January 2002, 14 percent of Americans thought that "mainstream Islam encourages violence against non-Muslims"; roughly two years later the percentage of Americans holding this belief had more than

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26. For FBI hate crime statistics, see the online source: http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm#hate; for a study of hate crime in the wake of 9/11, see Byers and Jones 2007.

doubled (34 percent). This figure remained stable until the latest available survey in March 2006 (33 percent).

According to a poll conducted in June 2002, a similar proportion of Americans (39 percent) believed that "the attacks on America represent the true teachings of Islam." Although the trends seen in other related polls varied somewhat, the public's self-reported animosity toward Arabs and Muslims was remarkably high in the years following 9/11, especially for a country that prides itself on racial and religious tolerance (Yum and Schenck-Hamlin 2005).

Immigration

Public attitudes toward immigrants and immigration also hardened after 9/11. According to national polls, the percentage of Americans who believed that "immigration should be decreased" rose from 41 percent in June 2001 to 58 percent in October 2001.[27] This seventeen point backlash is significant, given the steadiness of this indicator over the two years prior to the attacks.[28] Other polling questions produced similar results. The percentage of Americans who thought that "immigration is a bad thing for this country" increased from 31 percent in June 2001 to 42 percent in October of the same year.[29] Both indicators remained above the pre-9/11 level until June 2006, after which both fell below this level. Data from multiple polling firms and individual researchers illustrate a similar

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27. Gallup Organization, Gallup's Pulse of Democracy: Immigration, accessed online on October 5, 2007 at www.galluppoll.com.

28. The indicator dropped six points between February 1999 and September 2000, rose five points in March 2001 and dropped again by only two points in June 2001 (Gallup Organization, Gallup's Pulse of Democracy: Immigration, accessed online on October 5, 2007 at www.galluppoll.com).

29. Gallup Organization, Gallup's Pulse of Democracy: Immigration, accessed online on October 5, 2007 at www.galluppoll.com.

mild-to-medium backlash against immigration in the post-9/11 period (Pew Research

Center 2006; Newport 2007; Jones 2007; Moore 2002; Panagopoulos 2006; Esses,

Dovidio, and Hodson 2002; Nagel 2002).

Summary of 9/11 Effects

This review covered four changes in the public mindset and behavior after 9/11.

First, numerous empirical studies showed that the attacks had a significant effect on the

public's psychological wellbeing, particularly in people living closest to New York City,

as well as children and those who had experienced traumatic events in the past. Although

most of the overt symptoms of PTSD and other psychological harms declined

substantially within six months of the attacks, social scientists should bear in mind the

possible long-term and latent effects of this trauma as they continue unpacking the social

psychological effects of 9/11.

Second, the events of 9/11 spurred a strong rally effect. In the immediate

aftermath, President George W. Bush received a record-high approval rating of 90

percent, a significant boost in popularity that flooded the Bush Administration with

political capital. Although rally effects are nothing new to political scientists and other

researchers, many observers saw the post-9/11 rally around the president as unique in

both its strength and longevity. The president's rating remained elevated for roughly two

years. Other rally effects included increased levels of public trust in local, state and

federal governments and a rise in various patriotic feelings, rituals and acts. The

empirical measures of these two variables, however, returned to pre-9/11 levels within a

shorter time frame of about nine months to one year.

Third, Americans, though to a lesser extent, also rallied around each other after the attacks. In the first weeks after 9/11, they showed increased kindness and support for their friends, families and fellow citizens. The public attended countless funerals and memorial services for the 9/11 victims, donated more money to charities and served as volunteers more often. For roughly one year, people also reported that they trusted each other more and felt greater confidence in their communities as sources of support and cooperation.

Although the evidence is mixed, 9/11 also brought a brief renewal in the public's civic engagement. People reported being more interested in politics and more connected to their communities. There were also slight increases in various "civic behaviors," such as attending political meetings and reading newspapers. Overall, however, these changes were the weakest and least permanent. Even the most optimistic data estimated the longevity of these effects at no more than three to six months.

A loose category, labeled here as authoritarian tendencies, represents the fourth and also one of the most prominent 9/11 effects. Researchers working in the aftermath of 9/11 discovered general shifts in American values, as well as specific manifestations of these effects in public opinion. Americans showed a greater willingness to punish those who violate conventional values and were more attracted to leaders who displayed power, toughness and an iron determination to confront the enemy. The public also placed a greater emphasis on the value of security, while tempering their need for novelty and innovation and yielding to hierarchical authority.

Preoccupied with the threat of terrorism, Americans stood behind their leaders and supported the military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the escalation in

defense spending. Backing for the war in Iraq did not return to pre-9/11 levels until June 2004, but even then it enjoyed a favorable rating from a majority of Americans. After 9/11, harsh anti-terrorism tactics, such as torture and assassination, as well as more aggressive law-enforcement procedures to fight terrorism no longer seemed as unacceptable to many people. While popular support for the USA Patriot Act diminished over time, the public's willingness to make the civil-liberties-security tradeoff stood at 11 percent above the pre-9/11 level as late as July 2005.

After a brief honeymoon of favorable sentiments toward Arabs and Muslims, American attitudes toward these groups cooled uniformly. The number of people who accepted negative stereotypes of "mainstream Islam" doubled in the first four years after the attacks. This growing intolerance also involved public views on immigration. The percentage of Americans who believed immigration was a "bad thing" and "should be reduced" remained above the pre-9/11 level until June 2006.

Discussion

In the aftermath of 9/11, many editorialists, pundits and scholars argued that the attacks fundamentally changed the United States (Smelser 2004). Years later, however, some observers suggested that the rush to identify 9/11 as a turning point in American history was "born out of shock" and that very little has changed since the attacks (Dobson 2006, p. 22). Drawing on a broad examination of pre-post 9/11 research, this review generally supports the former argument. The aptness of this conclusion is most convincing when one ponders the massive scope and variety of small-to-moderate 9/11 effects, rather than the strength of any one change in the public mindset. Many of these

changes persisted for one or more years, particularly rally effects and authoritarian tendencies.

There are several reasons to further emphasize the impact of 9/11 on American society. First, even though the goal of this review was to accentuate the diversity of these changes, I have merely scratched the surface. Given the space constraints, I did not review the literature that showed how 9/11 (or the increase in perceived terrorism threat) may have affected travel, tourism and other consumer behaviors (Chen and Chen 2003; Carter 2004; Gigerenzer 2006, 2004; Makinen 2002), the housing slump and mortgage mess (Burns, 2008), job performance and career choices (Wrzesniewski 2002; Burke 2005), healthcare concerns (Blendon et al. 2001), low birth weights (Eskenazi et al. 2007), the fear of crime (Altheide 2004), food safety concerns (Kaplowitz and Ten Eyck 2006), moods and self-efficacy (Fischer et al. 2007) and even mundane matters such as restaurant tipping (Seiter and Gass 2005) and Halloween trick-or-treating (Jones 2001).

Also neglected were the post-9/11 shifts in public attitudes toward global warming (Nisbet and Myers 2007), alternative energy sources and green technology (Friedman 2007; Nisbet 2006; Kennedy 2001), biotechnology (Lundy and Irani 2006), environmental groups and social movements (Green and Griffith 2002; Maney, Woehrle, and Coy 2005; Barcott 2002;), gun control (Altheide 2004; Smith 2007), police and law enforcement agencies (Sunshine and Tyler 2003), border security (Coleman 2005; Ackleson 2003), missile defense (Eichenberg 2003) and many others.

Although I briefly addressed social attitudes toward Arabs, Muslims and immigrants in the United States, I did not consider how 9/11 influenced views toward other racial and ethnic groups (Davis 2007), foreign countries or international

organizations (Brewer, Aday, and Gross 2005). This review only covered shifts in public

opinion on the most glaring foreign policy issues involving Iraq and Afghanistan, yet the

terrorist threat is clearly relevant to public attitudes on numerous other aspects of

international relations (German Marshall Fund 2002).

Given my focus on national issues, I also ignored how 9/11 affected public

thinking at the local level, particularly local politics and security concerns involving the

regional infrastructure, from the Mackinaw Bridge in Michigan to the New Mexico

border. While some of these issues were trivial—for instance, the crusade by officials in

Dover, New Jersey to strengthen the city's gumball machines against the terrorist

threat—others were taken quite seriously by local populations (Fahim 2007).

Finally, this review also failed to consider how the events of 9/11 displaced other

social problems in the public mindset. According to the Gallup Organization, as the threat

of terrorism shot to the top of America's list of "most important problems," other issues,

which had been gradually rising in importance, were suddenly disregarded. For instance,

"education," which was mentioned as the most important problem by 16 percent of

respondents in March 2000, dropped to 3 percent after 9/11; in the next three years, the

importance of education would never rise above 6 percent (Saad 2000; Gillespie 2001;

Gallup Organization 2004). Similar trends were seen in the cases of "Medicare" and

"social security." Future studies should consider not only what terrorism makes us think

and feel, but also what it makes us forget.

In closing, I turn now to the possible implications of 9/11 effects and make a case

for a new direction in terrorism research. Considering the strength, longevity and range of

these changes, I suggest that people's perceptions of terrorism in the post-9/11 era should

not be seen as a temporary response to an isolated danger, but rather as an organizing force that helps them quickly make sense of their political and social worlds.

In many respects, the perceived threat of terrorism is similar to the core element of an ideology or belief system. First, as mentioned, this concern remained stable over time. Nearly half the population was still worried about terrorism as late as the summer of 2007. Second, as emphasized in this review, the perceived threat of terrorism exhibited both "consistency" (interrelationships with other attitudes and beliefs) and "instrumentality" (behavioral effects) (Cobb 1973). Third, it had the potential to polarize the population's political and social views. While many Americans were "very concerned" about the threat, many others were "not at all concerned." The effects of perceived threat may only be relevant to the former segment of the population, which would thereby diverge, systematically, from the latter.

The perceived threat of terrorism may, under some conditions, be even more powerful than some older ideological dimensions such as the liberal-conservative continuum. For one thing, as Converse (1964) suggests, the development of a liberal/conservative ideological framework requires an education, an understanding of complex issues and a willingness to spend the cognitive effort to attain this knowledge. An understanding of the terrorist threat, in contrast, can be attained with far less cognitive exercise, and, in most cases, its relationship to other social issues is neither complicated, nor subtle.

As numerous communication scholars have shown, these links are vividly and continually underscored in the mass media (e.g., Norris, Kern, and Just 2003). In fact, some connections between the threat of terrorism and key political issues appear in media

and exist in the public mind as familiar catchphrases, such as the "war on terror" or "We fight them over there, so we don't have to fight them here."

The perceived threat of terrorism is an easy-to-use, multifunctional tool for differentiating and evaluating domestic and international policies and political leaders. A sort of cotton-candy ideology, it is widely available to the public, affordable, attractive, stimulating and often distributed in the context of entertainment, from Hollywood movies to sensationalized TV news programs.

As a second advantage over conventional ideological dimensions, the perceived threat of terrorism comprises both a cognitive and an affective component. The idea that emotions play a systematic role in people's judgments and decision making represents a relatively new trend in the social and psychological sciences. While the cognitive framework has been dominant since the 1950s, researchers are now paying greater attention to the influence of emotions on the way people process and store information, evaluate their environments and make decisions (Finucane et al. 2000, Zajonc 1980; Damasio 1994; Epstein 1994).

Expanding on this reasoning, the perceived threat of terrorism may be best understood as an affective ideology or organizing force, comprising both cognitive and emotional components, which helps people quickly make sense of the complex world and draw conclusions about a range of political and social problems. Such an organizing force would rely more on the intensity of emotional states and be less responsive to new information, empirical justifications, expert assessments and "central-route" communications (Petty and Cacioppo 1986).

Meanwhile, emotional reactions to terrorism can be primed by mass mediated news and images, political rhetoric and any number of related cultural artifacts and social interactions. A heavy dose of these reminders may act as a sort of emotional booster shot that reinforces the perceived threat of terrorism, along with its ideological links to other issues. Further research is needed to expand this perspective and explain the potential role of emotion, the fear of terrorism in particular, in the development, integration and maintenance of ideological formations.

CHAPTER 3

Framing Terror: What Scares us Most about Terrorism

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the goal was to show how 9/11, and the perceived threat of terrorism in particular, influenced a variety of important social attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. In this chapter, I move one step backward to investigate the origins of people's worries and beliefs about terrorism. There are many antecedents one might consider, such as people's socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, personal experiences, geographical vicinity to big cities or high-profile terrorist targets, knowledge about international relations, perceived self-efficacy and numerous others. Interpersonal communication about terrorism between family members, friends and colleagues, and face-to-face encounters with experts, teachers and politicians may also explain at least some of the variance in public threat perceptions.

While these factors are important, this chapter focuses on the mass media as a determinant of these concerns. After 9/11, in addition to the flood of survey research discussed in Chapter 2, many researchers converged on the topic of the media, its affects on public perceptions of terrorism and the role of this threat in political communication (Norris, Kern and Just, 2003; Fried, 2005; Entman, 2003, 2004; Moeller, 2004). In most of these studies, however, the threat of terrorism was conceptualized and operationalized as a one-dimensional danger. We know much, for instance, about people's responses to "*the* terrorist threat," or how "*the* war on terror" became the dominant frame used by American politicians and journalists to make sense of international security issues.

The aim of this chapter, in contrast, is to investigate whether people's perceptions of terrorism depend in part on the type of terrorist threat they consider. I argue that the news media uses several different portrayals, or "frames," in its coverage of terrorism and that each of these frames may evoke varying levels of perceived threat.

As previously discussed, I use "perceived threat" as an umbrella term for a range of cognitive and affective responses to danger. This chapter focuses on three of these distinct, yet related responses: dread, worry and risk judgment. "Dread" is defined as people's beliefs about the catastrophic potential of a terrorist attack[30]; "worry" refers to an emotional response to this hazard; and "risk judgments" are beliefs about the probability or likelihood of an attack occurring over a specified period of time.

I begin this chapter by defining "news frames" and reviewing the strengths and weakness of this concept in the literature. Second, I discuss the general debate over the effects of news frames on public perceptions. Next, using an exploratory, framing effects experiment, I test whether subjects perceive some terrorism frames as more threatening than others. Finally, building on the findings in Chapter 2, I examine the relationship between perceived threat and two important social attitudes: support for the Iraq War and willingness to give up civil liberties in order to reduce the threat of terrorism. The social and political implications of this study, as well as its importance to future research on the perceived threat of terrorism, are discussed.

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30. In the risk perception literature, Slovic (2004, 225) introduced "dread," or dread risk, as a factor comprised of multiple, highly correlated risk characteristics, including "perceived lack of control, dread, catastrophic potential, fatal consequences and the inequitable distribution of risks and benefits." The conceptualization of dread used in this analysis is relevant to only part of this factor—namely catastrophic potential and fatal consequences (the number of people who would die if an attack took place).

The News Frame as a Concept

Concepts represent the building blocks of social scientific research. Drawing on Weber's notion of "ideal types," a concept can be defined as a summary of more complex ideas that generally correspond to various aspects of concrete reality but never replicate them precisely. Concepts aid the advancement of social science by allowing scholars to quickly understand complicated ideas and apply them in various studies. Clearly defined concepts also guide the operationalization of variables, promote the internal logic of individual studies and make it easier for future scholars to replicate research.

Criticisms of the concept of news frames

Despite the importance of these functions, several scholars have described the concept of "news frames" as vague and undeveloped and pointed to a number of specific weaknesses in the literature. In this section, I consider four of these conceptual problems: 1) undefined or ambiguous conceptualizations, 2) conceptual fragmentation, 3) concept-theory overlaps and 4) terminological disagreement.

Beginning with the first issue, a review of numerous studies shows that the task of defining news frames is sometimes neglected all together. Similar to the treatment of concepts such as "values" or "trust," some scholars assume that the meaning of the term "frame" is widely understood and leave it undefined. Other scholars define the concept, but without serious rigor. As Entman (1993, 52) noted, the concept is "often defined casually, with much left to an assumed tacit understanding of reader and researcher."

The second problem in the literature relates to the multifaceted nature of news frame research and the fragmentation of the concept itself. Scholars have formulated

numerous specialized concepts to examine media coverage of various issues and events. Many of these frames are issue-specific and cannot be easily applied to other research topics. Instead of building on previous conceptualizations, scholars often invent their own concepts even when studying the same topics. For instance, a study of media coverage of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 (Li and Izard, 2003) introduced seven distinct news frames. Meanwhile, a study by Lee (2003) addressed the same topic using twelve frames and yet none of them matched the concepts in the Li and Izard study.

On one hand, this problem is difficult to avoid. In many cases, new concepts are needed for studying the framing of new social trends, technological advances and the ever-changing political discourse. On the other hand, it is often quite possible to use or adapt previously developed concepts for current use and the failure to do so explains, in part, why news frame research is still considered a "fractured paradigm" (Entman, 1993).

A third problem can be seen in studies that do not clearly distinguish between the *concept* of news frames (definitions) and framing *theories* (assumptions about the origins or effects of news frames). In many cases, scholars weave their conceptualization into a theory of framing. Consider, for example, Gitlin's (1980, 7) widely cited definition of frames as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of election, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse." This definition contains a tenuous theoretical assumption about the process through which frames are created (i.e., "symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse"). This is a common conceptual weakness in the literature. Scholars regularly define news frames by explaining their origins or effects, rather than explaining what they consist of or how they can be identified in communication content. To consider a few more examples, Norris,

Kern and Just (2003, 10) suggest that "the idea of 'news frames' refers to interpretive structures that journalists use to set particular events within their broader context." In a study by Terkildsen and Schnell (1997, 881), news frames are defined as "the 'maps' or internal story patterns reporters and editors draw for their readers."[31] The concept-theory overlap in these definitions advances the untested claim that news frames, by *definition*, are the result of intentional journalistic biases. By equating the term "news frame" with "bias," these authors imply that the causal link between a journalist's intentions and the creation of frames is unproblematic. This definition encourages researchers to simply accept this assumption rather than testing it. As a matter of fact, in some cases, communicators unintentionally create news frames. In other cases, news frames are produced within rigid institutional settings where a journalist's choices are restricted, or at least guided by strong organizational roles and norms or ideological parameters.

An analogous conceptual problem arose over the definition of "attitude" in the social psychological literature. Scholars debated whether the concept could be properly defined as an "intention to act." This definition, some argued, implied a theory of behavior, which, in turn, diminished the concept's clarity and led to one-sided theorizing on the link between attitudes and behavior. The "theory of reasoned action," meanwhile, advanced the literature in part by clearly distinguishing between "beliefs," "attitudes," "intentions" and "behavior" and only then drawing assumptions about the causal relationship between them (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Drawing a clearer distinction between the "antecedents," "contents" and "effects" of frames may have a similar beneficial effect on news frame research.

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31. For other examples of concept-theory overlaps, see Bronstein, 2005, 785; Lepre, Walsh-Childers and Chance, 2003.

The fourth conceptual weakness lies in the fact that the term itself, even when clearly defined, means entirely different things to different scholars. Outside the context of mass media research, "frames" are often understood as internal structures of the mind (Mccombs, Shaw and Weaver, 1997; Hamill and Lodge, 1986; Scheufele, 1999). For instance, Lakoff (2004, xv) defines frames as the "mental structures that shape the way we see the world." This definition is almost synonymous with the definition of "schema" found in social psychological textbooks (Michener, DeLamater and Myers, 2004). Some scholars use the term to simultaneously represent both cognitive elements and aspects of mediated discourse. As mentioned, Gitlin (1980, 7) defined news frames as both patterns of cognition and aspects of mediated presentation: "Media frames organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports." Given the problems of conceptual ambiguity--and to avoid concept-theory overlaps--several scholars have stressed the need for drawing a terminological distinction between aspects of communication content and the structures of the human mind. Scheufele (1999) suggested, for instance, using the term "media frames" to represent content characteristics and "individual frames" to represent internal cognitive structures. A similar suggestion was made by Entman (1991, 7) who differentiated between "information-processing schemata" and the "attributes of the news itself."

Best practices in conceptualizing news frames

Reflecting on the problems discussed above, there are three essential criteria for establishing news frames as consistent concepts in communication research. News frames should be 1) defined as identifiable characteristics of content, 2) differentiated from other

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similar concepts and 3) distinguished from theories of framing. Though several scholars have addressed each of these criteria, the present study draws most directly on Entman's conceptualization of news frames. Entman (1993, 52) satisfied the first criteria with his generic definition of news frames as "the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments." Addressing the other two criteria, Entman also distinguished new frames from cognitive structures and drew a clear line between the theory and concept of frames. The fulfillment of these criteria may explain, in part, why Entman's conceptualization has been used in so many other news frame studies (e.g., Chyi and McCombs, 2004; Valkenburg, Semetko and De Vreese, 1999; Noakes and Wilkins, 2002).

The Effects of News Frames: Strong or Weak?

The idea that the framing of messages affects people's thoughts and behavior has generated a great deal of debate among scholars. Though most researchers concede that media messages or frames have some effect on audiences, disagreement is rife when it comes to determining the extent and conditions under which these effects occur.

Strong Effects

Much of the evidence that supports framing effects has come from experimental studies that control for the influence of other factors and offer precise measurements of the effects. A classic study by Kahneman and Tversky (1984; see McNeil et al., 1982), for instance, found that people's preferences for or against undergoing a medical

procedure depended on how the potential outcomes of the procedure were presented to them. When the treatment outcomes were framed in terms of survival rather than mortality, the subjects reported being more favorable toward undergoing the procedure (in this case, a hypothetical surgery for lung cancer). More specifically, the subjects were much more willing to consider the surgery when told that "95 percent of patients live," as opposed to "5 percent of patients die." In this case, the researchers showed that they could influence people's perceptions without changing the statistical information about the risk of having the surgery.

The theory of framing has been applied in numerous fields throughout the social and cognitive sciences. As Druckman (2001, 226) suggested, it has been used by "scholars of social movements, bargaining behavior, foreign policy decision making, jury decision making, media effects, political psychology, public opinion and voting, campaigns, and many others." Some authors contend that, in some areas of research, there is little contention or debate over the strong effects of framing. As Sniderman and Theriault (2004, 136) wrote, "Based on the last decade of research on framing effects on public opinion, there now is a consensus that the way an issue is framed matters for how citizens think about political issues." To offer a few more examples, a study by Nelson and Kinder (1996) showed that the framing of public policy outcomes in favor (or against) of certain social groups influenced the subjects' level of acceptance of the policy. Zaller (1992) found that public attitudes toward oil drilling depended on whether the issue was discussed in the context of national security, economic consequences or environmental risks.

Researchers have shown that framing can influence people's views even when they hold attitudes in the opposite direction. One example of this can be seen in Sniderman and Theriault's "rally" experiment (2004). The researchers began by assessing the attitudes of their subjects toward the need for "law and order in society" versus the need to "guarantee individual freedoms." Next they asked them whether a group with "very extreme political views" should be allowed to hold a public demonstration. Under one condition, the question began with the phrase, "Given the importance of free speech ..." Under a second condition, it began, "Given the risk of violence ..." The results of the study showed that the subjects were swayed by the phrasing of the question ("free speech" versus "risk of violence") regardless of their deeper political attitudes.

A great deal of research has showed the even slight alterations in the framing of survey questions can influence respondents' answers to them. For instance, Hurwitz and Peffley (2005) found that certain racially coded words ("inner city") affect people's attitudes toward funding prisons.

The wealth of evidence from these and other experimental framing studies is directly relevant to media effects research, because media organizations, as in the experiments, routinely organize, describe or frame the possible outcomes and consequences of important local, national and international policies. The media's framing of key issues, including the risk of terrorism, may indeed influence people's attitudes and beliefs about them.

Weak Effects

However, when drawing conclusions about the link between mediated messages and public perceptions, it is important to appreciate the differences between a "clean" laboratory experiment and the far more complicated, real-life conditions under which media organizations produce and disseminate the news and audiences receive and process these messages. With these distinctions in mind, Gans (1993) strongly critiqued the framing effects literature, the studies on media effects in particular. He argued that the effects are probably relatively weak and that most studies neglect other important factors related to attitude change. Much of his critique was aimed at the experimental literature's failure to appreciate "how people use, and live with, the mass media" (1993, 34). He suggested that viewers "tune out much, if not all, undesired content--and perhaps potential effects" (1993, 31). Gans portrayed media consumers as generally apathetic and reluctant to change their views. The audience, according to Gans, does not have a strong need for national news, bases its understanding of broad social trends on individual cases from everyday life, screens out unpleasant or contradictory information and does not change its attitudes or behavior unless "unusual incentives or intense economic or social pressures force them to change their ways involuntarily" (1993, 33).

A Middle Ground

Although Gans poses his argument as a strong refutation against quantitative and experimental studies, it may be more constructively understood as a guide for improving this brand of research. Consider, for instance, his view that media or framing effects are limited because people develop their views based on their own personal experiences.

Rather than a fatal flaw, this point could be used to refine the theory of framing by elucidating one of the conditions under which frames may have less influence on public perceptions. It seems plausible that personal experiences do influence attitudes and perceptions on some social issues, especially those which impact everyday life, such as unemployment, health care and local political campaigns, but have less effect on remote or distant topics, such as foreign policy issues and international conflicts (Gamson, 1992).

Although the attacks on 9/11 resulted in catastrophic human and material loses, these experiences were felt directly by only a small proportion of the population. For this reason, drawing in part on Gans' logic, the media's framing of terrorism risk may indeed be expected to have significant effects on public perceptions of the danger.

In some ways, Gans' portrayal of the average citizen can be used to question his central argument. Contrary to his assertion, an apathetic or uninformed audience—one that is "not interested in national news stories"—may actually be more susceptible to the media's framing of social and political issues than people who are well-informed or hold energetic views on the issues. Traces of this argument can be seen in classic public opinion studies, including Lippmann's (1922) famous critique of the basis of public opinion, Converse's (1974) noted discussion of "non attitudes," the experimental studies discussed above, as well as in research that supports the elaboration likelihood model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Lavine et al., 1998).

Right or wrong, however, Gans' weak effects argument brings home the important point that studies of the media should not assume that particular messages have

effects; rather, studies should empirically test the extent and conditions under which these effects occur.

Framing Terror

The next task is to explain why some terror frames may elevate threat perceptions more than others. The explanation developed here is supported in part by the psychometric paradigm, a leading perspective in risk perception research (Fischhoff et al. 1978; Sjöberg 2005; Covello 1992; Slovic 2004). The model draws in part on cognitive scales and multiple regression methods to identify the qualitative characteristics of hazards that affect the way people perceive them. For instance, dangers perceived as high in "dread" (extent of catastrophic potential), "hard to control," or "new" are known to elevate risk judgments (Fischhoff et al. 1978; Slovic 2004). Such hazards are also thought to engage people's emotions, which may affect the cognitive processing of these threats (Slovic et al., 2002; Finucane et al., 2000; Johnson & Tversky, 1983; Sunstein 2003).

While many studies have shown that hazards produce both cognitive and emotional response, it is not clear which occurs first (Peters and Slovic, 1996; Peters, Burraston and Mertz, 2004). In fact, as some scholars argue, when people find themselves in a risky situation, their emotions may precede their cognitive processing of the danger (Slovic et al., 2002). Any attempt to establish the time ordering of the three factors of perceived threat—risk judgment, dread and worry—goes beyond the scope of this study. The aim here is simply to test whether certain experimentally manipulated terror news frames affect any or all three of the variables. An analysis is also conducted to assess the relationship between these variables.

Hypotheses

As discussed in Chapter 1, the news media covers many different aspects of the nation's vulnerability to terrorism and a variety of different modes for carrying out attacks. Given the great number and variety of terrorism news frames, a comprehensive analysis is not possible. I have chosen three frames to test as case studies based on their relevance to the ongoing public debate and scholarly research on the relationship between terrorism, the media, politics and public opinion.

Terrorism Frame

The first frame I consider is the term "terrorism" itself. The use of this term in public discourse has generated a great deal of interest and contention among researchers, journalists and politicians. Some regard the term as a political tool, because the simple act of labeling an act of violence "terrorism" can influence people's attributions of the behavior, as well as their assumptions about what should be done to stop it (Cooper, 2001).

After 9/11, public officials increasingly identified terrorism as a new and serious social problem. Given the term's constant association with harm and danger, I suggest that the mere mentioning of it may produce thoughts and feelings of dread and worry, which, as mentioned, are known to be positively correlated with risk judgment. In other words, the terrorism frame may act as a peripheral cue for danger, a conditioned response that evokes higher levels of perceived threat when mentally processed. Specifically, I test the following:

Hypothesis 1: Treatments containing the term terrorism will evoke higher levels of perceived threat (risk judgment, dread, worry) than treatments with no mention of this term.

Radical Islamic Frame

The term "Islam" has also been controversially linked to acts of violence. In the post-9/11 period, many commentators and public officials labeled the perpetrators as "Islamic extremists" or "radicals." While the popular association between Islam and mass violence certainly predates 9/11, as seen in media coverage of events ranging from the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979-1981 to the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000, this association likely became more prominent in the public mind as media coverage of terrorism risk greatly increased after 9/11 (Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2003; Nacos 1994; Traugott and Brader 2003).[32]

Radical Islam is now associated with one of the most dramatic and damaging terrorist attacks in history, as well as other acts of violence across the world. Such a link may directly evoke higher levels of perceived threat. Associating terrorism with religious extremism may also suggest to some people that the violence has no logical basis and therefore cannot be controlled. As mentioned, hazards perceived as uncontrollable may increase perceptions of dread, worry and risk judgment.

In testing the effects of the radical Islamic frame, rather than merely excluding any mention of it, I decided on the more conservative procedure of comparing it to an alternative identity and motivation of terrorism—namely, "American citizens who view their government as the enemy." I test the following:

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32. By the mid-2000s, according to public opinion polls, the idea that Islam encouraged violence more than other religions was supported by a large percentage of Americans (Panagopoulos, 2006; Yum and Schenck-Hamlin, 2005).

Hypothesis 2: Treatments containing the radical Islamic frame will evoke higher levels of perceived threat (risk judgment, dread, worry) than treatments with the domestic threat frame.

Nuclear Frame

The third assumption I address examines whether people's threat perceptions depend in part on the type of terrorist attack they consider. As in the previous case, I compare a theoretically high-threat frame ("nuclear") to one that may be perceived as less innocuous ("conventional explosives"). Given the known links between dread perceptions (extent of catastrophic potential), worry and risk judgment, I offer the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Treatments containing the nuclear frame will evoke higher levels of perceived threat (risk judgment, dread, worry) than treatments with the conventional explosives frame.

Pretest Measure

Previous research has shown that people's risk perceptions tend to vary rather dramatically on a range of different hazards. Much of this variance, however, goes unexplained, even in studies with a great number of strong predictors (Sjoberg 1998, 2000). The covariate in this analysis (a pretest measure for risk judgment) is designed to account for these preexisting differences in perceived threat. Controlling for the subjects' pretest risk judgments of terrorism will isolate the unique effects of the three frames.

Figure 6: Additive Effects of Frames

Treatment 1: No Threatening Frames	**Treatment 2: Terrorism Only**
Treatment 3: Nuclear Only	**Treatment 4: Radical Islamic Only**
Treatment 5: Terrorism & Nuclear	**Treatment 6: Terrorism & Radical Islamic**
Treatment 7: Nuclear & Radical Islamic	**Treatment 8: Terrorism, Nuclear & Radical Islamic**

Note: Treatments that are shaded darker are hypothesized to evoke higher levels of perceived threat.

Additive versus Interaction Effects

A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ complete factorial design is used to test the three hypotheses stated above. Such a design takes into account all the possible interactions between these frames. This portion of the analysis is exploratory in nature. There is little previous evidence to suppose that combining any two or more hypothetically threatening frames in a single test article will produce interaction effects. Rather, it may be more reasonable to suppose, as illustrated in Figure 6, that combining the frames will produce additive effects on the subjects' threat perceptions. In other words, each additional frame may further increase the subjects' risk judgments, dread perceptions and worry. I address these issues as general research inquires, rather than specific hypotheses.

Effects of Perceived Threat

Researchers are ultimately interested in people's perceptions of the terrorist threat, because these psychological reactions are known to influence a wide range of

other social attitudes and behaviors. According to inter-group conflict theory, higher levels of perceived threat are associated with increased out-group bashing (Tajfel and Turner 1979), stereotyping and attribution errors (Brewer 1993). Perceived threat may also activate authoritarian tendencies, such as greater adherence to conventional values, submissiveness to moral authorities, identification with powerful figures and rejection of outsiders (Adorno et al. 1950; Doty, Peterson, and Winter 1991; Duckitt 1989; Feldman 2003).

Other researchers offer different psychological explanations of how people process threat, but make similar predictions about its effects. According to terror management theory (Greenberg et al. 1990), violent attacks, such as those seen on 9/11, heighten people's awareness of "the inevitability and potential finality of death" (Pyszczynski et al. 2006, p. 526). This heightened "mortality salience," in turn, is known to increase authoritarian tendencies and out-group derogation, as discussed above (Greenberg, Solomon, and Pyszczynski, 1997).

Drawing on these theoretical traditions, a number of researchers found that public willingness to tradeoff certain privacy protections and personal freedoms to reduce the threat of terrorism increased substantially after 9/11 (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002; Huddy et al. 2005; Greenberg, Craighill, and Greenberg 2004; Best, Krueger, and Ladewig 2006; Davis 2007). Popular support for using military force to combat terrorism also escalated following the attacks (Gallup Organization 2001b; Carroll, 2007a; Everts and Isernia 2005; Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002). Some researchers were able to isolate worry and risk judgment of terrorism as the determinants of the post-9/11 surge in

civil liberties tradeoff willingness and support for war. In an effort to confirm these

findings and link them to framing effects, I offer the following:

> *Hypothesis 4:* Subjects who report higher levels of perceived threat (risk judgment, dread, worry) will show greater support for the Iraq war than subjects who report lower levels of perceived threat.

> *Hypothesis 5:* Subjects who report higher levels of perceived threat (risk judgment, dread, worry) will show greater willingness to trade their civil liberties for security than subjects who report lower levels of perceived threat.

Confounding Variables

While examining the relationship between the three components of perceived

threat and the effects of these components on other social attitudes, this analysis controls

for four potential confounding variables: sex, race, political ideology and age. My

primary objective here is not to develop the theories related to these variables, even if

such a task is worthwhile. Rather, I wish to substantiate my claims about the direct

relationship between worry, risk judgment and dread and the influence of these variables

on people's attitudes toward war and civil liberties. For this reason, the discussion here is

brief and atheoretical.

First, the sex of the subjects will be taken into account. Many studies have shown

that women tend to judge a variety of dangers as more likely to cause harm than do men

(Rovira et al., 2000; Marshall, 2004; Hollander, 2001; Wulfhorst, 2000), even if some

studies question this claim (El-Zein et al., 2006; Lundborg and Lindgren, 2002; Reid and

Konrad, 2004). Although the difference between men and women's willingness to trade

civil liberties for security is negligible (Davis, 2007), women tend to be less inclined to

support the use of military force (Nincic and Nincic, 2002; Conover and Sapiro, 1993).

Second, research demonstrates that non-white respondents rate many risks higher than do whites (Adeola, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Kanan & Pruitt, 2002; Marshall, 2004). Race and ethnicity also explain a great deal of variance in people's willingness to compromise their civil liberties (Davis, 2007) and support war (Nincic and Nincic, 2002).

The third confounding variable is political ideology. People who do not identify with a political party or ideology tend to be more affected by framing effects than those with strong political beliefs (Durfee, 2006). Moreover, if the terrorist threat is perceived as a false justification for politically conservative foreign policies, liberal-minded individuals may be more likely than conservatives to dismiss or downgrade the threat. There are also strong links between political ideology and attitudes toward both civil liberties and war (Davis, 2007).

Finally, research on the relationship between age and risk perception has produced mixed results. Some studies show that older people tend to give higher risk estimates than younger people (e.g., Lai and Tao, 2003). Others have demonstrated the opposite tendency (e.g., Floyd and Pennington-Gray, 2004), while still others have found no relationship between age and risk perception (e.g., Hellesoy, Gronhaug, and Kvitastein, 1998). Ambivalence also characterizes the possible effects of age on civil liberties tradeoff willingness. In contrast, numerous studies have linked age or cohort experiences to attitudes toward war (Schuman and Corning, 2006; Gartner, Segura and Wilkening, 1997). Although I believe it is important to control for age in the present study, I concede that the subjects—undergraduate college students—do not vary greatly in this respect and that any findings would be merely suggestive.

Method

Treatments

As mentioned, an experimental framing effects design was used to test the hypotheses. The experiment manipulates three frames (terrorism, radical Islamic, nuclear) in a test article about a federal commission's report about security threats to American cities. The test article draws on news content from the Associated Press and was designed to resemble the layout and formatting of an actual newspaper article. The independent variable is the presence or absence of each frame in the given treatment of the article. The dependent variable is the subjects' level of perceived threat (risk judgment, dread or worry) after reading the treatment.

As illustrated in Figure 6, treatment 1 was designed to be the least threatening. It contains no high-threat frames. The term terrorism is never used, the sources refer to the threat of "explosives," as opposed to "nuclear weapons," and the most likely perpetrators are referred to as "homegrown militants," as opposed to "radical Islamic groups." Treatments 2, 3 and 4 each contain one high-threat frame. Treatments 5, 6 and 7 contain two of these frames and treatment 8 includes all three of them. A representation of all eight variations of the test article appears in Appendix A.

Subjects

A total of 176 subjects took part in the study. The experimental treatments and questionnaires were distributed in social science courses during class time at a large Midwestern university in 2007 and early 2008. The subjects were divided evenly and randomly assigned to read one of the eight treatments. More than half of the subjects

were women (60 percent). Ages ranged between 18 and 50, though most (83 percent) subjects were 18 to 22. The majority (70 percent) identified their race/ethnicity as White; Black, 17 percent; Hispanic, 6 percent; Asian, 5 percent; Other, 2 percent. Their anonymity was maintained and informed consent was received. All subjects were given a small incentive, in the form of extra credit, for participating. Less than 2 percent declined participation. This study was approved by a university human subjects review board.

Issues involving representativeness inevitably arise when student samples are used in research. In such cases, a strong argument for external validity can never be made. At best, these findings can be generalized to the wider student body at the university where the study was conducted. These data are, nevertheless, meaningful and interesting for at least three reasons. First, it should be noted that the perceived threat of terrorism is known as a rather universal psychological response within the context of the United States. For instance, while Republicans and Democrats disagree about how the country should respond to terrorism, they do not differ in their risk judgments of the threat (Carrol, 2007).

Second, while the sample is clearly younger than the population at large, it does not differ greatly by race/ethnicity. This sample comes from a large state university (43,784 students enrolled in Spring 2008), which is likely to service students whose socio-economic class and background are closer to that of most Americans than a smaller, elite or highly specialized school. In 2007, according to data from the university's office of the registrar, roughly three quarters of the student population was Caucasian, with Black (8 percent), International (8 percent), Asian (5 percent), Hispanic/Chicano (3 percent) and other minority students making up a quarter of the

student body. The gender mix was 55 percent women, 45 percent men. Again, the age of the university's student population was much lower than the population as a whole (23 percent were over the age of 24; 77 percent were under 24).

Survey and Administration

Before reading the article, the subjects were asked two pretest risk judgment questions aimed at measuring their general beliefs about the likelihood of a terrorist attack occurring in the next 12 months. The questions were based on two different scales: one Likert-type word scale, ranging from 1 (Extremely unlikely) to 7 (Extremely likely) and one scale where subjects were asked to give a number rating of the risk between 0 percent and 100 percent. These two questions were scaled together, with an alpha reliability of .96.

Table 1: Manipulation Check for Radical Islamic Frame[33]

	Religion of perpetrator?				
	Buddhist	Jewish	Islamic	Religion Not Mentioned	Total
Non-Religious Frame Included	2 2.3%	0 0%	2 2.3%	83 95.4%	87 100%
Radical Islamic Frame Included	0 0%	1 1.1%	82 94.3%	4 4.6%	87 100%

33. In addition to Buddhist, Jewish and Islamic, the alternative Catholic was also included in the question, but no respondents selected it. For this reason, it does not appear in the table.

The subjects were then asked to read the article and answer a series of additional questions without referring back to the article (the complete wording of all questions appears in Appendix B). First, the subjects were asked again about the likelihood of an attack. Two risk judgment questions, which were identical to those asked before the reading of the article, were used and scaled together with an alpha reliability of .96. Worry was measured in a similar fashion. Subjects were asked to report their "level of worry" using two scales: one seven-point word scale ("not worried at all" to "extremely worried") and one number scale, ranging from 0 to 100. The questions were combined with an alpha reliability of .97. The variable dread was measured with one question asking the subjects how many people would likely be killed if an attack actually took place (the seven-point scale ranged from "fewer than 10" to "more than 1,000,000").

Next, the subjects were asked three manipulation check questions to assess whether the subjects noticed the three news frames as they read the article. The results strongly supported two of the framing manipulations. As shown in Table 1, the great majority of subjects correctly identified whether the radical Islamic frame appeared in the article. When the frame was present, 94 percent of subjects accurately recognized it. When the Islamic radical frame was replaced with a secular terrorist motive, 95 percent of subjects responded that the religion of the potential attackers was not mentioned.[34] A similar result was found in the case of weaponry. When the nuclear frame was present, 91

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34. For this manipulation check, Lamba, a proportional reduction in error measure, was equal to .93 (p < .001). The lambda statistic refers to the proportion by which the error in predicting the dependent variable can be reduced by knowing the value of the independent variable (Norušis, 2000, 356). In other words, knowing that the radical Islamic frame was used in the treatment reduces the error of guessing the result of the manipulation check by 93 percent.

percent of subjects correctly identified it, and 85 percent accurately noticed when the

alternative frame (conventional weapons) was used.[35]

Table 2: Manipulation Check for Nuclear Frame[36]

	Type of Weapon?				
	Biological	Conventional Explosives	Nuclear	None of the above	Total
Conventional Explosives Frame Included	1 1.1%	75 85.2%	2 2.3%	10 11.4%	88 100%
Nuclear Frame Included	4 4.6%	1 1.2%	78 90.7%	3 3.5%	86 100%

The manipulation of the terrorism frame received less support. Among the 88

subjects whose test article included the terrorism frame, 98 percent correctly reported that

the term was used at least once. However, among the 86 subjects whose test article did

not include any mention of "terrorism," only 57 percent responded correctly that the term

was not used. Although there was statistical support for this manipulation ($r = .56$, $p <$

.001), caution will be used when discussing its effect on the subjects.

Following the manipulation check questions, the subjects answered background

questions, assessing their sex, race/ethnicity, age, political ideology and level of media

35. For this manipulation check, Lamba, a proportional reduction in error measure, was equal to .77 ($p <$ .001). Knowing that the nuclear frame was used in the treatment reduces the error of guessing the result of the manipulation check by 77 percent.

36. In addition to biological, conventional explosives, nuclear and none of the above, the alternative poison gas was also included in the question, but no respondents selected it. For this reason, it does not appear in the table.

consumption, as well as two questions measuring their civil-liberties tradeoff willingness and two questions measuring their support for the Iraq war. All questions were modeled after questions previously asked in national or state-level polls.

Table 3: Manipulation Check for Terrorism Frame[37]

	Was terrorism mentioned?		
	Yes	No	Total
Terrorism Frame Not Included	37 43%	49 57%	86 100%
Terrorism Frame Included	86 97.7%	2 2.3%	88 100%

Results

Effects of Frames on Perceived Threat

A three-way, between-groups analysis of covariance was conducted to assess the effect of the framing treatments on the subjects' perceptions of the terrorist threat (risk judgments, dread and worry). The subjects' pretest risk judgments were used as the covariate in this analysis. Diagnostic checks were conducted to ensure that there was no substantial violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances and homogeneity of regression slopes and efforts were taken to measure the covariate reliably. Starting with risk judgment[38] as the dependent variable, the pretest measure of

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37. Affirmative responses to the manipulation check ranged from 1 to 12 mentions of the term terrorism.

perceived threat produced the greatest effect [F (1,165) = 62.57, p < .001]. As shown in

Table 4, it explained roughly 28 percent of the variance in posttest risk judgment.

However, after adjusting for the pretest measure, there was also a significant main effect

of the radical Islamic frame [F (1,165) = 16.38, p < .05], which explained 3.5 percent of

the variance in subjects' risk judgments. These data show modest support for Hypothesis

2. Treatments containing the radical Islamic frame evoked significantly higher judgments

of terrorism risk than treatments that did not contain this frame. Hypotheses 1 and 3,

however, were not supported. There were no significant main effects of the nuclear and

terrorism frames on subjects' risk judgments.[39]

Table 4: Framing Effects on Risk Judgment

Variance Source	df	MS	F	P	Partial Eta Squared
Pretest Measure of Risk Judgment (Covariate)	1	170.10	62.57	.000	.275
Terrorism Frame	1	3.86	1.42	.235	.009
Radical Islamic Frame	1	16.38	6.02	.015	.035
Nuclear Frame	1	.011	.004	.949	0
Error	165	2.72			

R Squared = .328 (Adjusted R Squared = .295)

38. Risk judgments, as previously defined, are beliefs about the probability or likelihood of an attack occurring over a specified period of time.

39. In the case of risk judgment, two very small, but significant interactions were found (nuclear × radical Islamic and radical Islamic × Terrorism). These findings were difficult to interpret and not seen as meaningful. Moreover, identical analyses of the other two indicators of perceived threat (dread and worry) did not uncover any interactions.

The findings were similar when worry was the dependent variable. Once again, the pretest measure was significant and explained approximately 27 percent the variance [$F (1,165) = 59.76$, $p < .001$]. Controlling for this measure, the data also showed that only the radical Islamic frame produced a significant main effect on worry [$F (1,165) = 4.08$, $p < .05$]. These data supported Hypothesis 2, but failed to support Hypotheses 1 and 3 regarding the suggested main effects of the nuclear and terrorism frames.

Finally, using dread as the dependent variable, the pretest measure still produced a significant effect, but explained a much smaller amount of the variance at around 4 percent [$F (1,165) = 7.63$, $p < .01$]. After controlling for the pretest measure, there were significant effects of both the radical Islamic [$F (1,165) = 10.84$, $p < .01$] and nuclear frames [$F (1,165) = 34.79$, $p < .001$] on dread; the former explained just over 6 percent of the variance, while the latter explained more than 17 percent (see Table 5). These data support both Hypotheses 2 and 3, but failed to support Hypothesis 1. Treatments containing the radical Islamic frame evoked significantly higher dread than articles that did not contain this frame. The same was true about the effects of the nuclear frame.

The data showed no significant interaction effects, which indicates that the frames had an additive effect on dread. In other words, the effect of the treatment containing both the radical Islamic and nuclear frames was greater than the effect of either one on its own, and it was approximately equal to the sum of the effects of each variable individually.

Table 5: Framing Effects on Dread

Variance Source	df	MS	F	P	Partial Eta Squared
Pretest Measure of Risk Judgment (Covariate)	1	12.88	7.63	.006	.044
Terrorism Frame	1	.005	.003	.958	.000
Radical Islamic Frame	1	18.29	10.84	.001	.062
Nuclear Frame	1	58.72	34.79	.000	.174
Error	165	1.69			

R Squared = .266 (Adjusted R Squared = .230)

Relationship between Risk Judgment, Dread and Worry

The data showed that the framing manipulations had a somewhat greater effect on dread and risk judgment than on worry. One possible explanation for this is that the terror news frames tested here have direct effects on dread and risk judgment and an indirect effect on worry. While this analysis cannot ascertain the time ordering of these variables, the statistical relationship between them is worth considering. As shown in Table 6, based on a regression model, both dread (Beta = .243, p < .001) and risk judgment (Beta = .485, p < .001) are strong and significant predictors of worry. None of the confounding variables, including political ideology, has a significant effect. Subjects who perceived the likelihood of an attack as being high tended to worry more. Subjects who believed that the number of causalities in such an attack would be high also reported higher levels of worry.

Table 6: Regression Model Showing Standardized Coefficients for Predictors of Worry about Terrorism

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables
	Worry (Beta)
Risk Judgment	.485**
Dread	.243**
Sex (M = 1 / F = 2)	.041
Race/Ethnicity (W = 1 / Non W = 2)	-.028
Age	.004
Political Ideology (Con = 1 / Lib = 7)	-.113
R Square	.381

** = $p < .001$

Effects of Worry on Social Attitudes

The importance of these findings comes to light when examining the effects of worry on other social and political attitudes. As illustrated in Table 7, only worry had a significant affect on these attitudes. People with greater worries about terrorism were more willing to tradeoff some civil liberties for added protection against terrorism (Beta = .351, $p < .001$).

Table 7: Regression Models Showing Standardized Coefficients for Predictors of Willingness to Give Up Civil Liberties and Support the Iraq War

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	
	Willingness to Give Up Civil Liberties (Beta)	Support for Iraq War (Beta)
Risk Judgment	.013	.091
Dread	-.008	.046
Worry	.351**	.156*
Sex (M = 1 / F = 2)	.083	-.128*
Race/Ethnicity (W = 1 / Non W = 2)	-.045	.000
Age	-.065	-.004
Political Ideology (Con = 1 / Lib = 7)	-.343**	-.523**
R Square	.279	.336

* = p < .05; ** = p < .001

The strength of worry as a predictor was even greater than the effect of political ideology (Beta = -.343, p < .001), which has been shown to explain this and other political attitudes. However, in the case of support for war, the significant effect of political ideology was much greater than worry. Sex is also a significant predictor in this model. Women showed less support for the Iraq War than men, confirming pervious studies.

Discussion

The data indicated that framing violent acts as "terrorism" did not affect subjects' levels of worry, risk judgment or dread. The lack of supporting evidence may, however,

be explained in part by the given characteristics of the experimental treatments. The test article offered a rather typical portrayal of the threat. It may be that any article that offers a detailed discussion on the danger of organized groups carrying out violent acts on American cities will be contextualized by audiences as "terrorism" whether the term is used copiously or not at all.

The results from the manipulation checks corresponded with this assumption. As mentioned, many subjects reported that the term terrorism appeared in the treatment when, in fact, it was never mentioned. Future research should investigate the possible interaction between the context of news articles and the use of this frame. The terrorism frame may have an effect within a more ambiguous thematic framework, such as a story about the danger of school shootings or the aggressive protest activities of radical environmental groups.

The nuclear frame had a significant main effect on dread, but no effect on risk judgment or worry. As expected, subjects who received the nuclear frame estimated the number of potential casualties as significantly higher than those who received the conventional explosives frame. It appears, contrary to previous research, that prompting the subjects to think about a catastrophic loss of human life, which would inevitably result from a nuclear attack on an American city, did not elevate their judgments of the likelihood of such an attack, nor their worries about it.

The data demonstrated that the radical Islamic frame produced the greatest influence on the subjects' perceptions of the terrorist threat. It had a significant main effect on all three indicators—risk judgment, dread and worry. The subjects who read about potential attacks carried out by small groups "motivated by Islamic extremism," as

opposed to "American citizens who view their own government as the enemy," reported higher risk judgments, dread and worry.

Mirroring previous research, the three indicators of perceived threat were strongly correlated. However, only worry was shown to be a significant predictor of the subjects' willingness to give up civil liberties to curb terrorism and support the war in Iraq.

These findings have important implications for the methods used to study public perceptions of terrorism, as well as some social and political ramifications. The data suggest that not all terror frames produce equal effects on public worries, risk judgments and dread. When pollsters ask about *the* threat of terrorism, it is conceivable that some respondents may be thinking of radical Islamic terrorists from foreign lands, while others contemplate the threats posed by homegrown terrorism or other similar threats, such as school shootings. If true, the variance between such respondents could be misunderstood as a difference in general levels of perceived threat, when it should be attributed to a systematic tendency to think either about radical Islamic or homegrown terrorism. This potential problem could be remedied by developing measures that offer greater detail on the threat and explicitly frame the specific type of terrorism under study.

The results of this study, particularly the findings related to the radical Islamic frame, are also relevant to a growing scholarly debate over the causes of terrorism and the proposed strategies for responding to it. On one side, some authors argue that the religious character of terrorism is indisputable, that culture matters most in international conflicts and that appreciating this fact is crucial to the proper formulation of U.S. foreign policies (Huntington, 2003). Other authors claim that the supposed religious motive of terrorism is dubious, that placing the emphasis on this motive distracts policymakers

from the real causes of terrorism and that the perpetuation of this stereotype is counterproductive to the struggle against it (Pape 2005).

Previous communication research demonstrated that the first argument was highly available in the U.S. press in the first four years after 9/11. For instance, based on a large sample of articles from the opinion-leading press, one study found that 20 percent of articles on the subject of terrorism associated this threat with religion and that the great majority of these references were to Islam (Woods, 2007). This study suggests that, right or wrong, such an argument elevates subjects' threat perceptions.

The data also have implications for political communication and the official discourse on Iraq in particular. Within a year of 9/11, the U.S. Administration justified its call for a preemptive strike against Iraq by regularly linking the terrorist threat to both the Iraqi government and its possession of weapons of mass destruction. Media scholars showed how the "triple threat" (the dictator Saddam Hussein, his links to al Qaeda and access to Weapons of Mass Destruction) became engrained in news coverage running up to the war in Iraq (Fried, 2005; Entman, 2004; Moeller, 2004; Gershkoff and Kushner, 2005). In fact, some news organizations would later criticize their own coverage and apologize for printing flawed intelligence and relying too heavily on unscrupulous sources (*New York Times*, 2004).

The potentially severe consequences of a "nuclear Iraq," given its supposed links to terrorist organizations, were thought to worry many Americans and thereby convince them that the use of preemptive military force was warranted. The data from this study provided some support for this claim, demonstrating that 1) the nuclear frame produced higher levels of dread than an alternative frame, 2) that dread substantially predicted

worry, controlling for other variables, and 3) that worry was a significant, positive predictor of the subjects' support for the Iraq war. These results urge further research on the messages produced by the U.S. Administration and disseminated by media in the run up to the Iraq war in early 2003.

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CHAPTER 4

Elite Press Coverage of Terrorism: What We Talk about when we Talk about Terrorism[40]

Introduction

The previous chapter offered empirical support for the claim that some news portrayals of terrorism are more likely to increase people's threat perceptions than others. The central aim of this chapter, in short, is to explain when and under what circumstances these fear-inducing news frames appear in the elite press in the United States. I begin by discussing the general relationship between the mass media and society. Reflecting on the findings from Chapter 3, I then further define the dimensions of "high-threat" versus "low-threat" press content. Next, I move to a specific explanation of the factors that predict the level of threat portrayed in newspaper articles. Finally, I describe how these dimensions changed over an eight-year period centered around the attacks on 9/11 and explain how these portrayals were associated with other important news topics, including the use of military force, the protection of civil liberties and the image of the Muslim religion.

Media and Society

Researchers have long understood that the political and economic forces in society greatly influence mass media content (Gamson et al., 1992, 2). In a classic book on this subject, entitled *Four Theories of the Press,* Siebert et al. (1956) contend that

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40. A version of this chapter first appeared in the *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics,* 12(3): 3-20.

media content is ultimately determined by where a given society falls on a political

continuum. The authors position a centralized authoritarian society on one side (the

"authoritarian" model) and a free and democratic power on the other side (the "social

responsibility" model). Countries closer to the latter model are more likely to exhibit

greater diversity on important social issues, "see that all sides are fairly presented" and

make sure "the public has enough information to decide" how to respond to problems

(1956, 5) than countries nearer to the authoritarian model.

In the half century since the publication of *Four Theories of the Press,* media

scholars have criticized the book from all directions. Some see it as nothing more than a

Cold War artifact, an international media theory based solely on the ideologized models

that existed in the Soviet Union and the United States at mid-century. However, in spite

of its rhetorical and normative character, the book remains influential as a broad

framework for understanding the macro-social factors, ideology in particular, that

influence media content in a given society (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, 7).

In fact, it is difficult to find a macro-analytical model that does not exhibit some

similarities to Siebert's classic example. For instance, by opposing the "dominance

model" to the "pluralist model," McQuail (2000) offers a similar dichotomy for

comparing media systems. In the dominance model, the media is controlled by a small

group of powerful individuals and media content is "selective and decided from 'above'"

(McQuail, 2000, 70). In contrast, the pluralist model assumes that power is disseminated

among diverse groups in a free society. People who hold mutually exclusive goals are

allowed access to the media, resulting in a plurality of views in the various media outlets.

Drawing on the normative logic of Siebert et al. (1956), the pluralist model has been

associated with the free-market democracies of the West, while the dominance model has been linked to authoritarian nations such as Russia or China.

If Siebert's social responsibility model (or McQuail's pluralist model) fit the case of the United States, the framing of terrorism would reflect the diversity of the nation's groups and institutions—from the Administration of George W. Bush to privacy and civil liberties groups and the antiwar community—all of whom have a stake in defining this crucial social problem.

There are many reasons, however, to question this assumption. For critical scholars, "media content is seen as both expressing and furthering the power of elites or propertied classes" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, 228).[41] Theorists from this tradition argue that the scope of political and social debate in any society usually comprises an innocuous set of views, none of which question the prevailing ideology established by the powerful elites (Molotch & Lester, 1974; Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Altschull, 1995).

Ideological forces may play an especially important role in news coverage of terrorism, particularly after 9/11, because the threat itself was intertwined with a number of divisive social issues, such as the use of military force, the preservation of civil liberties and the funding of new security and defense measures. For instance, a study of international press content (Woods, 2007a; see Shlapentokh, Woods, Shiraev, 2005) showed how ideological forces strongly influenced press coverage of 9/11 in seven foreign countries. Although disagreements on the issues surrounding 9/11 in the United States have not been as deep as in the international context, the debates have polarized

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41. Many of the authors who support this position draw on the Marxist tradition. As Parenti wrote, citing Marx directly, "those who control the material means of production also control the mental means of production" (1986, 32).

the American political landscape, pitting the political establishment against a less powerful oppositional force.

Donohue, Tichenor and Olien (1995) use the "guard-dog" metaphor to explain this relationship between media content and the dominant power structure in society. They argue that unlike a "watchdog," the media function as a guard dog that helps maintain the status quo and protect the existing system. If the press acts like a guard dog, which is directly opposed to the social responsibility model, the framing of the terrorist threat would likely reflect the views and interests of the dominant groups in society. Moreover, it is well known, as described below, that even in democracies, the media usually report on foreign affairs from the perspective of their government. I now move to a specific discussion on how the media's portrayal, or framing, of the terrorist threat may be influenced by the political establishment and other sociological variables.

Story Elements as Indicators of Terrorism Threat

As discussed in Chapter 3, I use the psychometric paradigm as a tool to identify "high threat" story elements in newspaper articles (Fischhoff et al. 1978; Sjöberg 2005; Covello 1992; Slovic 2004). The model draws on cognitive scales and multiple regression methods to identify the qualitative characteristics of hazards that affect the way people perceive them. Two dimensions in particular—"newness" and "dread"—are thought to influence public threat perceptions (Fischhoff et al. 1978). Dangers perceived as being new are judged as more risky than dangers perceived as old, even when the old danger has a greater statistical probability of causing harm. Dreaded dangers--that is, hazards that could harm many people, cause catastrophic damage, or have lasting effects on society or the environment--are also known to inflate risk judgments. As discussed in

detail later, both of these dimensions represent common story elements in news coverage of terrorism.

Previous studies have also shown that the salience (or "cognitive availability") of a hazard increases people's judgments of its likelihood of causing harm (Slovic 2004). When people lack information about a given danger, they tend to assess its likelihood of causing harm by whether an example of the danger easily comes to mind (Tversky and Kahneman 1974). As explained by Sunstein (2004:121), "In the aftermath of a terrorist act, and for a period thereafter, that act is likely to be both available and salient, and thus to make people think that another such act is likely, whether or not it is in fact." In this way, news organizations may increase threat perceptions not only by describing the threat as something "new" or "dreaded," but also by making it widely available in the public mind.

The salience dimension may be conceptualized as the number of stories that mention the threat of terrorism over a given time period, or as the centrality of this topic within a given article. This distinction is important because, while it is apparent that the general level of news coverage of terrorism rose dramatically after 9/11, it is not clear whether the salience within articles also increased. In fact, the level of within-article salience may have declined after 9/11, because the risk was increasingly linked to extraneous news topics such as the stock market, travel and politics.

While high levels of dread, newness and salience may amplify worries and risk judgments of terrorism, other news elements may moderate these responses. One of the basic precepts of "good journalism" is to offer balanced accounts of important social issues (Bunton 1998). There are at least two reasons to assume that balanced portrayals of

terrorism—that is, messages that supply a rationale for questioning the risk of terrorism—would tend to diminish worries and risk judgments.

First and foremost, a balanced account directly questions some aspect of the risk itself. A message containing counterarguments or contrasting information about the risk would likely decrease the target's perceived susceptibility by countering the effect of the threatening message. This assumption is consistent with the literature on fear appeals. A meta-analysis by Witte and Allen (2000), for instance, demonstrated that strong fear appeals (unbalanced messages) produced higher levels of perceived susceptibility than low or weak fear appeals (balanced messages).

Second, research also shows that people desire a sense of control over their lives when facing uncertainty or potential danger (Brown and Siegel 1988). A balanced account may help people rationalize their low levels of perceived susceptibility and their high levels of perceived control. An unbalanced portrayal, on the other hand, would likely only increase public worries about the danger.

As discussed in the measurement section, I used the four dimensions discussed above--newness, dread, salience and unbalanced portrayals--as the theoretical basis for identifying specific aspects of newspaper content that are likely to increase public perceptions of terrorism. While each of these dimensions will be operationalized separately as a quantitative variable, I will also combine these measures in a single index to indicate the overall level of terrorism threat in articles.

Factors Related to the Threat Level in Newspaper Articles

A well-established finding in media research is that journalists rely heavily on official sources for framing the content of stories (Gans 1979; Cohen 1963). According to

Bennett (1994:23), "The dominance of official, particularly executive branch, sources is even more pronounced in national security stories than for the news as a whole." In the case of 9/11 coverage, Li and Izard (2003) found that newspapers and television networks relied more on government sources than other sources during the crisis. A report by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (2002:2) showed that government officials were not only commonly used as information sources, but that "the press heavily favored pro-Administration and official U.S. viewpoints—as high as 71% early on." Other studies of 9/11 coverage have made similar claims (Entman, 2003; Traugott and Brader, 2003; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003).

Meanwhile, following the attacks on 9/11, the Bush Administration made it clear to the nation and to Congress that the United States would respond to the threat using military force. The heightened threat of terrorism was used, directly or indirectly, by numerous government officials, as well as a host of pundits and commentators, to justify the military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq (National Security Strategy 2002; Daalder et al. 2002). Based on this research and reasoning, I offer two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 6: Articles that used more government sources than nongovernmental sources will have higher threat level than articles that used more nongovernmental sources.

Hypothesis 7: Articles that favored a military response will have higher threat levels than articles that did not favor a military response.

In addition to using military actions as a means for controlling terrorism, the Bush Administration introduced several security measures known as the USA Patriot Act that

increased law enforcement powers, reduced the free flow of information and limited other civil liberties. The new laws gained a great deal of attention from politicians, scholars, media and the public (e.g., Leone and Anrig 2003; Baker and Stack 2006; Cole and Dempsey 2006; Graber 2003). Some authors argued that an unjustified or exaggerated level of public concern about terrorism had pushed officials to support the intrusions on civil liberties and that the media played an important role in creating and sustaining these concerns (Sunstein 2003, 2004; Huddy et al. 2003). I therefore offer the following hypothesis:

> Hypothesis 8: Articles that supported the Patriot Act (or similar measures that reduced civil liberties) will have higher threat levels than articles that did not support the Patriot Act.

In the first days after the 9/11 attacks, many commentators and public officials framed the conflict in religious terms or referred to the perpetrators as Islamic extremists or Muslim radicals. By the mid-2000s, according to public opinion polls, the idea that Islam encouraged violence more than other religions was supported by a large percentage of Americans.[42] While the popular association between Islam and terrorist violence is likely rooted in a long series of past events, from the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979-1981 to the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000, this association likely became more prominent in the public mind as media coverage of terrorism greatly increased after 9/11 (Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2003; Nacos 1994; Traugott and Brader 2003).

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42. See a survey by the Pew Research Center (2004), which found that "A plurality of Americans (46 percent) believes that Islam is more likely than other religions to encourage violence among its believers." See also a Gallup Poll report that 51 percent of Americans perceive "Islamic Fundamentalism" as a "critical threat" to the "vital interests of the United States" (D.W. Moore, "Terrorism, Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction Most Critical Threats. Few Partisan and Socioeconomic Differences on Rankings of Threats," *Gallup News Service,* March 8, 2004).

The prediction here is not that the press used negative or stereotypical news frames to describe Muslim Americans or Islamic groups within the United States, but that the topic of religion, Islam in particular, often emerged in articles that discussed the identity of the terrorists, the cause of 9/11, or the possible motivation for terrorist attacks in the future. Specifically, I offer the following hypothesis:

> Hypothesis 9: Articles that mentioned the suspected terrorists' religion will have higher threat levels than articles that did not mention the terrorists' religion.

Another factor that may be associated with the level of threat portrayed in the press is the nearness of the given newspaper to high-profile targets, the sites of the 9/11 attacks in particular. Given the previous research on this topic, the effect of proximity is unclear. On one hand, a study by Fischhoff et al. (2003) found that judgments of terrorism risk were higher among people living within 100 miles of the World Trade Center than among those living farther away. These results were replicated, in part, in a study by Woods et al. (2008).

If this tendency held for editors and journalists as well, I expect that newspapers located in New York City and Washington DC (the sites of the 9/11 attacks) would produce articles with higher risk levels than newspapers from geographically remote cities (I used the *Anchorage Daily News* in Alaska and the *Lincoln Journal Star* in Nebraska for the comparison). On the other hand, the acts of 9/11 were widely covered in the local press via wire services, which may have homogenized the imagery and framing of the attacks across the nation. Moreover, as described by Traugott and Brader (2003:183), "conventional media models" and "the standard criteria of newsworthiness

are thought to apply to a news story about terrorism," which may have also diminished differences in coverage between newspapers located near and far from the sites of the 9/11 attacks. Given these opposing rationales, I examine the influence of proximity from an exploratory perspective with the following research question:

Research Question 1: Is the level of terrorism threat greater in articles published in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* than in the *Anchorage Daily News* and *Lincoln Journal Star?*

Method

The aim of this study was to measure portrayals of terrorism in the "elite press" in the United States. Based on previous studies (Ten Eyck and Williment 2003; Horvit 2003; Swain 2003; Hertog 2000), I chose the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* as indicators of the elite press.[43] These newspapers are known for playing key roles in national decision-making (Gitlin 1980; Gans 1979). Moreover, the two papers were used in a similar study of terrorism coverage (Li and Izard 2003), which may offer an opportunity for cross-study comparisons. In addition, I analyzed the *Anchorage Daily News* and the *Lincoln Journal Star* to test the relationship between geography and the

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43. According to 2006 data from the Audit Bureau of Circulation, the *New York Times* is the largest metropolitan newspaper in the United States. It is owned by The New York Times Company, which is a publically traded company controlled by Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr. The *Washington Post* is owned by The Washington Post Company, another publically traded company, whose major shareholders include Katharine Graham and Berkshire Hathaway. Both newspapers officially endorsed John Kerry in the 2004 election.

level of terrorism threat in articles.[44] These newspapers are located in remote cities in two

of the least populated states in the nation.[45]

The unit of analysis was the article. The electronic archive Lexis-Nexis was used

to select all the related articles published between September 11, 1997 and September 11,

2005.[46] Articles that contained one of seven different search terms were collected and

categorized.[47] In most cases, the entire population of relevant articles was included in the

sample. A systematic random sample was taken for the *New York Times* and *Washington*

Post during the post-9/11 period, because the number of relevant articles was exceedingly

high (the sample included roughly 200 articles from each newspaper). The total sample

included 753 articles.

Measurement

Dependent variables

As discussed, there are certain abstract dimensions of the threat—newness, dread,

salience and unbalance portrayals—that are likely to increase concerns about the danger.

In this section, I describe how these dimensions were identified in newspaper content and

operationalized as quantitative variables. Starting with the newness dimension, I found

that some articles portrayed the threat as something new to the United States, increasing,

44. The *Lincoln Journal Star* is owned by Lee Enterprises, and the *Anchorage Daily News* is owned by The McClatchy Company; both are publicly traded companies. The former backed John Kerry, while the latter supported George W. Bush in the 2004 election.

45. According to census data from 2000, the Alaskan population was 626,932 (third smallest) and Nebraska was 1,711,263 (tenth smallest).

46. This period of coverage represents the largest symmetrical time frame (i.e., four years before and after 9/11) that could be constructed when the collection of data began.

47. The search terms included: threat of terror!, terror! threat, terror! alert, terror! warning, risk of terror!, terror! risk and war on terror! The exclamation point represents a wildcard function that allows the search engine to find all variations of the term "terror," including terrorism, terrorist and terrorists.

elevated, worsening, or suggested that the nation's ability to defend itself against terrorism had weakened. Articles that included these or similar descriptors were coded as 1; articles without these descriptors were coded as 0.

I measured the dread dimension using three components. One component was found in articles that speculated about "nuclear," "chemical" or "biological" attacks being carried out in the United States. The second component of dread was seen in articles that described the terrorists as "suicide bombers" or discussed their willingness to die in order to harm others. The third component consisted of a pooled category that included several other dread-related words and phrases, such as "potentially catastrophic," "uncontrollable," "severe," "high," and "real." When used to describe the threat, these three components—nuclear etc., suicide and other dread-related words—are all likely to increase public risk judgments and concerns as a function of the dread dimension.

However, I separated the components in order to account for their unique and substantively interesting characteristics. I also wished to draw a quantitative distinction between articles that contained zero, one, two or all three of these distinct components. Articles containing none of these components were coded as 0; articles containing 1, 2, or 3 of the components were scored as 1, 2 and 3, respectively. For example, an article that discussed the "high" risk of "nuclear" attacks by "suicidal" terrorists would receive a score of 3 on the dread dimension.

I measured the salience dimension with two components. For the first component, I determined whether more than 50 percent of the paragraphs in the given article mentioned the terrorist threat to the United States (if yes, 1; if no, 0).[48] Second, I counted

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48. If there was an equal number of "on topic" and "off topic" paragraphs, the decision was based on the number of sentences. It should also be noted that the optimal measure of this component would have been a

the number of times the article used the words "terror," "terrorist," or "terrorism"; this component was then scored based on a scale ranging from 0.1 (one occurrence) to 1.0 (ten or more occurrences). Combining the two components, the highest score on the salience dimension would be 2, in which case more than half the article would be on-topic and the term terrorism would be mentioned 10 or more times.

The unbalanced portrayals dimension, like the newness dimension, was measured with a simple dichotomous variable. I found that some articles questioned the scope or intensity of the threat or balanced high risk assessments with low risk accounts, while others did not. Articles from the first category were coded as 0, from the second as 1.

The final component was based on a qualitative assessment of the articles. In pre-testing the protocol, I came to believe that the seven manifest components described above may not account for all aspects of terrorism risk in articles. Much of the commentary on this topic contains subtle details, nuances, stylistic elements and a particular tone that cannot be gauged by a rigid quantitative scale. In our attempt to account for these subtleties, as well as to substantiate the validity of the index (as discussed later), I included the coder's overall subjective judgment of each article based on a scale ranging from 0 to 1. It should be noted, especially for those concerned about including a qualitative component in a quantitative index, that the relative weight of this component in the overall index was quite small and that the results of this study would not change significantly if I took the qualitative component out of the index.

To summarize, this study was designed to measure four abstract dimensions of terrorism—newness, dread, salience and unbalanced portrayals. The newness and

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percentage of on topic versus off topic paragraphs. This procedure, however, would have been very time consuming.

unbalanced dimensions were each based on one component of newspaper content, while dread and salience were based on three and two components, respectively. These seven components were measured using a quantitative content analysis. An eighth component was developed using a qualitative assessment of the articles. Combining these components in a single index, each article was rated on a scale between 0.1 and 8 (the higher the rating, the greater the threat). In order to offer both a specific and general assessment of terrorism risk in newspaper content, I will report the results for each of the four dimensions, as well as the overall index.

Independent variables

All the independent variables were dichotomous--that is, the article either included the given content characteristic or did not. If the article associated the terrorist threat with the Muslim religion in any way, I coded it as 1 (if not, 0). If a military response to terrorism was advocated in more than half of the article's relevant paragraphs, it was coded as 1 (if not, 0). If the Patriot Act (or similar measures) was supported in more than half of the article's relevant paragraphs, it was coded as 1 (if not, 0). If the article described the threat using more government sources than non government sources, it was coded as 1 (if not, 0). Finally, articles from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* (newspapers located near the 9/11 sites) were coded as 1; articles from the remote newspapers, the *Anchorage Daily News* and the *Lincoln Journal Star,* were coded as 0. The complete codebook and protocol used in this study appear in Appendix C.

Validity

The validity of this terrorism threat index was supported by a comparison between two operationally distinct measures. As discussed, the index comprised seven manifest characteristics of content and one qualitative assessment made by the coders. The first type of measure assumed that specific words and phrases, such as "dirty bomb" or "bioterrorism," captured a particular dimension of terrorism that tends to increase public perceptions of the danger. The second measure was based on the common sense assumption that people can use their own personal judgments and interpretations to rate the level of danger portrayed in articles. Given the universal nature of risk, I also supposed that most people would offer similar ratings of the risk (this assumption was supported by an inter-coder reliability test, as noted below).

Though conceptually and operationally distinct, the two measures were essentially intended for the same purpose: to indicate the level of threat in articles. To explore this assumption empirically, I tested the association between each of the seven manifest components and the coder's overall assessment.[49] Based on a multiple regression analysis, in which the coder's evaluation was treated as the dependent variable and the manifest components as predictors, our assumption was strongly confirmed. Each manifest characteristic had a significantly high, independent, positive association with the coder's subjective evaluation of the articles. This finding supports the validity of both measures. Also worth noting is the high R Square value (.760; $p < .001$), which indicates that the manifest components represent a strong set of explanatory variables.

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49. It should be noted that the same coder produced both the quantitative (manifest components) and qualitative (overall assessment) measurements of the content.

Reliability

Moving to the issue of reliability, inter-coder agreement tests were conducted on all the variables using 8 percent of the total articles in the sample (a systematic random sample was used for choosing the test articles). A correlation analysis was used to measure the inter-coder reliability of the terrorism threat index; I found that the correlation between coders was sufficiently high (r = .87). The percentage of agreement on the five independent variables ranged from 89 percent to 100 percent. Scott's Pi, which corrects for chance agreement, ranged from .77 to 1.0 on these variables.

Analysis

Our analysis consists of four parts. I begin with a brief review of the study's descriptive statistics. Next, I describe how the threat level in the press fluctuated over time. Third, I use Pearson correlation coefficients to determine the strength of the relationship between the five independent variables (published near 9/11 sites, government source dominant, supports military response, supports liberties reduction, religion associated with terrorism) and each of the four dependent variables (newness, dread, salience and unbalanced portrayals), as well as the combined index. The fourth section includes a multiple regression analysis that tests the influence of each independent variable, while controlling for the other variables.

Descriptive statistics

A total of 753 articles were analyzed in this study. Three quarters of the articles were published in the post-9/11 period, one quarter during the pre-9/11 period. Articles

from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* comprised 73 percent of the sample, while 27 percent came from the *Anchorage Daily News* and the *Lincoln Journal Star*. Government officials were the most prevalent sources in 47 percent of the articles; nongovernmental sources were dominant in 53 percent of the articles. One in five articles (20 percent) associated the threat of terrorism with religion and the great majority were references to Islam. Roughly the same percentage of articles was mostly in favor of a military response to terrorism (19 percent), while the number of articles that supported the Patriot Act or similar security measures was much smaller at 5 percent.

The terrorist threat over time

As expected, the number of articles on terrorism increased dramatically after 9/11.[50] The *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, for instance, published roughly three times more articles on this topic in the first three months following 9/11 than in the four preceding years. However, while the level of terrorism threat in articles also spiked after 9/11, it declined rather quickly and generally fluctuated over the eight-year period (see Figure 7).[51] Overall, the average threat level was slightly higher in the pre-9/11 period (3.44) than after the attacks (3.09). The same results were found for three of the four dimensions of terrorism risk (newness, dread and salience). Unbalanced portrayals, however, were more common in the post-9/11 period (59 percent of pre-9/11 articles compared to 64 percent of post-9/11 articles were unbalanced).

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50. For a detailed analysis of the trends in media coverage of terrorism, see Kern, Just and Norris 2003.

51. Based on the combined index, the average terrorism risk level in articles published between September 11, 1997 and December 31, 1998 was 4.07. After a 1-point decline in 1999, the average increased each year until 2002 when it reversed course and trended downward.

Figure 7: Average Terrorism Risk Level in the Press from 1997 to 2005

Period	Value
09/11/97-12/31/98	4.1
1999	3.05
2000	3.25
01/01/01-09/11/01	3.55
09/12/01-12/31/01	3.9
2002	3.15
2003	2.9
2004	2.7
01/01/05-09/11/05	2.8
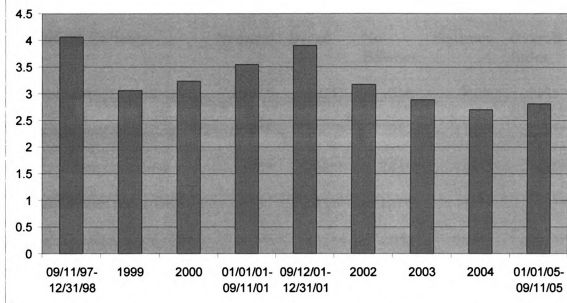
Correlation analysis

Newspapers located near the sites of 9/11 (*Washington Post* and *New York Times*) tended to publish articles with higher levels of newness, dread and salience than the remote newspapers (*Anchorage Daily News* and *Lincoln Journal Star*). However, nearness to the 9/11 sites was not associated with the level of unbalanced portrayals. As shown in Table 8, there was a significant positive correlation between nearness to the 9/11 sites and three of the four dimensions of terrorism threat, as well as the combined index ($r = .114$; $p < .01$). Given the relative weakness of these correlations, however, I considered these results as more illustrative than definitive.

Table 8: Correlations Between Terrorism Threat and Other Variables in Newspaper Articles

Independent Variables	Pearson Correlation Coefficients				
	Newness	Dread	No Balance	Salience	Overall Index
Published near 9/11 sites	.099**	.102**	.016	.080*	.113**
Government source dominant	.194**	.166**	.012	.119**	.208**
Supports military response	.137**	.248**	.243**	.166**	.327**
Supports liberties reduction	.033	.122**	.107**	.150**	.175**
Religion associated w/ terrorism	.079*	.171**	-.052	.287**	.221**

Notes: * = p < .05; ** = p < .01.

The results found in the case of government source dominance were more decisive. I should first note that the social actors categorized as "government sources" offered similar portrayals of the threat, regardless of their particular occupation or political affiliation. As shown in Table 9, the mean threat levels for almost all types of government officials (Clinton Administration, Bush Administration, Republicans, Democrats and other officials) were greater than the mean for nongovernmental sources, with one exception found in the relatively few articles dominated by Senator John Kerry. There was a significant positive relationship between government source dominance and three of the four threat dimensions, as well as the combined index (r = .208; p < .01).

Table 9: Mean Terrorism Threat Level by Source Dominance

Dominant Source	Mean	N	Standard Deviation
Bush Administration	4.22	77	1.54
Clinton Administration	4.20	22	1.99
Senator John Kerry	2.47	12	1.98
Other officials identified as Democrats	2.83	26	1.82
Other officials identified as Republicans	3.13	13	1.59
Other officials (no political affiliation mentioned)	3.47	204	1.78
Nongovernmental sources (newspaper staff, ordinary people, others)	2.78	389	1.82
Foreign sources	4.02	10	1.97
Total	3.18	753	1.85

An even stronger relationship was seen in the case of articles that favored a military response. This variable was strongly and significantly correlated with all four dimensions of the threat and the combined index ($r = .327$; $p < .01$). Support for measures that reduced civil liberties was significantly correlated with three of the four dimensions and the combined index ($r = .175$; $p < .01$). Finally, articles that associated terrorism with Islam had greater threat levels than articles that did not. Again, as shown in Table 8, this variable was significantly correlated with three of the four dimensions and the combined index ($r = .221$; $p < .01$).

Multiple regression analysis

To answer Research Question 1 and test the four hypotheses stated above, I

conducted a multiple regression analysis. Terrorism threat, as measured by the combined

index, was the dependent variable. The five theoretically relevant aspects of newspaper

content were treated as independent variables. In constructing the model, the basic

assumptions and potential shortcomings of regression modeling were considered and found

to be unproblematic.[52]

Table 10: Regression Model Showing Standardized Regression Coefficients for Five Predictors of Terrorism Threat in Newspaper Articles (all newspapers combined)

Independent variables	Standardized Regression Coefficients
Published near 9/11 sites	.076*
Government source dominant	.163***
Supports military response	.278***
Supports liberties reduction	.137***
Religion associated with terrorism	.181***
R Square	.198***

Notes: * = $p < .05$; *** = $p < .001$; Published near 9/11 sites was scored as follows: 0 = articles from the *Anchorage Daily News* and *Lincoln Journal Star* and 1 = articles from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post;* Government source dominant was 0 = nongovernmental source and 1 = government source; Supports military response was 0 = military response not unsupported and 1 = military response supported; Supports liberties reduction was 0 = liberties reduction not supported and 1 = liberties reduction supported;

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52. The dependent variable was normally distributed; we also checked for multicollinearity (i.e., when the independent variables are highly correlated and have little unique explanatory power) and found that the four significant predictors in the model had relatively weak correlations with each other and strong correlations with the dependent variable terrorism risk. By adding these variables into the model one at a time, we also found that each increased R Square substantially.

Religion associated with terrorism was 0 = religion not associated with terrorism and 1 = religion associated with terrorism.

As shown in Table 10, all five variables contributed significantly to the explained variance of terrorism threat (R Square = .198; p < .001). Addressing Research Question 1, I found that the nearness of a newspaper to the 9/11 sites was a weak but significant predictor in articles (beta = .076; p < .05). (Note that "beta" refers to standardized regression coefficients). Confirming Hypotheses 6 through 9, the variables Government source dominant (beta = .163; p < .001), Supports military response (beta = .278; p < .001), Supports liberties reduction (beta = .137; p < .001) and Religion associated with terrorism (beta = .181; p < .001) proved to be modest but significant predictors. Each of these characteristics increased the threat level in articles. As demonstrated in Table 11, almost all of these relationships were also found when I split the sample of articles into two groups: newspapers close to 9/11 sites (*New York Times* and *Washington Post*), and newspapers far away from them (*Lincoln Journal Star* and the *Anchorage Daily News*).

Table 11: Regression Model Showing Standardized Regression Coefficients for Four Predictors of Terrorism Threat in Newspaper Articles (newspapers separated by proximity to 9/11 sites)

Independent variables	Standardized Regression Coefficients	
	New York Times & Washington Post	Lincoln Journal Star & Anchorage Daily News
Government source dominant	.159***	.183**
Supports military response	.244***	.407***
Supports liberties reduction	.159***	.040
Religion associated with terrorism	.193***	.165*
R Square	.169***	.258***

Notes: * = p < .05; ** = p < .01; *** = p < .001; Government source dominant was 0 = nongovernmental source and 1 = government source; Supports military response was 0 = military response not unsupported and 1 = military response supported; Supports liberties reduction was 0 = liberties reduction not supported and 1 = liberties reduction supported; Religion associated with terrorism was 0 = religion not associated with terrorism and 1 = religion associated with terrorism.

Discussion

The issue of how and to what extent the United States is threatened by international terrorism is deeply interwoven in other important news topics and social issues. In the wake of 9/11, given the perceived increase in the risk, numerous politicians, experts and commentators called for a swift and mighty response from the United States military. The threat of terrorism was commonly used as a justification for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the surge in American troop levels in Iraq in early 2007. As this study showed, the elite press clearly reflected the strategic and rhetorical link between threat and

war. Articles that made a case for a military response tended to contain higher levels of terrorism threat than articles that did not. The same association was found between the threat and the need for enhanced homeland security measures, such as the USA Patriot Act, which effectively degraded some of the freedoms and civil liberties enjoyed by Americans.

A strong relationship also existed between source selection and press portrayals of the risk. Supporting the findings of Bennett (1994) and others, the journalists in our sample relied heavily on official sources when describing the threat of terrorism. Nearly half the articles in the sample (47 percent) included more government sources than nongovernmental sources. Our study also showed that government officials, Administration officials in particular, tended to describe the risk of terrorism in more ominous and weighty terms than nongovernmental officials. It should be noted, however, that I did not find a partisan bias in this respect. For example, as shown in Table 9, articles dominated by the Clinton and Bush Administrations exhibited, on average, almost exactly the same level of threat.

The subject of religion, Islam in particular, was another important issue that often emerged in press portrayals of terrorism. In fact, every fifth article in our sample associated religion in one way or another with the threat. While previous studies have shown that the media avoided making specific negative statements about Muslim Americans and Islamic organizations in the United States, there was still a tendency to link Islam in general to some of the scariest accounts of the terrorist threat.

This finding is relevant to a growing debate over the causes of terrorism and the strategies proposed for responding to it. On one side, some authors argue that the religious character of terrorism is indisputable, that culture matters most in international

conflicts and that appreciating this fact is crucial to the proper formulation of U.S. foreign policies. Other authors claim that the supposed religious motive of terrorism is dubious, that placing the emphasis on this motive distracts policymakers from the real causes of terrorism and that the perpetuation of this stereotype is counterproductive to the struggle against it (Pape 2005). While this study cannot speak to the cause of terrorism itself, I can conclude that the former argument prevailed in the elite press and that religious identities and motives were often associated with the most frightening portrayals of terrorism in the United States.

Our study revealed a weaker relationship between the closeness of a newspaper to the sites of 9/11 and the level of terrorism threat in articles. On one hand, given the enormous scope and intensity of the 9/11 events, it was not surprising that the level in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* exceeded that of the geographically remote newspapers from Nebraska (*Lincoln Journal Star*) and Alaska (*Anchorage Daily News*). On the other hand, the statistical significance of this relationship was not strong enough to warrant a decisive conclusion on the effects of proximity. While I found these data interesting, further research is needed, especially studies that take into account a larger sample of newspapers from across the country, to develop this perspective.

One of this project's most surprising findings was that, while the level of terrorism threat indicated in the mass media spiked after 9/11, it leveled off and declined rather quickly. The average threat level in articles published in 2002 was roughly equivalent to the level in 2000. In fact, the average level in pre-9/11 articles was slightly higher than in post-9/11 articles. One possible explanation is that pre-9/11 articles were generally more focused on the risk itself, whereas after 9/11 the issue often played a

secondary role in a wider range of news topics, which would have moderated the average level of terrorism threat during this period.

The events of 9/11 transformed the way Americans think and talk about terrorism. In the years following the attacks, references to and speculation about this strategic danger were offered by all spectrums of society, from government officials, military leaders and terrorism experts to political pundits, private security companies, religious leaders, artists, writers and athletes. Once a unique national security issue, discussed primarily by politicians and security officials, the threat of terrorism now ranks among the most important social problems of the twenty-first century—one with numerous links to other public issues and personal relevance to almost everyone.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion: Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

Summary

How did the events of September 11, 2001, and the perceived threat of terrorism in particular, change American society? This is a complicated question and one that cuts across different academic terrains. To answer it, an investigator must take into account psychological processes (attitudes, beliefs, emotions and so forth) of individuals, as well as the macro-social structures (private and public organizations, political institutions and economic forces) that shape these experiences.

The aim of this dissertation was to investigate and report on some of these social and psychological processes. I attempted to show that 1) macro-social and organizational factors explain the characteristics of terrorism news coverage, 2) these massages affect people's worries about the danger, 3) concerns about terrorism are associated with a range of in-group and out-group processes and orientations, such as patriotism, trust in government and willingness to use harsh military tactics, and 4) these public attitudes were consonant with the Bush Administration's aggressive foreign and domestic policies.

In order to emphasize the real-life implications of this dissertation, I told the story of 9/11 in reverse. I began with a discussion on the policy changes in the post-9/11 period, which included the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the massive increases in federal defense spending, upgraded security measures in all areas of the critical infrastructure, reductions in civil liberties and shifts in immigration policy.

These historic political events would not have been possible without broad public support for the Bush Administration and numerous aspects of the "War on Terror." Chapter 2 reviewed the evidence for this broad support and considered how it may be related to people's worries about terrorism. I suggested that, after 9/11, public concerns about the danger functioned as an "organizing force," not unlike an ideological dimension or belief system, which shaped the way they thought about a variety of political and social issues. The horrific events of 9/11 should not be treated as an isolated incident, but rather as a cultural trauma that transformed the American mindset.

Moving one step back in the causal chain, I then investigated the underlying determinants of these worries and fears. Unlike many hazards of everyday life, such as car accidents and the common cold, very few Americans have experienced terrorism first hand. For this reason, people's thoughts and feelings about the danger are strongly influenced by mass mediated information and images, from Hollywood movies and sensationalized news broadcasts to televised political debates and reports in the opinion-leading press.

Chapter 3 employed an experimental research design to determine whether certain qualitative variations in the latter might influence people's perceptions of the threat. Although the term "terrorism" itself did not seem to directly effect the subjects' perceptions, the terms "nuclear" and "radical Islam" did. Based on the evidence, I can only speculate about the intentions of the Bush Administration, but I can suggest that its decision to link Saddam Hussein to international terrorist organizations and stress the dangers of Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction" was an effective tool in convincing

much of Congress and the American people to go along with its preemptive strike against the regime of Saddam Hussein.

The evidence in Chapter 3 also revealed much about the relationship between Islam and terrorism in the public mind. While I cannot remark on the cause of terrorism, my findings suggest that Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis, which highlights religion and culture as key sources of conflict, resonates with the public. News stories that associate Islamic radicals with the terrorist threat, as opposed to homegrown terrorists, elevate people's worries, risk judgments and perceptions of the potential consequences of an attack.

These findings have important implications for the lives of Arabs and Muslims living in the United States. Given the salience of the Islam-terrorism link in the public mind, the persistence of negative attitudes and the high level of hate crimes aimed at these groups, government efforts to defuse negative stereotypes, combat hate crime and further protect American civil liberties are in great demand.

In the previous chapter of this dissertation, I investigated the conditions under which "high threat" portrayals of terrorism appear in the press. I found that the public discussion of this threat is deeply intertwined with a number of other important social issues, including the use of military force, the protection of civil liberties and the image of the Muslim religion.

In this chapter, I showed that the Bush Administration's emphasis on the threat of terrorism as a justification for war was reflected in the elite press. Articles that showed support for going to war or increasing troop strength in Iraq and Afghanistan were much more likely to offer highly threatening portrayals of terrorism than articles that did not

make this point. The same relationship held in the case of the USA Patriot Act and the government's call for giving up some civil liberties to curb the threat. Adding to the normative concerns about the treatment of Arabs and Muslims, this chapter also showed that the Islam-terrorism link appeared regularly in the elite press. Articles that associated religion with terrorism were more frequently coupled with high threat characteristics, such nuclear, chemical or biological attacks, than articles that never mentioned religion.

Strengths and Weaknesses

To begin with the strengths of this dissertation, the experimental study shows that the perceived threat of terrorism is not, contrary to previous research and theorizing, one-dimensional. Terrorism is a multidimensional hazard that evokes a range of thoughts and feelings. In line with the psychometric paradigm, the qualitative characteristics of the threat influence the way people perceive it. While the theoretical basis of this finding is not new, no other empirical study, to my best knowledge, has defended this perspective in the case of terrorism. Future studies—survey research in particular—should take these results into account. While most measures of the perceived threat of terrorism carefully distinguish between personal and collective ("sociotropic") dangers, very few measures contextualize the motive behind the threat, or the weaponry that could be used in an attack.

The content analysis portion of the dissertation also makes an important contribution. This study offers a reliable and valid measure of the threat level in written communication. While I used the "terrorism threat index" to examine newspaper content, it could easily be applied to the study of television news transcripts, political speeches, corporate marketing campaigns, transcriptions of interviews and other socially important

documents. The index also comprises both quantitative and qualitative components. Content measures based on mixed methods increase the validity of the findings, but they are relatively rare in the social and communication sciences.

The combination of the two studies represents a third strength of the dissertation. This is the first, terrorism-related study that brings together a news-frame experiment and a content analysis. Most communication research on the threat of terrorism focuses either on the effects of media content or the origins of the content, even though these two areas of research are inextricably linked. The present study does both. It identifies some of the frames that elevate people's threat perceptions and explains when and under what circumstances these frames appear in the elite press in the United States.

The research presented here also has a number of limitations. First, the framing effects experiment only tested three frames: "terrorism," "radical Islam" and "nuclear." There may be several other characteristics of news coverage that have similar effects on people's thoughts and feelings. Does framing the threat as a local versus national problem influence public perceptions? How might the perceived credibility of news sources affect people's thinking about terrorism? The present study measured subjects' reactions to terrorism motivated either by radical Islam or by homegrown militants who hate their government. It may be worth considering whether other motives, such as mental illness, severe developmental problems, or a young person's anger toward bullies, yield different results.

Second, as previously discussed, the external validity of the experiment is quite weak. A broad generalization of these findings would require a more representative sample than the one assembled for this study. A productive next step might include a similar

experiment embedded in a regional or national survey.

The content analysis had weaknesses as well. First, the number of newspapers considered was small. To determine how a news organization's proximity to a high-profile terrorist target affects its coverage, a much larger sample of newspapers must be drawn. Second, given the decline of newspaper circulation and the increasing skepticism surrounding the impact of this medium on public opinion, future research should move beyond the press and consider other types of media, such as television, radio broadcasts and online sources.

Federal Commission Considers [<Terrorist> / <Security>] Threat to Cities

BY KEVIN SHENON
Associated Press

WASHINGTON – Big cities remain vulnerable to [<terrorist> / <delete>] threats, a nonpartisan federal commission suggested in a report released today.

"I am very worried that [<terrorist> / <some>] groups may use [<a nuclear weapon> / <explosives>] to attack an American city," said Bernard Hamilton, vice chairman of the commission.

Cities with high population densities are "particularly vulnerable" to [<a nuclear explosion,> / <an explosion,>] Hamilton said.

"New screening technologies and portable [<radiation> / <bomb>] detectors are needed to protect the nation's major urban centers against [<a terrorist attack,"> / <an attack,">] said Dr. Kevin Wright, director of the Emergency Response Institute.

[<Radical Islamic groups from foreign countries> / <Homegrown militants>] pose the most serious [<terrorist> / <delete>] threat to Americans, according to the report.

"The most likely perpetrators of new [<terrorist> / <delete>] attacks are small groups [<motivated by Islamic extremism to commit violence against Americans,"> / <of American citizens who view their own government as the enemy,">] the report suggested.

Survey Questions by Variable

Variable	Survey Question	Scale / Answer Format
Pretest Risk Judgment	How would you rate the likelihood of an organized group carrying out a violent attack on a major American city in the next 12 months?	1 (Extremely Unlikely) to 7 (Extremely Likely)
	Next, we would like to ask you the same question, but this time, please give us a number rating between 0% and 100%. A rating of 0% means that there is no chance that an attack will happen in the next 12 months. A rating of 100% means that an attack is certain to happen.	Please write in your answer in the space provided: _____
Posttest Risk Judgment	How would you rate the likelihood of such an attack, as described in the news article, occurring in the next 12 months?	1 (Extremely Unlikely) to 7 (Extremely Likely)
	Next, we would like to ask you the same question, but this time, please give us a number rating between 0% and 100%. A rating of 0% means that there is no chance that an attack will happen in the next 12 months. A rating of 100% means that an attack is certain to happen.	A _____ % chance
Worry	To what extent are you *worried* about such an attack occurring?	1 (Not worried at all) to 7 (Extremely worried)
	How would you rate your *level of worry* on a scale from 0 to 100? A rating of 0 means that you are not at all worried about an attack. A rating of 100 means that you are extremely worried about it.	A rating of _____
Dread	How many people would likely be killed if such an attack took place?	A. Fewer than 10 B. 11 to 100 C. 101 to 1,000 D. 1,001 to 10,000 E. 10,001 to 100,000 F. 100,001 to 1,000,000 G. More than 1,000,000
Manipulation check: Islam	What was the religious group affiliation of the potential attackers described in the story?	A. Buddhist B. Catholic C. Jewish D. Islamic E. The religion of the potential attackers was not mentioned
Manipulation check: Nuclear	What type of weapon was potentially going to be used according to the story?	A. Biological weapons B. Explosives (conventional

bombs)
C. Nuclear weapons
D. Poisonous gas
E. None of the above

Manipulation check: Terrorism	What is your recollection of the number of times that the word "terrorist" was used in the news article that you just read? Please write in your answer in the space provided:	The term "terrorist" was used _____ times.
Sex	We have a few background questions. These are for statistical analysis purposes only. First, are you male or female?	A. Male B. Female
Race/Ethnicity	What is your race/ethnicity?	A. African American or Black B. Asian C. Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin D. White or Caucasian E. Other
Age	How old are you?	Please write in your answer in the space provided:_____
Political Ideology	How would you describe your political ideology?	1 (Very conservative) to 7 (Very liberal)
	How would you describe the level of national news coverage of the terrorist threat to the United States over the last 12 months?	1 (Very light) to 7 (Very heavy)
Civil Liberties	To what extent would you support or oppose new laws to strengthen security measures against terrorism, even if that meant reducing privacy protections such as limits on government searches?	1 (Strongly oppose) to 7 (Strongly support)
	To what extent would you be willing or unwilling to give up some of your personal freedom in order to reduce the threat of terrorism?	1 (Very Unwilling) to 7 (Very willing)
Iraq War	To what extent do you support or oppose the United States having gone to war against Iraq?	1 (Strongly oppose) to 7 (Strongly support)
	To what extent do you support or oppose the United States pulling the troops out of Iraq in the near future?	1 (Strongly oppose) to 7 (Strongly support)

Newspaper coverage of the terrorist threat: Codebook

V1. Story ID number _____

V2. Date (month/day/year) _____

V3. Newspaper name _____

> 1 = New York Times
> 2 = Washington Post
> 3 = Anchorage Daily News
> 4 = Lincoln Journal Star

V4. Section of newspaper _____

> 1 = News sections
> 2 = Editorial/Opinion/Op-Ed
> 3 = Letters
> 4 = Interview
> 5 = Other

V5. Author/Reporter sex _____

> 1 = man   2 = woman   3 = can't tell

Extent of threat

V6. Count occurrences of "terror," "terrorism," or "terrorist(s)" _____

V7. Threat salience: Terror against U.S. homeland only _____

> 1 = 51% or more paragraphs on terrorism against homeland (NOT overseas)
> 0 = 51% or more paragraphs NOT on terrorism against homeland

V8. Dynamics of threat _____

> 1 = Threat deemed new / changing / increasing / elevated / an alert, warning
> 0 = Threat NOT deemed new, etc.

V9. Magnitude of threat (and other worrisome modifiers) _____

> 1 = Threat deemed serious / major / real / high / ever-present / cause of worry, fear

0 = Threat NOT deemed serious, etc.

V10. Nuclear threat   _____

1 = Threat deemed nuclear / biological / chemical / germs / anthrax / nerve gas / weapons of mass destruction
0 = Threat NOT deemed nuclear, etc.

V11. Suicide threat   _____

1 = Threat associated with suicide terrorists or bombers
0 = Threat NOT associated with suicide, etc.

V12. Specificity of threat   _____

1 = Specific threat mentioned (to a particular person, place or thing)
0 = Specific threat NOT mentioned

V13. Threat questioned/balanced   _____

1 = Threat questioned/balanced
0 = Threat NOT questioned/balanced

V14. Overall rating of threat: Coder's general interpretation   _____

0   1   2   3   4   **5**   6   7   8   9   **10**

Low   Somewhat Low   **Moderate** .   Somewhat High   **High**

Attribution of threat

V15. Religion   _____

1 = Terrorism associated with Islam, Muslims, religion, fundamentalists, radicals
0 = Terrorism NOT associated with Islam, etc., or association refuted/rejected

Controlling the threat

V16. Military actions/spending   _____

1 = Mostly/completely supports military actions/spending, war, fighting terrorists
2 = Mixed/balanced/too difficult to judge
3 = Mostly/completely against military actions/spending, war, fighting terrorists
0 = Military actions, war, spending NOT discussed

V17. Civil liberties tradeoff _____

1 = Mostly/completely supports/defends Patriot Act/profiling/reducing civil rights, liberties/less privacy/abuse or torture of prisoners, or holding them too long
2 = Mixed/balanced/too difficult to judge
3 = Mostly/completely against/critiques Patriot Act/profiling/reducing civil rights, liberties/less privacy/abuse or torture of prisoners, or holding them too long
0 = Patriot Act/profiling/reducing civil liberties, etc., NOT discussed

V18. Source dominance (most frequent source) _____

Count the paragraphs in which a given source was used. To be counted, the author or source must discuss the terrorist threat to U.S. or its interests overseas. Determine which type of source is used in the most paragraphs. Sources can be identified when reporters use attribution terms such a "said." If an author characterizes the threat, consider him or her a source. If there is a tie between two different sources, determine source dominance by counting the number of sentences from each type.

1 = Bush Administration sources (all members)
2 = Clinton Administration sources (all member)
3 = John Kerry, John Edwards, or members of their 2004 campaign
4 = Sources identified as Democrats (not including any of above)
5 = Sources identified as Republicans (not including any of above)

6 = Other Government sources (not including any of above)
    Examples:
- Politicians/legislators (national, state, local; no political affiliation given)
- Officials/authorities (no political affiliation given)
- Governors (no political affiliation given)
- Mayors (no political affiliation given)
- Judges (no political affiliation given)
- FBI, CIA, intelligence officials (all levels)
- Military officials/personnel (all levels)
- Police/fire officials/personnel (all levels)

7 = Non-Government Sources
    Examples of non-government sources:
- Experts (government affiliation not mentioned)
- Scholars, scientists, academics, professors
- Business owners, employers, CEOs, business managers
- Religious leaders of all ranks (priests, ministers, mullahs, pastors, rabbis)
- Writers, intellectuals, poets, artists, actors, film makers

- Letter-to-the-editor writers,
- Citizens, Americans, ordinary people, students, readers, the public
- Editors of newspapers, byline authors, reporters, columnists

8 = Sources from foreign countries (including the suspected terrorists themselves)
9 = Other

The Protocol: An Introduction

The main goal of this study is to measure the portrayal of the terrorist threat to the United States in the press. Our basic assumption is that some articles frame the threat as high, some frame the threat as low, and the difference between these frames can be reliably measured using a quantitative scale.

We are also interested in what factors influence the threat level in articles to be high or low. The factors considered include: 1) the events of 9/11, 2) the geographical location of the newspaper, 3) the type of story, 4) sex of reporter/author, 5) the sources used, 6) the occurrence of frames that identify suspected terrorists' religion, 7) frames that favor or oppose military action in response to terrorist threat, 8) frames that favor or oppose the Patriot Act or similar limitations on civil liberties and rights. Each of these factors is represented by a variable in the coding protocol.

The unit of analysis is the article.

Article selection

The articles for this study were gathered using seven search terms in the Lexis Nexis newspaper archive.[53]

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53. The search terms include: threat of terror! / terror! threat / terror! alert / terror! warning / risk of terror! / terror! risk / war on terror! Articles were chosen for the study only if they explicitly mentioned the threat of terrorism to the continental United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. The article may also discuss the threat to U.S. interests overseas, but there must be at least some mention of the threat to the U.S. as well. We carefully excluded articles about the threat of terrorism to foreign countries. We also excluded articles covering criminal domestic disputes in which one person makes a "terroristic threat" against another. This is a misdemeanor offense, almost always involves people who know each other (husband/wife, student/teacher, etc.), and is not clearly related to our topic. If, by chance, you discover an article that does not directly mention the threat of terrorism to the United States set it aside and show it to the project coordinator. This coding scheme is used for analyzing articles. By article, we use the common sense definition as written material in a newspaper, published on a particular date, which clearly has a beginning and an ending and usually consists of multiple sentences. This study is intended to analyze several different news frames. Frames perform several functions in newspaper articles. They define problems, explain why problems occur, and offer solutions to problems. Drawing on this understanding of "frames," this study is interested in how the threat of terrorism is defined (high or low?), how the cause of terrorism is attributed (Islamic fundamentalism?) and what should be done to control the threat (military actions, tradeoff on civil liberties?). The procedures used for identifying and coding these frames are now discussed in detail, in addition to the other substantive variables in the study.

Variable definitions and coding information

V1.   Story ID number[54]

V2.   Date (month/day/year)

Record the date using numbers; for instance, an article published on September 11, 2001 should be coded as 9/11/2001.

V3.   Newspaper name

1 = New York Times
2 = Washington Post
3 = Anchorage Daily News
4 = Lincoln Journal Star

V4.   Section of newspaper

1 = News sections
2 = Editorial/Opinion/Op-Ed
3 = Letters
4 = Interview
5 = Other

V5.   Author sex

The sex of the author may be determined by the byline of the article. In the case of multiple authors on the byline, code the sex of the first author listed. In the case of ambiguous names or when names do not appear, code as "can't tell."

Framing Variables

Extent of threat

V6.   Count occurrences of "terror," "terrorism," or "terrorist(s)" _____

All you have to do is count the number of occurrences of the words "terror," "terrorism," or "terrorist(s)" and write that number down on the line.

V7.   Threat salience: Terror against U.S. homeland only

This variable is intended to roughly measure the proportion of each article that deals

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54. For the sake of organization, each article in the sample should be pasted into a Word file in chronological order and given a unique, consecutive identification number. Include the letter "x" after the number (i.e., 1x, 2x, 3x, etc.). The "x" will allow you to perform a quick electronic search and find any given article in the Word file, when or if further analysis is required at a later date.

with the terrorist threat to the continental U.S., including Hawaii and Alaska ("homeland"). A count of paragraphs will be used to make this measurement. The number of "on topic" paragraphs should be divided by the total number of paragraphs in the article. If the percentage is 51% or greater, code as 1. If not, code as 0.

Definition of "on topic."

Count any paragraph that includes an explicit mention (e.g., "the terrorist threat to the United States") or implicit mention (e.g., "we must deal with the terrorist threat") of the threat. Examples:
- o Threats to the country in general, an American city, or some other specific American target
- o The vulnerability of homeland targets or a need for more protection against terrorism
- o The destruction, in lives or infrastructure, to America caused by terrorist attacks
- o The public's perception of the terrorist threat
- o Discussions about terrorists, their abilities, how many terrorists exist, how they operate, how they plan attacks, find funding, gain intelligence (in the context of the homeland, or in the case when there is no other mention of a target overseas)
- o The cause of terrorism against the homeland

NOTE 1: Many articles simply discuss the "terrorist threat" without specifying whether this threat is against the homeland or U.S. interests overseas. Assume that all mentions of the threat are against the homeland if a specific geographical location outside the U.S. is not given.

NOTE 2: This variable is the only one that only considers the terrorist threat to the homeland. All other variables consider both the threat to homeland as well as the threat to U.S. interests overseas. (Of course, none of the variables consider the threat to other countries).

NOTE 3: There is an inherent difficulty with articles about Saddam Hussein. Let us count any paragraph that mentions the "threat" of Hussein as "on topic" unless it explicitly mentions some other target besides the U.S. (for instance, the threat of Hussein to Middle East stability, to Israel, or to his own people is "off topic"). This runs from the logic that we are already counting general statements about the "terrorist threat" as on topic (i.e., dangerous to homeland). The idea is that many people may presume the threat is to America when there are no explicit details citing other regions of the world.

The given "threat to homeland" can be up to 4 years in the past from the date of publication. For instance, if an article published in 2003 says that the attacks on

9/11 demonstrated the nation's *serious* vulnerability to terrorism, this would be a "magnitude mention" (V9).

Definition of "off topic"

- discussions on a completely different subject
- the threat of terrorism to other countries
- the threat to U.S. citizens living or traveling abroad
- the threat to American soldiers or military installations overseas, U.S. embassies and their personnel, etc.
- Also, paragraphs that are devoted to debunking or questioning the terrorist threat should NOT be counted.

V8.   Dynamics of threat

This variable measures whether the article modifies the terrorist threat with various adjectives related to the dynamics of the threat, that is, the change or growth of the threat, including words such as new / changing / increasing / growing / elevated / an alert / a warning / worsening.[55] Instead of talking directly about the terrorists, the article may also talk about an *increasing* vulnerability in the U.S., an *increasing* fear or concern, or *increasing* security efforts. In all the cases stated above, code as 1. In all other cases, code as 0. If the article discusses a decline in the threat level (even though it is technically a "change"), do not code it as 1.

V9.   Magnitude of threat and other worrisome modifiers

This variable measure whether the article modifies the threat with various adjectives related to the magnitude of the threat, including words such as serious / large / major / real / high / catastrophic / ever-present / scary / or a cause of concern, worry, or fear. The article might also modify the magnitude of the terrorists' determination, will, or ability to carry out attacks. Code these articles as 1. If the article does not contain a magnitude modifier, code as 0.[56]

V10.   Nuclear threat

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55. The author may explicitly mention the "*new* threat of terrorism" or the "*increasing* threat of terrorism," a "terrorism *warning*," or "terror alert." The Department of Homeland Security regularly issued such warnings and alerts, urging various regions of the nation, or the country as a whole, to prepare for possible terrorist attacks. Remember, there are many similar ways to elaborate on the dynamics or changing character of the threat (although if the change relates to a decrease in the threat, do not, of course, use code as 1).

56. It is often the case that a single phrase contains both a description of the dynamics of the threat (see previous variable), as well as a magnitude modifier. In this case, code both variables as 1. For instance: "the *high* and *increasing* threat of terrorism," or "Americans are becoming *increasingly concerned* about the threat."

Whenever the article associates the terrorist threat with a "nuclear," "biological," "bioterrorist," or "chemical," attack, or relates it to "germs" or "anthrax," code as 1. Also code as 1 when an attack on a "nuclear" or "chemical" plant in the U.S. is discussed. In all other cases, code as 0.

V11.   Suicide threat

Whenever the article associates the threat with a terrorist's willingness to end his or her own life (sometimes referred to as "suicide bombers"), code as 1. In all other cases, code as 0.

V12.   Specificity of threat

This variable is intended to determine whether the article referred to a terrorist threat to a specific person, group, place or thing. For instance, when the article describes a threat to the State of Michigan, New York City, the White House, the Brooklyn bridge, the Fermi Nuclear Plant, the Alaskan pipeline, U.S. soldiers in Iraq or Afghanistan, a specific military vessel, piece of equipment, or some other specific target, code as 1 ("specific threat mentioned"). Every article in the sample mentions some kind of threat, so if it is not a "specific" one, it will be a "general" one by default.[57] Code these articles as 0 ("specific threat NOT mentioned").

V13.   Threat questioned/balanced

Many articles will describe the threat of terrorism without questioning whether it actually exists, or without balancing high assessments of the threat with low assessments. In this case, code as 0 ("threat not questioned").

In other cases, however, the article will question the extent of the threat or assess it as low. There are many different possibilities for this to occur. In short, the article might assess the vulnerability of a terrorist target as low, the consequences of an attack as low, dispel a rumor about a threat, say that "no specific threat has been detected," or that the intelligence is incomplete, or that the people's response is exaggerated, or that certain social actors benefit from people's concern about the threat (see endnote for more detail), or that the threat of terrorism is less than some other danger, such as the danger of limiting civil liberties.[58] Code these cases as 1

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57. These "general" articles may simply mention the threat of terrorism, or talk about the threat to the U.S., America, the American people, the population, the American way of life, the American government, western civilization, American democracy or some other vague target at the national level or higher.

58. For instance, an article may cover the debate among nuclear power experts over the vulnerability of power plants to terrorism. One expert might portray the vulnerability as high, while the other says it's low. There is a similar debate over the terrorists' ability to gain access to nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. As another example, a reporter might cover several specific threats or vulnerabilities, describing some as serious, while others as less serious. In a similar vein, the article might claim that while a particular target is indeed vulnerable (e.g., the Alaskan pipeline), the consequences of an attack would not be great or at least would not be as great as some expect (e.g., the Alaskan pipeline can be fixed relatively easily). In

("threat questioned").

V14. Overall rating of threat: Coder's general interpretation

You can think of all of the variables described above as "objective" or "quantitative" indicators. In each case, you were asked whether or not an article contained a specific piece of content. For the present variable, in contrast, we are interested in your overall interpretation of the portrayal of the threat. Each article should be rated on a 10-point scale. A rating of 10 indicates a "high" level of threat, and 0 indicates a "low" level of threat. Considering all aspects of the article, judge the article. If the threat seems more high than low, rate it between 6 and 10, and if it seems more low than high, rate it between 0 and 4, depending on how clearly you believe the extent of the threat was portrayed as high or low. Code articles as 5 if the threat seems to be moderate (see endnote for more details).[59] Remember, this is your interpretation of what the article as a whole is saying about the seriousness of the threat.

Attribution of terrorism

V15. Religion

If the article associates the terrorist threat with religion in any way, code as 1 (including references to Islamic fundamentalists or Muslim terrorists, or simply

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some cases, you might find an entire article devoted to questioning the threat of terrorism. For instance, a popular rumor of a threat might be dispelled in a short news report (this often happened in the case of stories on anthrax). The article might mention that "no specific threat has been detected," or that the intelligence is questionable or incomplete. Another example occurs when an author claims or implies that the government or some other institution, group or individual benefits from the public's fear or concern about terrorism. Although such a statement does not directly claim that the threat is "low" or "non existent," it certainly indicates the article's skeptical perspective on the threat. In a similar case, the article may directly claim or insinuate that the threat of terrorism has been exaggerated, or that officials or the public has overreacted to the threat. Finally, the article may argue that the warnings and alerts about the threat are too vague or lack evidence, data and clear information.

59. We think coders have an almost natural ability to make such interpretations. As constant decision makers, we judge threats and risks on an everyday basis. In many cases, we quickly make these judgments based on a multitude of indicators, some of which are quite subtle (for instance, we might regard someone as physically threatening based on their expression, demeanor, beauty, voice quality, smell, clothing, race, and other factors). For this variable, we'd like you to rate each article based in part on the subtleties and nuances of the article viewpoint. Perhaps there's a particular style, tone or hint of sarcasm that indicates a high or a low threat. Of course, your rating should take into account the quantitative variables (the prominence, intensity, specificity and critiques of the threat), but you do not need to count or average these variables to make your decision. Simply give your general impression. Remember, however, you will not be judging whether *you personally* find the article scary or threatening. Rather, we want you to judge whether the author or source is portraying the terrorist threat as high, low or somewhere in the middle. Try not to react to the type of author or the sources used in the articles. Treat the claims of all authors and sources the same, whether it's a presidential address or a letter-to-the-editor writer. As you read, place yourself in the author's or source's shoes. Given the focus or emphasis of the article, the word choices used, as well as the tone and rhetorical style, does the article as a whole portray the threat as high, moderate or low?

fundamentalists, extremists, radicals, the Muslim world, etc.). If religion is not linked or associated with terrorism (or if the link is refuted in the article),[60] code as 0 ("Terrorism NOT associated with Islam/religion").

Controlling terrorism

V16. Military actions/spending

This variable is intended to measure whether the article as a whole showed support or rejection of the use of military force or spending as a response to the threat of terrorism. There are many different ways to advocate the use of military force, including:

> 1) by explicitly stating support for the idea of going to war or conducting a military strike in the future
> 2) by depicting an ongoing war using favorable phrases and terminology
> 3) arguing that an ongoing (or future) war decreases the risk of terrorism or shows the terrorists that we will not back down
> 4) by arguing that war or military force will result (or already resulted) in desirable outcomes for the United States, besides decreasing terrorism, such as the promotion of democracy or simply "winning the war."

Remember, people, including the president, sometimes talk about the need for military actions using slang-type phrases, such as "go get 'em," "take it to them," and "scare them out of their holes."

There has also been lots of discussion about the need for a missile defense system, which would be very costly and its ability to make us safer has been debated for many years.

Most articles will clearly take a side and indicate either support or rejection of war or military spending. In articles that consider both sides of the debate, count the number of paragraphs in which support or rejection is made. If more paragraphs support, as opposed to reject, code as 1. If more paragraphs reject, as opposed to support, code as 3. Remember, any given paragraph could be counted as both support and rejection of military force (though it will only rarely happen). Even with the double counting, in most cases one side will receive more paragraphs than the other. However, if there's a tie, count sentences instead. If the issue is indeed brought up in the article, but you are simply unsure whether to code it as a 1 or a 3, code it as a 2 ("too difficult to judge").

As a rule, do not count paragraphs that simply give the "who-what-where-why-how facts of journalism" about military actions or spending, unless it covers a viewpoint or stance toward this issue.

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60. In some cases, the article may dispute the link, criticize those who associate terrorism with Islam/religion, or describe Islam as peaceful, tolerant or non-violent, or in some other way defend the religion's image. These articles should obviously be coded as 0 ("Terrorism NOT associated with Islam/religion").

V17. Civil liberties reduction/Patriot Act

This variable takes into account a rather wide array of issues related to civil liberties. Many authors and politicians (especially after 9/11) have debated whether ethnic profiling should be used in airport security, whether it is reasonable to give up some of our privacy in order to fight terrorism, and whether terrorism-related prisoners should be held in the U.S. or in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for long periods of time without a court trial. There have also been debates over the rights of immigrants in America. Many of these debates will be centered on the Patriot Act. The Patriot Act is a federal law with many aspects designed to curb terrorist activities. Another issue is the mistreatment of prisoners in Iraq. Many authors have also discussed their concerns about the rights and well being of Muslims and Arabs living in America.

Although each of the issues discussed above is different, we believe that they share a common theme and therefore placed them in the same category. Again, most articles will clearly take a side and indicate either support or rejection on this issue. In articles that consider both sides of the debate, follow the same rules as in Variable 16 on military actions.

As a rule, do not count paragraphs that simply give the "who-what-where-why-how facts of journalism" about issues related to civil liberties, unless it covers a viewpoint or stance toward these issues.

1 = Mostly/completely supports or defends profiling/reducing civil liberties/less privacy/holding prisoners for long periods in U.S., or Guantanamo Bay, Cuba
2 = Mixed/balanced/too difficult to judge
3 = Mostly/completely against profiling/reducing civil liberties/less privacy/ holding prisoners for long periods in U.S. or Guantanamo Bay, Cuba
0 = Profiling/reducing civil liberties etc, privacy NOT discussed

V18. Source dominance (most frequent source)

This variable identifies who talks most about the threat of threat of terrorism to U.S. interests anywhere.[61] Our main priority is to find out whether government sources dominated the public discussion on the threat of terrorism in the article. To make this determination, identify all the paragraphs in which the given article discusses or at least mentions 1) the threat of terrorism to the United States, 2) the capabilities of the terrorists, 3) the nation's vulnerability or 4) the need to defend against terrorism. We will determine "source dominance" by counting up all the paragraphs in which

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61. A source is a person or organization that gives information to a journalists, news reporters or commentator. "A source is explicitly identified as such when news reporters and other commentators quote or paraphrase information from him or her in stories" (Fico, "Fairness in Election Coverage"). Sources can be identified when reporters or commentators use attribution words and phrases, such as "he *said*," "as *suggested* by so-and-so," or "she *stated* in a press conference."

the given source was used. A source can be counted only once per paragraph. If the author talks about the threat without using a source in a given paragraph, count the author as a source for that paragraph. For example, if the author talks about the threat in 6 out of 10 paragraphs and cites a government source in 4 out of 10 paragraphs, the author is the "dominant source" in this article. If there is a tie between two different sources, determine source dominance by counting the number of sentences.

1 = Bush Administration sources (all members)
2 = Clinton Administration sources (all member)
3 = John Kerry, John Edwards, or members of their 2004 campaign
4 = Sources identified as Democrats (not including any of above)
5 = Sources identified as Republicans (not including any of above)
6 = Other Government sources (not including any of above)
 Examples:
- Politicians/legislators (national, state, local; no political affiliation given)
- Officials/authorities (no political affiliation given)
- Governors (no political affiliation given)
- Mayors (no political affiliation given)
- Judges (no political affiliation given)
- FBI, CIA, intelligence officials (all levels)
- Military officials/personnel (all levels)
- Police/fire officials/personnel (all levels)

7 = Non-Government Sources
 Examples of non-government sources:
- Experts (government affiliation not mentioned)
- Scholars, scientists, academics, professors
- Business owners, employers, CEOs, business managers
- Religious leaders of all ranks (priests, ministers, mullahs, pastors, rabbis)
- Writers, intellectuals, poets, artists, actors, film makers
- Letter-to-the-editor writers,
- Citizens, Americans, ordinary people, students, readers, the public
- Editors of newspapers, byline authors, reporters, columnists

8 = Sources from foreign countries (including the suspected terrorists themselves)
9 = Other

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