

# **Democracy at Risk**

How Terrorist Threats Affect the Public

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## Introduction

[T]hey're doing everything they can to find ways to strike us. And they are actively . . . trying to get their hands on deadlier weapons than anything they've ever used before—specifically chemical, biological agent, or even a nuclear weapon, if they can. And you can imagine what would happen if we had an Al Qaeda cell loose in the middle of one of our own cities with a nuclear weapon. The devastation that that would bring down on hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of Americans.

Vice President Dick Cheney, August 6, 2004

The attacks on September 11, 2001, jarringly awoke the average American to the grim reality that even a major power like the United States is susceptible to international terrorism. Prior to 9/11, the United States had not experienced a significant foreign attack on its shores since Pearl Harbor and, in that case, the attack was by an easily identified enemy who targeted a military base. Since 9/11, the *threat* of another terrorist attack continues to loom large in the minds of U.S. citizens, in particular during election years or when the terror threat level is raised.

This is not only a U.S. phenomenon. In recent years, Al Qaeda, groups affiliated with Al Qaeda, and other extremist groups have waged their war against the West and Western interests by carrying out deliberate, violent, and lethal attacks in countries such as Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Spain,

Turkey, and the United Kingdom. This list is not close to exhaustive, nor does it include other countries in which plots by international terrorists have been foiled. These attacks and plots have resulted in frequent reports by the media on the danger posed by international terrorism. Thus, even in the absence of a particular incident, the threat of future attacks often weighs heavily on the minds of individuals around the globe. These concerns affect people as they go about their everyday lives, including as they interact with the political world.

Our principal argument is the following: Politics proceeds under the shadow of terrorist threat, but *not* “as usual.” Looking at the last several years, it is easy to find examples of cases in which concerns about terrorism have intersected with politics. In 2004 voters in Spain went to the polls just days after devastating train bombings in Madrid. In the summer of 2007 the new British prime minister’s first week in office was occasioned by attempted terrorist attacks in London and Glasgow. And, as we already mentioned, it seems quite clear that even several years out from 9/11, the issues of terrorism and homeland security are still salient in the United States. Yet, while it appears that individuals are increasingly making political assessments, developing political attitudes, and expressing these under conditions of terrorist threats, we know little about how such crisis conditions affect citizens’ preferences over domestic and foreign policies, their evaluations of leaders and the political system, and their political behavior.

In this book, we examine how the threat of terrorist attacks affects individuals across these numerous domains. Using data from both surveys and experiments, we compare citizens experiencing conditions of national security crisis (brought on by the threat of terrorism) to those experiencing other conditions, primarily times of well-being and prosperity or times of economic crisis. Our principal message and findings can be simply stated: the specter of terrorist threat results in attitudinal, evaluative, and behavioral shifts, some of which can potentially endanger democracy.

The arguments that we will make briefly here, and more fully in the next chapter, are meant to be general in scope. We expect that citizens in democratic nations around the globe will react similarly to the threat of international terrorism. That being said, many of our examples, and the majority of our data, come from the U.S. case. One reason for drawing many examples from the U.S. case is that the terrorist attacks that took place on 9/11 were lethal to an unprecedented degree. Second, there is more survey data related to terror threat and political behavior available in the U.S. context. Finally, as scholars located in the United States, we found it

relatively easier to collect experimental data in this country. However, as a point of comparison, we also use data from Mexico, which differs from the United States in terms of its relatively weaker military strength, lower level of economic development, shorter history of party competition, and other factors. In particular, Mexico has been threatened by, but not hit by, an international terrorist attack. Where relevant, we insert discussion and examples from other countries into the text. In the book's conclusion, we return to a discussion of how general our results likely are to residents of other democratic nations threatened by international terrorism.

In the remainder of this introduction, we first set the stage, so to speak, by showing evidence that the scope and degree of threat posed by international terrorist activities have increased over time. We then present some initial theory and evidence concerning the ways in which citizens cope with this threat. That section is followed by a discussion of whether these methods of coping might actually threaten democracy. Finally, we conclude with a brief overview of the structure of the book.

### **Setting the Stage: The Terrorist Threat**

While there is no universally agreed upon definition of terrorism, the U.S. Code defines terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.”<sup>1</sup> Since terrorism is generally carried out by nonstate actors, it is similar in kind to other criminal acts. However, a few components of this definition distinguish terrorism from general criminal acts and, as well, from acts of war by a country. Unlike a criminal act, terrorist violence is generally connected to political goals and is intended to strike fear into the hearts of the public in the hope that the government will have little choice but to cede to the group's demands. In order to attain such influence, terrorist groups often claim credit for incidents, unlike more general criminals. Unlike state actors, terrorists often directly and openly target civilians in violation of international norms with respect to rules of war. While comprehensive in many ways, one factor missing from the U.S. Code definition of terrorism is the *threat* of violent actions. We will show that even the threat of a substantial attack can effectively terrorize a civilian population.

It is also worth distinguishing between domestic and international terrorism. Domestic terrorism is contained within one country, and typically propagated by residents of that territory, while international terrorism involves individuals and/or territory from more than one country.

Unless otherwise stated, throughout this book, we focus on the *threat posed by international terrorism*: the credible threat by foreign, nonstate actors to carry out violent and destructive acts against residents of a particular country.

The threat of international terrorism has become a permanent and growing fixture of modern times. In the last half of the twentieth century and into the new century, attacks and plots generated by international terrorist groups have grown in number, size, and geographic scope. The Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism tracked the number of international terrorist incidents from 1968 to 2006.<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the series, in 1968, there were 97 incidents of international terrorism. A decade later, that number more than doubled to 220 annual incidents. International terrorist incidents continued to rise, reaching a peak in 1985 at 433 incidents. These numbers then declined to a low point of just over 100 incidents in 2000. The years since have seen a sharp increase, peaking again around 2004 with 395 incidents. The regions with the biggest increases in incidents over the last decade are the Middle East and Asia.

In addition to the mere number of events, the fatalities and injuries associated with terrorist incidents have climbed dramatically in recent years. In fact, a hallmark of the modern era of terrorism is the increasing size and magnitude of new plots and attacks, often aimed at highly visible targets (Laquer 1999). Earlier incidents of this type of attack include the 1993 World Trade Center bombings, which killed six people and injured more than 1,000 others.<sup>3</sup> Pre-2000, the number of terrorist-induced fatalities due to international terror incidents hovered between 0 and 500 (see fig. I.1). A huge spike in the number of fatalities occurred in 2001, as a result of 9/11. Excluding the nineteen hijackers, 2,974 people were killed in those attacks, the first time that so many civilians had been killed by a foreign attack on U.S. soil. Annual fatalities from international terrorist attacks declined again following 2001, but still remain mostly higher than they were pre-9/11. As an example of one post-9/11 incident, the 2004 Madrid train bombings resulted in 191 deaths. As the figure documents, the number of civilian injuries has increased significantly over time from the 1990s through the 2000s. Thus, the number of attacks is at historically high levels *and* these attacks are increasingly consequential with respect to the harm inflicted on innocent civilians. While Western nations have not witnessed the greatest increase in the number of incidents (as indicated above), they are among those experiencing the highest numbers of fatalities. Europe and the United States, along with the Middle East, top the list of regions most affected by high fatalities over the last decade.

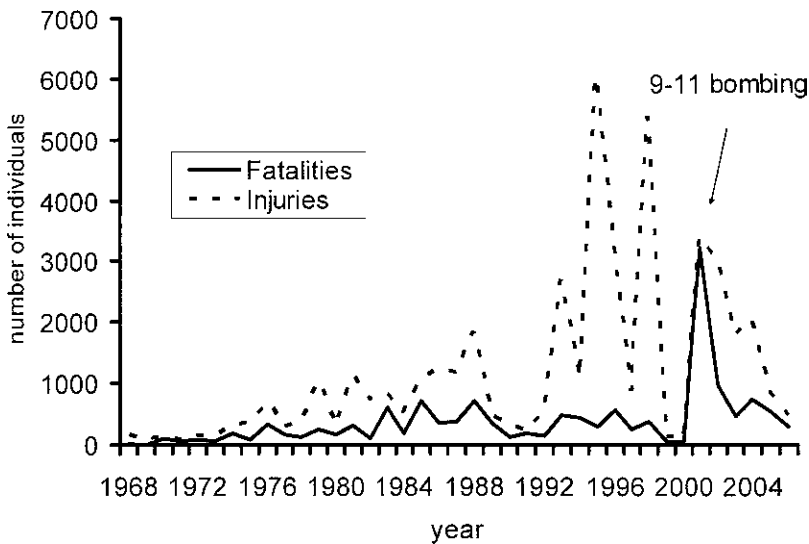


Figure I.1. Fatalities and injuries associated with international terror incidents, 1968–2006

Source: MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Database.

Given the spread and lethality of international terrorism in recent years, it is not surprising to find that individuals are worried about future attacks. The aftermath of 9/11 revealed numerous expressions of this concern by the public. Following the attacks, the *Washington Post* reported an increase in gas-mask sales, with one supplier indicating that he sold more than “1,000 gas masks in September, up from the usual 100 a year.” High levels of anxiety were further evident in relatively low birth weights among children born in New York City immediately following 9/11. In interviews with reporters, citizens also expressed high levels of concern. One New Yorker decided to relocate to New Jersey within a month after the attack, but remarked, “I don’t think that will make much of a difference. I don’t think I will ever feel safe again.” Two months after the attacks, a courier from New York admitted, “I still am a bit leery when jumbo jets fly by. I look up, and if I spot it, I keep an eye on its course and altitude.” While these sentiments were registered soon after the attacks, five years later, many U.S. citizens still felt the same. In a survey interview, a receptionist from Brooklyn indicated, “I don’t feel safe. I don’t know when there will be another attack.” Such feelings extended across the country. Interviewed around the same time, a woman living in San Jose, California, remarked, “I think that from now on, we’re living under the fear of being attacked. They’re planning things all the time.”<sup>4</sup>

We can get a more general sense of worry in the United States by looking at data from the Gallup organization. Since 9/11, this polling organization has asked individuals: “How worried are you that you, or someone in your family, will be a victim of a terrorist attack?” Responses have indicated a relatively high and constant level of concern among a majority, or near majority, of the U.S. population. Between September 2001 and July 2007 the percent of individuals who indicated that they were “very worried” hovered around 10 percent, with minor fluctuations (see fig. I.2). As expected, these elevated worry levels were highest in September of 2001 (about 15%), then dipped down a bit, and spiked again after the Madrid train bombings in March of 2004 and after the London bombings in July of 2005. This portrait of concern about terrorism expands significantly if we look at those who said they were “somewhat worried.” A full 35 percent indicated that they were somewhat worried about being the victim of a terrorist attack in the month that 9/11 occurred. The pattern of responses parallels, though at greater levels, the data on “very worried” dropping following September 2001 and spiking following attacks on other Western nations. In figure I.2, the line marked “combined worry” shows the combined percent of individuals indicating some or significant worry. The series begins and ends with over 45 percent of individuals worried that they will be personally affected by a terrorist attack. Data not shown here reveals a similar pattern (though even slightly more elevated on average) in response to questions asking about worry over the possibility of another terrorist attack on U.S. soil.<sup>5</sup>

Worry about terrorism is not confined to the U.S. public alone. The Pew Research Center for People and the Press conducted surveys in 2002 and 2007 across a range of countries and asked people to indicate whether terrorism was a very big problem, a moderately big problem, a small problem, or not a problem at all. In table I.1 we show the percent who responded that terrorism is a “very big problem.” As we would expect, this number was high in the United States in 2002 (50%), but it is also high across many countries. For example, in 2002, significant numbers of people identified terrorism as a significant problem in many of the major industrialized countries in Europe, such as France (65%), Germany (45%), and Italy (71%). These numbers were similarly high in Mexico (69%) and in many other countries south of the United States, such as Argentina (65%), Brazil (56%), Peru (70%), and Venezuela (62%). Substantial portions of the civilian population in Asia and throughout the Middle East, such as in Pakistan (78%), Lebanon (40%), and South Korea (68%), also indicated that terrorism is a very big problem. Looking across time, we see that most of these



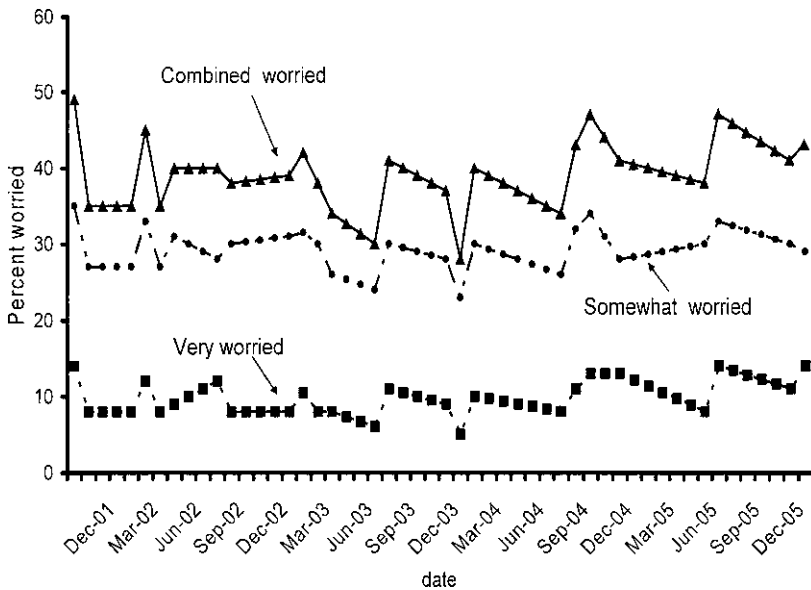


Figure I.2. Worry over being a “victim” of a terrorist attack, 2001–2007

*Question:* 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 worried at all? “Worried” shows the total percent of individuals expressing either level of worry (very and somewhat).

*Source:* Gallup Poll; Pew Research Center

percentages decreased somewhat by 2007, but nonetheless remained fairly high. Exceptions to this pattern include Canada, in which the table shows a shift from 19 to 24 percent, and Britain, which went from 23 to 30 percent, between 2002 and 2007. What likely explains these atypical shifts across time is the fact that, in the intervening years, the United Kingdom was hit by a terrorist attack (in 2005) and Canada faced credible terrorist threats. We also see a high percentage in Spain, 66 percent, another country targeted by terrorist attacks (Spain was not included in the survey in 2002). In short, concern about terrorism has afflicted and presumably continues to afflict citizens around the globe.

There is simply no denying the fact that we live in a changed world. As the data show, international terrorist attacks worldwide are at historically high levels, and a new feature of these attacks is that they are more dangerous. Given these statistics, combined with high levels of media coverage and elite rhetoric, it seems natural that worry about terrorism is high among citizens living in a range of countries with different positions on the world stage and who have and have not been victims of international

**Table I.1** Percent of individuals who think terrorism is a “very big problem”

Country	2002	2007	Country	2002	2007
Argentina	65	42	Kuwait	—	37
Bangladesh	92	77	Lebanon	40	76
Bolivia	58	42	Malaysia	—	10
Brazil	56	44	Mali	42	15
Britain	23	30	Mexico	69	50
Bulgaria	21	24	Morocco	—	81
Canada	19	24	Nigeria	—	40
Chile	—	46	Pakistan	78	76
China	—	11	Peru	70	70
Czech Republic	31	16	Poland	45	35
Egypt	—	53	Russia	65	48
Ethiopia	15	23	Senegal	66	22
France	65	54	Slovakia	28	17
Ghana	—	20	South Africa	34	20
Germany	45	31	South Korea	68	12
India	95	72	Spain	—	66
Indonesia	46	48	Sweden	—	3
Italy	71	73	Tanzania	27	19
Israel	—	70	Turkey	57	72
Ivory Coast	26	57	Uganda	52	34
Japan	—	59	Ukraine	33	23
Jordan	15	42	United States	50	44
Kenya	63	24	Venezuela	62	41

Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project

terrorism. This brings us to the heart of this book: How do citizens cope with anxiety over the threat posed by international terrorism, and what consequences might these reactions have for politics? We turn to exactly these questions in the next section.

### **How Citizens Cope with Terrorist Threats: Theory and Preliminary Evidence**

Terrorist threats endanger individuals’ physical, psychological, and even financial security. By their very nature they are collective crises and, therefore, create conditions in which solutions lie beyond individuals’ particular decisions or actions. The argument that we develop and support in this

book is the following. In reaction to conditions of terror threat, people adopt any combination of several coping strategies, which affect how they perceive and treat other individuals, their political leaders, and other nations.<sup>6</sup> One technique is designed to restore feelings of control and order by changing how one relates to other individuals. Expressions of this coping strategy are centered around increased distrust, hostility, intolerance, and punitiveness toward other individuals. A second technique is to find and turn over control to an external actor, such as a political figure whom one deems capable of solving or handling the crisis. Expressions of this coping strategy include the projection of unique leadership capabilities onto certain political leaders, an increased likelihood of voting for someone based on assessments of his or her leadership qualities, and an increased tendency to protect and assist the selected leader. A third strategy is used when considering how to treat other nation states (as well as people coming from other nation states). The expression of this third coping technique is increased preferences for the dual objectives of protecting the homeland while engaging on the terror front abroad.

A logical question that may arise with respect to these different coping strategies is whether they reflect purely instrumental reactions or whether they signal deeper psychological processes. By instrumental, we mean whether the strategies to cope with terrorist threat are things that one could easily and rationally determine are needed to resolve or mitigate the crisis. For example, a solid argument could be made that decisive and strong leaders are needed in times of threat. In fact, if we think of U.S. presidents who are typically considered great leaders, such as Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, their tenure was characterized by conditions of grave threat. Preferring and seeking out strong leaders could conceivably lead to a quicker resolution to the crisis condition. Developing a preference for stronger domestic security and an activist foreign policy may also be considered an effective, instrumental response to an external threat. In each of these cases, we might applaud individuals for reacting in reasonable and beneficial ways in response to the given threat. Some aspects of the three coping strategies we identify can in fact be instrumental along similar lines.

*However*, some of these coping strategies reflect psychological processes that lie outside the realm of overt and rational calculations. While it may be instrumental to trade civil liberties for more security, is it instrumental to target certain groups for more punitive public policies, even those who are not at all related to the particular threat environment? We argue that the tendency to become less tolerant of different groups in society reflects a

more psychological response to times of threat. Furthermore, while it may be instrumental to select decisive leaders in times of terror threat, *projecting* leadership qualities onto certain leaders arguably reflects a psychological desire to find a savior deemed capable of rescuing individuals from the crisis situation. Rather than merely making a rational calculation to elevate to office the most competent of leaders, we will show that individuals come to perceive selected leaders differently in times of crisis than they would otherwise. At the extreme, this process could negatively affect instrumental attempts to resolve the crisis, if individuals blindly pin their hopes on a relatively unqualified leader.

In the next chapter, we discuss each of these coping strategies in depth. Our particular focus is on the expressed manifestations of these coping strategies, though we will return to the question of whether these are grounded in purely instrumental, psychological, or both types of processes. For now, we present some preliminary evidence suggesting the use of these three coping strategies within the United States and abroad. Our intention here is to draw on existing data and scholarship to provide some initial support for the notion that, in times of terrorist threat, attitudes, evaluations, and behaviors with respect to other individuals, political leaders, and other nation states shift. And, moreover, they shift in ways that may place democracy at risk.

As noted above, one coping strategy in response to terrorist threat is to become more distrustful, hostile, intolerant, and punitive. Another way to state this is that some individuals may react to threat by becoming more authoritarian. An authoritarian individual is one who is relatively more morally absolute, more likely to obey authority, and more likely to conform to norms. In response to threatening conditions, authoritarian-inclined individuals may become more reverent with respect to symbols of authority and in-groups and, at the same time, less tolerant of societal out-groups. Such feelings likely underlie two attitudinal shifts that survey evidence, news stories, and scholarship have related to 9/11 and its aftermath: increased patriotism and hostility toward Arabs and Muslims.<sup>7</sup>

Survey evidence has documented these attitude shifts in the United States. In November of 2001, *Newsweek* asked citizens if they felt more patriotic since September 11. A whopping 78 percent said yes. Other surveys have shown that Americans have become more suspicious and less trusting of Arab and/or Muslim Americans in the post-9/11 world. In a CBS/*New York Times* poll in September of 2001, 28 percent of the public indicated that they thought that Arab Americans were more sympathetic to terrorists than were other American citizens. Years out from 9/11, 32 percent of

the public thought U.S. Muslims are more loyal to Islam than the United States, 19 percent thought U.S. Muslims condone violence, and 54 percent were worried about radicals within the U.S. Muslim community.<sup>8</sup> Not only has the U.S. public expressed less trust in U.S. Muslims, they have also supported policies that single out those who likely belong to this group. In a 2001 Gallup Poll, 49 percent of the sample favored requiring Arabs, even U.S. citizens, to carry a special ID card. That number dipped slightly to 46 percent in a 2005 Gallup study and was even lower, at 39 percent, in a 2006 *USA Today*/Gallup poll. Meanwhile, 53 percent supported requiring Arabs, even U.S. citizens, to undergo more intensive security checks before boarding U.S. planes.<sup>9</sup>

Even more alarming is the fact that some citizens have not simply stated such beliefs but have acted on them with hostility. Soon after the calamitous events of September 11, 2001, the media around the world reported numerous incidents involving attacks on individuals perceived to be of Middle East origin and/or of Muslim faith. On September 14 *The Times* reported attacks on and threats against Islamic mosques and schools in London, Manchester, and Birmingham. On September 24 the *Sydney Morning Herald* described a “fourth major assault” on Muslims in the state of Queensland; in one of these incidents a “bus carrying Muslim children . . . had rocks, bottles, and other missiles hurled at it.”<sup>10</sup> In the United States, anti-Islamic hate-crime incidents recorded by the FBI catapulted from 28 in 2000 to 481 in 2001.<sup>11</sup>

While the above data is suggestive of an increased sense of patriotism and intolerance of out-groups, scholars have conducted more detailed analysis of this topic. After 9/11, citizens came to have greater levels of identification with the country (Moskalenko, McCauley, and Rozin 2006). Those with high levels of worry about future attacks were more willing to increase surveillance on Arabs and Arab Americans, increase security checks on Arab visitors, and decrease visas to Arab countries (Huddy, Feldman, Taber, and Lahav 2005). This evidence is consistent with our first proposed coping mechanism, but it is also limited in some key ways. For example, explorations into intolerant attitudes and behaviors have typically been limited to a focus on Arab- and/or Muslim-appearing individuals. Does the range of authoritarian attitudinal shifts end there? We believe it does not. In addition, there is a tendency in much of this scholarship to assume that individuals respond similarly to worry about terrorist threats. Later in this book, we take up the task of establishing a more nuanced set of relationships among certain types of individuals, terror threat, and general authoritarian attitudes using both survey and experimental data. However,

one thing should be clear from this brief introductory discussion: such attitudes and behaviors *may* threaten the very fabric of democracy by singling out particular groups as second-class citizens, which may lead to treatment and policies that deny equal rights and equal protection.

We now turn to some very preliminary evidence of the second strategy of coping, which entails looking for a leader capable of resolving the crisis situation. At a minimum, does available data suggest that people project leadership capabilities onto selected leaders in times of terror threat? Anecdotally, mentions of President George W. Bush and former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani as being strong leaders became ubiquitous after 9/11. In a LexisNexis database search of all U.S. newspapers and wires between March of 2001 and 2002, we found that the number of articles that mentioned Bush or Giuliani as a strong leader tripled after 9/11. The only survey-based indicators available for us to look at over time with respect to projections of leadership were approval ratings for these two leaders, pre- and post-9/11. During this time period, we were also able to look at approval ratings for another leader, Tony Blair of Great Britain. The approval ratings for all three political leaders are presented in figure I.3.

Bush began his presidency in the shadow of the controversy surrounding the 2000 election, in which he lost the popular vote but gathered enough Electoral College votes (and Supreme Court support) to win the election. Before the attacks of 9/11, his approval ratings hovered around 50 percent. Immediately following the attacks, his approval ratings spiked to over 80 percent and stayed high for a while before starting a gradual decline mostly due to disappointment with the war in Iraq. This huge rally behind Bush is at least consistent with our claim that individuals project leadership qualities onto select leaders during times of terror threat.

A similar pattern emerges for Giuliani. While pre-9/11 he had earned a positive reputation among some New Yorkers for improving the city (e.g., lowering crime rates), other citizens did not approve of his tactics. Furthermore, his image was scathed by various personal and professional scandals. Thus, Giuliani's approval level hovered around 40 to 50 percent for all of 1999, 2000, and most of 2001. His 42 percent approval rating on September 5, 2001, shot up to an 89 percent approval rating on November 7, 2001. We again witness a dramatic rally in the shadow of a terrorist attack, this time around the mayor of New York City. Giuliani became a household name following the attacks of 9/11. He went on to become *Time* magazine's Person of the Year for 2001, was a featured speaker at the 2004 Republican National Convention, and ran for the Republican presidential nomination (2008) on a national security platform.

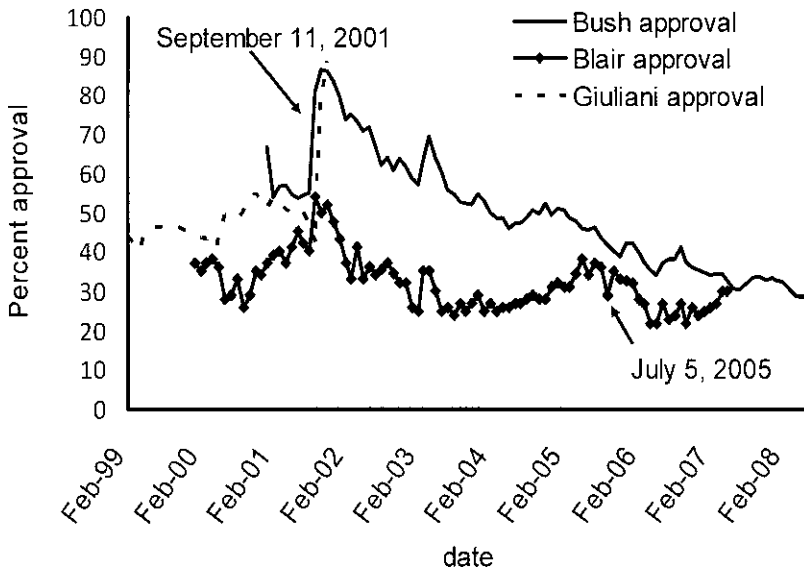


Figure I.3. Approval ratings for George W. Bush, Rudolph Giuliani, and Tony Blair, 2001–2008

*Questions:* Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Rudolph Giuliani is handling his job as Mayor? Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way Mr. Blair is doing his job as Prime Minister?

*Sources:* Multiple sources, accessed through Roper Polls Online Database (Bush); Quinnipiac University Poll, directed by Douglas Schwartz, Ph.D. (Giuliani); Ipsos MORI (Blair).

If we turn to Tony Blair, pre-9/11, his approval rating fluctuated greatly and ranged between about 27 and 42 percent. Even though the attacks of 9/11 occurred on U.S. soil, Tony Blair also experienced over a 10-percentage-point increase in approval from UK citizens following the event. After that point, his approval ratings declined likely due to British involvement in the Iraq war (which the public did not support). It is hard to tell if he received any boost in approval ratings immediately after the bombings in London on July 7, 2005, since our first available survey after that point was not until August 5. Overall, his approval ratings continued to slide as the unpopularity of the war in Iraq continued to mount with the British public.

Thus, across all three leaders, we find instances where terrorist attacks were followed by increases in approval ratings. Scholars have examined some of these rallies and have established a direct link between the attack and increased approval ratings (Kam and Ramos 2008; Hetherington and Nelson 2003). Put simply, individuals evaluated leaders differently

under crisis conditions than they might otherwise. It could be argued that approval ratings soared in each of these cases because the leaders “earned it” by way of competent leadership in the aftermath of the attacks. While this is a possibility, we believe these reactions were based at least in part in deeper psychological processes by which individuals sought to restore their own sense of calm and hope by projecting greater evaluations onto these figures. This is, of course, difficult to substantiate with the approval ratings data alone, which do not capture the specific concepts in which we are most interested: perceptions of leadership abilities and the public’s expressed willingness to protect and assist the given leader. Using both experimental and some survey evidence, we will explore such manifestations of the use of our second proposed coping strategy. While spikes in approval ratings may reflect more psychological processes, some of the other aspects of this coping mechanism that we assess in subsequent chapters likely also reflect instrumental motivations. Regardless, we will also provide reason to suspect that, to at least some degree, the specific expressions of this coping mechanism carry the potential to place democracy at risk.

Finally, we turn to the third strategy of coping, which concerns preferences over relations with other countries, individuals coming from other countries, and the general security of one’s own country. To refresh, we expect that during times of terrorist threat people will support policies that protect the homeland within, while at the same time they will prefer greater engagement abroad. For example, with respect to protecting within, they will support policies that make it more difficult to enter and exit the country, as well as policies that enhance security (often at the expense of civil liberties). Engaging abroad can include militant actions such as attacking terrorist training camps as well as nonmilitant actions such as sharing intelligence with other nations. Support for these policies may reflect instrumental motivations on the part of citizens, though again they may also reflect more psychological processes. Surveys have included a wide range of questions related to these dual objectives; here we will just highlight a few bits of survey evidence that relate to this coping strategy.

Turning first to policies meant to secure the homeland, the post-9/11 U.S. public has been very supportive, even with respect to policies that might threaten civil liberties. For example, in surveys since 2002, the Gallup organization has asked respondents: “Which comes closer to your view? The government should take all steps necessary to prevent additional acts of terrorism in the U.S., even if it means your basic civil liberties would be violated. OR, The government should take steps to prevent additional acts of terrorism, but not if those steps would violate your basic civil liberties.”



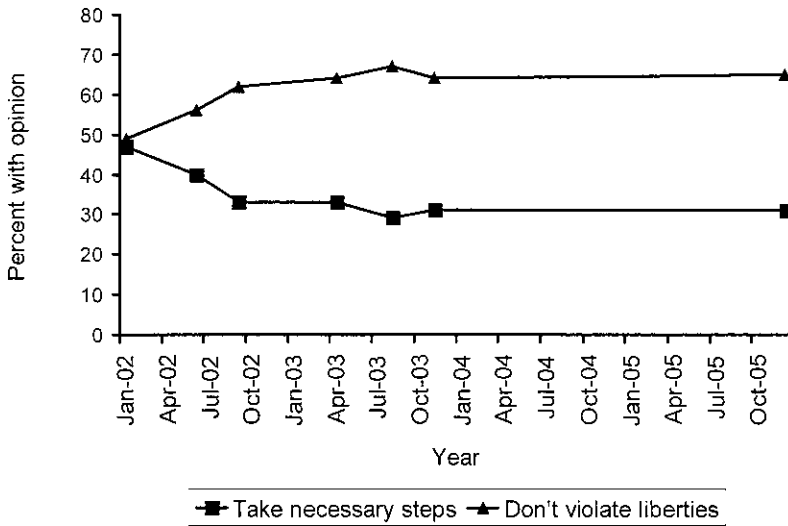


Figure I.4. Support for policies restricting civil liberties, 2002–2005

*Question:* Which comes closer to your view? The government should take all steps necessary to prevent additional acts of terrorism in the U.S., even if it means your basic civil liberties would be violated. OR, The government should take steps to prevent additional acts of terrorism, but not if those steps would violate your basic civil liberties.<sup>9</sup> Options rotated. Form B (N = 522, MoE ± 5).

*Source:* CNN/USA Today/Gallup Polls.

Responses to this question over time are presented in Figure I.4. In the poll closest to 9/11 (January 2002), 47 percent of respondents chose the first option. Thus, a high proportion of Americans was willing to have basic civil liberties violated (one of the central tenets of democracy) in order to prevent additional acts of terrorism. While this support has waned over time, as of December 2005, 31 percent of respondents still chose that option. With respect to more specific types of policies, data from Gallup surveys in 2005 and 2006 indicated that a majority of Americans supported the PATRIOT Act and thought the Bush administration was right to engage in wiretapping without a warrant.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, and to provide some balance to this discussion, a somewhat different trend is found in citizen perceptions of whether the Bush administration went too far in restricting people's civil liberties in order to fight terrorism. In June 2002 only 11 percent expressed this opinion (according to Gallup data), while in May of 2006 41 percent expressed this opinion.

We see a similar willingness to restrict civil liberties in light of the terrorist threat in the case of the United Kingdom. In a survey conducted just

after the attacks in 2005, a You Gov/Mirror/GMTV survey found that 75 percent of the public supported a provision in the proposed new terror bill that would allow the government to hold terror suspects without trial. In a study by the same organization a year later, 69 percent of the public still supported holding terror suspects without trial (though the question now said for up to ninety days). In this study, 55 percent also supported the introduction of passenger profiling in airports.

If we turn to preferences for engaging abroad, there is evidence of support for this foreign policy orientation in both the United States and the United Kingdom. A vast majority of Americans supported the Bush administration's decision to send military forces into Afghanistan. For example, in a CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup poll in November of 2001, when asked whether the United States made a mistake by sending forces into Afghanistan, 89 percent of the public said no. When asked the same question in a poll conducted in July of 2004, the percentage of people saying no was exactly the same. Support for the Iraq war was also quite high early on, 71 percent in May 2003, according to the same polling organization. At the same time it is worth noting that support has waned over time as the United States has been unable to help the new government maintain stability and as the number of troops being killed has increased. In the 2006 survey of UK citizens discussed above, 53 percent thought that the United Kingdom needed to change its foreign policy to be tougher and more aggressive in response to the terrorist threat.

Of the three coping strategies we assess and examine, there has been more scholarly work that examines preferences over homeland security policies and international engagement (though it is not framed with respect to dual foreign policy preferences). Using survey data, scholars have found that citizens who were more worried about terrorism were more willing to trade civil liberties for more security (Davis and Silver 2004a; Davis 2007; Huddy et al. 2005). With respect to international engagement, as individuals' anger over the terrorist attacks increased, they became more supportive of the United States being active in the world, the campaign against terrorism, and military action in Afghanistan (Huddy et al. 2005). While these findings are consistent with our arguments, in subsequent chapters we consider additional types of homeland security policies as well as international engagement policies that are more cooperative in nature. Furthermore, we ask whether citizens in countries other than the United States, principally Mexico, might adopt similar preferences of protecting at home and engaging abroad.

The picture that emerges from our brief review is that there is some pre-

liminary support for each of the coping mechanisms that we identified. In times of crisis, individuals' attitudes, evaluations, and behaviors shift. And they do so at three levels: with respect to other individuals, with respect to political leaders, and with respect to other nations. In the next section we take a step back and consider the general relationship between conditions of threat, the use of these coping strategies, and the quality of democracy.

### **Do Conditions of Threat Place Democracy at Risk?**

They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.

Benjamin Franklin (1759)

Benjamin Franklin's quote has historically been embraced by defenders of civil liberties, especially in times of threat. For many, it suggests that democratic citizens, if they are to be considered as such, have a duty to defend their liberties even in the face of security crises. The quote has been employed in various protests and even served as inspiration for the Benjamin Franklin True Patriot Act (HR 1131), a bill sponsored and introduced by Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) and Ron Paul (R-Texas) in the U.S. House of Representatives close to the end of the 108th Congress. The bill represented a joint effort by those on the left and Libertarians to challenge, unsuccessfully, some provisions in the PATRIOT Act, such as roving wiretaps, secret record searches, and detention of noncitizens.

However, there are some qualifiers in the quote, which might point to a more measured interpretation of what it means to be a good citizen in times of threat. First, the quote does not merely say liberty, but essential liberty. There can certainly be a reasoned debate about which liberties are essential. Second, the quote discusses "a little temporary safety," not unqualified safety. One could make an argument that times of security crisis, such as terrorist threat, are those in which the objective is the survival of the nation itself. President Lincoln brought up exactly this point in his order to suspend the writ of habeas corpus in April of 1861: "Are all the laws but one to go unexecuted and the Government itself go to pieces lest that one be violated?"<sup>13</sup> Later in time, Justice Robert H. Jackson echoed these sentiments in a dissenting opinion in *Terminiello v. City of Chicago* (1949): "There is danger that, if the [Supreme Court] does not temper its doctrinaire logic with a little practical wisdom, it will convert the constitutional Bill of Rights into a suicide pact." The argument is, simply put, that it may be necessary to give up some liberties to preserve the nation. The pertinent

question then may be whether those liberties are restored when the threat recedes.

We have outlined three coping strategies that citizens may employ in times of terror threat. In this section, we explore what implications the use of these coping mechanisms has for the quality of democracy. As we consider these implications, we will keep in mind some of the complexities discussed above. First, we briefly review some of the more general literature on what it means to be a good citizen and how citizens live up to this ideal in times of well-being and times of crisis.

While conceptions of what it means to be a good citizen have shifted throughout U.S. history, the Progressive era shaped the notion of a good citizen as being an informed, rational individual who participates in political life (Schudson 1998). Not only are these qualities desirable, they are often considered *necessary* for a healthy democracy. But how well do individuals live up to this ideal in general? For decades, scholars depicted the average (U.S.) voter as someone who cared little, knew little, and thought little about the political world. These assessments were seemingly validated by low turnout levels, (often dismally) low levels of political information, and an absence of coherent opinions on the major issues of the day (see, e.g., Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Incentives to become politically engaged and to acquire information about politics vary by electoral laws and party systems, and thus are often higher outside the U.S. context (e.g., Gordon and Segura 1997; Jackman 1987; Jackman and Miller 1995; Powell 1986). Nonetheless, even taking into consideration the importance of institutions in shaping citizens' incentives, few would argue that the average individual in any context meets the demanding criteria of being copiously informed and constantly active with respect to politics.

The exogenous shock of a crisis, however, can launch the average individual out of political complacency and into action. This may seem counterintuitive in that the conventional wisdom is that when people become more anxious or "emotional," they tend to become less coherent and withdraw from the world around them. However, new research crossing disciplinary boundaries suggests that, under times of anxiety, processes triggered within the brain motivate individuals to seek out information relevant to reducing anxiety (see Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000). In addition, individuals are more likely to use that new information when making decisions. Applying this logic and basic understanding of neurological responses to the political world, Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen (2000) have found that individuals who feel anxious (with respect to poli-

tics) are more interested in politics, more likely to seek out information on candidates, more likely to base voting decisions on issue opinions and candidate traits, and less likely to base voting decisions on long-standing dispositions such as partisanship. Brader (2005) has demonstrated a similar set of results among individuals who were exposed to a negative political advertisement with fear cues. Furthermore, there is some evidence that anxious individuals are more likely to engage in a variety of participatory activities (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000, Radcliff 1992; but see Brader 2005 and Valentino et al. 2006).<sup>14</sup> Thus, certain negative emotional responses may, at first glance at least, lead citizens to behave more in line with normative theories about what constitutes a good political citizen.

While we agree that crises lead to shifts in attitudes, evaluations, and behavior compared to normal times, our principal assertion is that this process under certain conditions may subject democracy to stress. Specifically, the threat of terrorism may in some ways lead to shifts in behavior that are healthy for democracy and, at the same time, in other ways lead to shifts that are less desirable for the quality of democracy. Collective crises, such as terrorist threat, typically elicit anxiety, distress, and a host of related negative emotional responses. The studies noted above suggest that such responses can cause individuals to become more attentive and informed about the political world and potentially more engaged. However, what are the implications for democracy when citizens use the three coping strategies that we have outlined?

Turning to the first coping strategy, consider the threat to the quality of democracy if an anxiety-producing situation causes individuals to become both more authoritarian in their attitudes *and* more engaged in the political system. Such a response can threaten the very fabric of democracy by singling out particular groups as second-class citizens, which may lead to policies that deny equal rights and equal protection. Certainly the quality of democracy in such a situation would suffer, at least in the short term. The question then becomes whether those attitudes and responses recede after the threat is gone. Several factors suggest that these attitudinal shifts may have long-lasting implications. In the first place, one potential problem with respect to the war on terrorism is that there is not a clear end in sight. Furthermore, to the extent that this process is largely psychological, it is not clear that citizens recognize that they are in fact shifting their attitudes in ways that threaten the democratic value of tolerance. Finally, the effect of these shifts may be long-lasting if they are translated into actual legislation, which is frequently difficult to remove once in place. Overall, such a response may not threaten the regime type itself, but it arguably

has negative implications for the quality of democracy. Thus, the regime remains a procedural democracy but one with a diminished social fabric and, potentially, one that fails to grant full rights to all citizens.<sup>15</sup>

With respect to the second strategy of coping with terror threat, is any threat to democracy posed simply by weighting leadership qualities more heavily in the voting booth? If we lived in the founding period, we might argue that this is in fact the way one should select leaders (Schudson 1998). Today we may also consider it a sign of a healthy democracy to the extent that citizens are choosing leaders they deem capable of finding a resolution to the crisis. As we indicated earlier, many great leaders came to power during times of crisis, such as FDR, Lincoln, and Churchill. We would likely be hard pressed to find anyone who considered the weighting of strong leadership in these elections as a reflection of an unhealthy democracy. However, the intersection of trait projection *and* voting on leadership gives us pause for thought. If individuals are expressing biased evaluations and making decisions based on these, then is it at least possible that the outcomes are not ideal from the perspective of the functioning and quality of democracy?

We may find cause to be even more concerned about the implications of threat for democratic quality and processes if individuals are also willing to cede more power to the selected leader. In the U.S. context, citizens have historically been willing to cede more authority and power to the executive office in times of threat. Some presidential scholars contend that the expansion of executive power during these contexts has significantly shifted the balance of power between the branches (Fisher 1995); however, others argue that the executive has always had such authority under the Constitution (Nichols 1994). Even if there have been shifts in the balance of power between the branches, the democratic regime in the United States has not been seriously threatened since the Civil War. And yet, we may be concerned if individuals are willing to cede more power to the selected leader in a context without a time horizon, such as a terror threat. In this case, standard checks and balances may be indefinitely diminished and the executive granted wide latitude to pursue policies with potentially little oversight. That being said, it is worth noting that the U.S. Congress and Supreme Court are pushing back a bit on presidential powers in the war on terror seven years out from the attacks.

For the most part we assume that it is democratic quality that suffers (e.g., via diminished civil liberties) in the face of such increased executive power. At least, this is the likely scope of such effects for established democratic systems. However, there have been cases in which the combination

of crisis and a strong, charismatic executive was followed by the dissolution of democracy, such as occurred in Nazi Germany. The potential for more dramatic shifts in regime type is greater in newer democracies with more fragile systems. One example of terrorist activity influencing a shift away from democracy as a regime type is that of Peru in the 1990s. The brutal domestic terrorist activities of the Sendero Luminoso, a Maoist revolutionary group active in the 1980s and 1990s, compelled many Peruvians to throw their support behind Alberto Fujimori's election in 1990 and—more important to our case—his *auto golpe* (closure of congress and other governmental institutions) in 1992. Fujimori was widely perceived as a charismatic leader and, in part due to the terrorist threat (alongside other factors), was granted such centralization of authority by the public that the once-democratic state could no longer be considered as such. International outcry forced Fujimori's hand, and the system reverted back to a somewhat more democratic state in 1995 (with a new round of elections) and subsequently returned to competitive party politics following Fujimori's flight into exile in 2000. Overall, the use of this second coping strategy presents a mixed bag with respect to its implications for democracy, ranging from actions illustrative of a healthy citizenry to those that might destroy (under certain conditions) the very regime type itself.

We have already touched on the tension between security and civil liberties that is related to the homeland security component of our third coping mechanism. While civil libertarians contend that any reduction in civil liberties poses a threat to liberal democracy, others can make a convincing case for the necessity of such measures in times of threat. The question then, as we have noted already, hinges on whether civil liberties are restored in full when the threat recedes. Again, one potential issue with terror threat is the extended time horizon; another is the degree to which these practices are put into enduring legislative policies. In contrast, it is more difficult (but perhaps not impossible) to determine clear threats posed to liberal democracy through the practice of an activist foreign policy. As we proceed through the book, we will carry this general theme with us. To what extent, if any, does the terrorist threat pose a threat to the quality and, potentially in some cases, the very existence of democracy?

### Looking Ahead

In the next chapter, we further delineate our conception of conditions of terror threat and how this particular crisis condition affects the public. We also discuss, to a much greater extent, the three coping strategies that

we have outlined briefly in this introduction, which we argue affect how citizens perceive and treat other individuals, political leaders, and other nations. The theory and arguments we assert in chapter 1 draw on scholarship across several disciplines (political science, sociology, psychology, and organizational science) and across subfields within political science (international relations, comparative, and U.S. politics).

Chapter 2 presents the data and methods we use to demonstrate support for the arguments identified in chapter 1. We employ unique experiment-based data, existing survey data, and specially developed survey data. The majority of our data come from experiments using student and nonstudent subjects, in both the United States and Mexico. In all of our experimental studies, subjects were randomly assigned to one of at least two conditions: one that sought to increase concerns of a terrorist attack and one that sought to diminish such concerns. In addition to the data generated from the experiments, we test select arguments through the use of survey data in the United States and Mexico. This “triangulation” of research methods allows us to demonstrate the robustness of our findings to different research instruments and samples of people.

In chapter 3 we examine the conditions under which and the types of individuals who might employ the first coping mechanism, related to how citizens perceive and treat other individuals. We argue that one manifestation of this coping strategy lies in the expression of increased distrust, dislike, intolerance, and punitiveness toward certain groups in society. We first demonstrate a basic relationship between terrorist threat and authoritarian attitudes using U.S. survey data. However, we also argue that not all individuals will necessarily employ this coping strategy. Rather, those high in authoritarian predispositions are more likely to exhibit authoritarian attitudes during times of national security crisis. In order to examine this type of conditional relationship, and better assess our causal claim, we turn to evidence from three experiments conducted in the U.S. and Mexico.

Chapter 4 is the first of two chapters focused on the second strategy of coping, which entails looking for and delegating leadership to those who appear capable of resolving the crisis. We begin by arguing that in contexts of national security crisis, individuals project leadership traits onto select individuals; that is, they perceive certain leaders as more qualified than they otherwise would. Furthermore, individuals then weight leadership qualities more heavily in their voting decisions. We demonstrate support for these arguments using data from experiments held during two U.S. elections.

In chapter 5 we explore the relationships among terror threat, percep-



tions of charisma, and behavioral and evaluative consequences. We argue that terror threats cause individuals to project charisma onto likely leaders. Individuals also then become willing to protect and assist the selected leader. More specifically, individuals are less likely to blame charismatic leaders, are more likely to sacrifice their own personal resources for a leader they deem charismatic, and are (sometimes) more likely to give that leader additional institutional powers to resolve the crisis situation. We demonstrate support for these relationships across several experimental studies conducted in the United States and in Mexico.

In the next chapter (chapter 6), we investigate the third coping strategy by looking at how foreign policy preferences over a range of issues are affected by conditions of terror threat. Here we demonstrate quite clearly that citizens in both major- and minor-power countries come to have similar foreign policy preferences under times of terror threat, supporting the dual objectives of protecting at home and engaging abroad. In this chapter, we employ data from experiments conducted in the United States and Mexico, and compare these results to surveys from both countries conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR).

In our conclusion, we summarize our findings, discuss their implications, and discuss potential avenues for future research on the topic. Most important, in this final chapter we draw out and comment further on the thread that visibly ties together the preceding chapters: conditions of terror threat have effects on political attitudes, evaluations, and behaviors that put democratic quality, and possibly democratic durability, at risk.