Americans Respond Politically to 9/11

Understanding the Impact of the Terrorist Attacks and Their Aftermath

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The 9/11 terrorist attacks have had profound effect on U.S. domestic and foreign security policy, leading to several expensive wars and the erosion of civil liberties (under the USA PATRIOT Act). We review evidence on political reactions to the 9/11 attacks and conclude that subjective reactions to terrorism played an important role in shaping support for national security policy in the wake of 9/11. Support for a strong national security policy was most pronounced among Americans who perceived the nation as at threat from terrorism and felt angry at terrorists. In contrast, Americans who were personally affected by the attacks were more likely to feel anxious about terrorism, and this anxiety translated into less support for overseas military action. In addition, Americans who felt insecure after the 9/11 attacks and perceived a high future threat of terrorism were more likely than others to support strong foreign and domestic national security policies. Overall, research on American political reactions to 9/11 suggests that support for a strong government response to terrorism is most likely when members of a population perceive a high risk of future terrorism and feel angry at terrorists.

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The 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center (WTC) and Pentagon dramatically affected American politics. In the aftermath of 9/11, the United States became engaged in very expensive foreign wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that were more or less tightly connected to combating terrorism and from which the United States has been able to disengage only very slowly (Haas, 2009; Ricks, 2006). According to economists Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes (2010), the U.S. debt went from $6.4 trillion in March 2003 to $10 trillion in 2008 with at least a quarter due to the Iraq war. Since 2001, the country has spent roughly $40 billion on airport security by one estimate and has levied even greater costs on the traveling public in terms of their time and personal inconvenience (Bandyk, 2010). Americans' civil liberties have been eroded in numerous ways by the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act of 2001 through the authorization of wiretapping of a suspect's phone calls and e-mails, government access to a suspect's medical, library, and financial records, and the detention without legal representation of citizens under suspicion (Whitehead & Aden, 2002).

Public opinion polls conducted in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 demonstrated broad support for these policies—including military engagement and the deployment of ground troops in Afghanistan, military action against other countries harboring terrorists, the introduction of a national identity card system, broader government powers to monitor Americans' phone and email—and a majority of Americans believed they would have to forego basic liberties to fight terrorism (Huddy, Khatib, & Capelos, 2002). The Iraq War, which was linked by the Bush administration to the war on terrorism, was somewhat less popular at its inception than the war in Afghanistan but was supported nonetheless by a majority of the American public (Berinsky, 2009). President George W. Bush experienced a marked upswing in public support after 9/11 with his approval ratings going from somewhere between 50% and 60% in July and August of 2001 to between 85% and 90% in mid-September (Jacobson, 2007; Ladd, 2007).

Threat and Political Conservatism

Conservative Shift

The post-9/11 shift in public opinion toward support of a stronger international military presence and greater restrictions on domestic civil liberties has been interpreted by some researchers as evidence of a general conservative shift within the American public in response to the terrorist attacks. This line of research has been actively pursued by Jost and colleagues (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Jost et al., 2007). These authors relied on several different lines of research to make their case, including research on the broad political effects of threat. Americans have lent greater support to conservative political candidates in threatening times, such as periods of high unemployment or civil unrest (Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991), and individuals who score highly on measures of authoritarianism are especially likely to react to threat with heightened political conservatism (Lavine, Lodge, & Freitas, 2005; Lavine, Lodge, Polichak, & Taber, 2002).

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In addition to heightened conservatism in response to general threat, there is specific evidence linking conservatism to death-related anxiety, something that is likely to be aroused by terrorism. Jost et al. (2007) documented a direct connection between measures of death anxiety and political conservatism in several different studies, demonstrating that this connection is distinct from personality attributes, such as conscientiousness and a lack of openness to experience. In addition, several studies document a link between experimentally aroused threat and heightened political conservatism (Thorisdottir & Jost, in press). Jost et al. (2003) concluded that "situations of crisis or instability in society will, generally speaking, precipitate conservative, system-justifying shifts to the political right" (p. 351).[1]

A number of studies based on terror management theory (TMT) find that mortality salience also increases political conservatism under some conditions (Landau, Burke, & Kosloff, 2011). In this line of research, the political effects of mortality salience are assessed by asking research participants to write short paragraphs on the feelings aroused by thoughts of their own death and what will happen to them when they die; findings are compared with subjects in a control group who write about pain or a neutral topic. TMT researchers regard the events of 9/11 as a real-world mortality salience induction and demonstrate that exposure to terrorism or symbols linked to 9/11 increased death-related thoughts (Cohen & Solomon, in press; Das, Bushman, Bezemer, Kerkhof, & Vermeulen, 2009; Landau et al., 2004; Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003). In several studies, mortality salience or subliminally primed words linked to death and 9/11 boosted ratings of George W. Bush, charismatic leaders, and conservative political candidates or heightened support for conservative policies (Cohen, Ogilvie, Solomon,

Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2005; Cohen, Solomon, Maxfield, Pyszczynski, & Greenberg, 2004; Landau et al., 2004).[2]

Finally, there is some evidence of a very direct link between increased conservatism and terrorist threat. Bonanno and Jost (2006) found, for example, a conservative shift some 18 months after the attacks among individuals who had been within several blocks of the WTC on 9/11. Ullrich and Cohrs (2007) compared German subjects who had been primed with information about a terrorist event (either 9/11 or the 2004 Madrid attacks) with those primed with a more neutral topic and observed greater support for the German social and political system among those primed with terrorism. In a longitudinal study conducted before and after the 2004 Madrid train bombings, Echebarra-Echabe and Fernández-Guede (2006) reported that the terrorist attacks increased Spanish subjects' support for conservative values, such as economic competition, support for authority, and privatization of public services, and decreased support for liberal values, such as equality and social reform. Janoff-Bulman and Usoof-Thowfeek, (2009) reviewed this and related research evidence and concluded that "there is considerable evidence, then, that threat produces a greater preference for politicians on the right; these conservative leaders are typically associated with increased national security" (pp. 82–83).

Ideological Intensification

In contrast to the conservative shift hypothesis, TMT researchers conclude for the most part that political ideology becomes intensified—more liberal for liberals and more conservative for conservatives—in response to terrorism (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003). From a TMT perspective, humans manage existential concerns about death through an increased support of cultural worldviews, such as religious beliefs and political ideology, that convey shared values and dictate normative behavior (Greenberg et al., 1990; S. Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). We refer to this as the *ideological intensification hypothesis* (although TMT researchers refer to it as the *worldview allegiance hypothesis*). If correct, ideological intensification challenges the notion that the American public became generally more conservative in response to terrorism. If anything, it suggests more intense politics on both the political left and right and no net change in broad political ideology after a terrorist attack.

Mortality salience often leads to ideological intensification in the context of threat (Anson, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2009). In one now classic study, liberals assigned more unpleasant hot sauce to someone who expressed antiliberal views, and conservatives assigned more of the sauce to someone who expressed anticon-

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[1] In Jost et al.'s (2003, 2007) research, death anxiety is measured by agreement with statements such as "I have an intense fear of death."

[2] TMT researchers, however, regard this as evidence of support for charismatic politicians not conservative politicians in general (Anson et al., 2009; Cohen & Solomon, in press; Cohen et al., 2004; Kosloff, Greenberg, Weise, & Solomon, 2010).

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servative views after a mortality salience induction (McGregor et al., 1998). Pyszczynski et al. (2006) observed increased support for aggressive military action in defense of U.S. interests and heightened support for the USA PATRIOT Act after mortality salience but only among political conservatives. Hirschberger and Ein-Dor (2006) found that mortality salience increased support for military force against the Palestinians but only among right-wing Israelis. Other recent studies lend support to the ideological intensification hypothesis (Castano et al., 2011; Landau et al., 2011).

Reactions to a terrorist event may be even more complex than suggested by TMT studies. Sharvit, Bar-Tal, Raviv, Raviv, and Gurevich (2010) analyzed findings from eight polls conducted in the 1990s and 2000s in Israel before and after a terrorist incident and compared them with a set of similar polls conducted in the absence of a terrorist incident. A terrorist event in the 1990s, a period characterized by some optimism concerning the peace process, lead conservative hawks to become more opposed to peace but had no effect on liberal doves, in line with the ideological intensification hypothesis. In contrast, in the 2000s, a period in which conflict escalated, a terrorist event lead doves to become more pessimistic and opposed to peace. These findings suggest that political reactions to terrorism depend on both existing political ideology and the prevailing political context in which the meaning of a terrorist attack is interpreted.

In summary, recent research lends support to both increased conservatism and ideological intensification as political outcomes of terrorism, albeit in different studies. To help make sense of the diverse political consequences of terrorism, we dig more deeply into differences among individuals in the way they experience terrorism psycho-

logically. We review studies conducted after 9/11 and conclude that those who perceived imminent terrorist threat supported strong overseas military action, whereas anxiety about terrorism (associated with proximity to the attacks) increased opposition to an aggressive foreign policy. These findings suggest that the political effects of terrorism vary with the specifics of a terrorist attack, such as the anxiety it arouses and the perceived likelihood of future terrorist violence.

Psychology of Terrorist Threat

National Versus Personal Threat

Not all Americans regarded the United States as at future risk of terrorism after the 9/11 attacks, indicating some variation in subjective estimates of terrorist threat. Such variation in perceived threat is observed in other trouble spots where the threat of violence is known, high, and constant but not everyone regards it as equally likely or threatening. For example, Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland felt less threatened by violence if they had contact with someone from the other religion, even in areas characterized by high levels of ongoing violence (Schmid, Tausch, Hewstone, Hughes, & Cairns, 2008). Most but not all Americans thought a future terrorist attack on U.S. soil was very likely in the aftermath of 9/11, a perception that has persisted over time (Davis, 2007; Davis & Silver, 2004; Huddy, Feldman, Taber, & Lahav, 2005; Huddy, Khatib, & Capelos, 2002; Shambaugh et al., 2010).

In a large three-wave national telephone survey, the Threat and National Security Survey (TNSS), which began in October 2001 and was completed in June 2003, we asked a series of questions tapping reactions to terrorist threat (Huddy et al., 2005; Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007).[3] In Wave 1 of the TNSS (conducted from October 2001 until March 2002), over 85% of Americans reported that they were very (50%) or somewhat (37%) concerned about another attack on U.S. soil, and 47% were very and 37% somewhat concerned about the threat of biological or chemical attacks. These subjective estimates of perceived national threat, typically measured as the perceived likelihood of a future terrorist attack on U.S. soil, can be considered a form of group-based threat. In this guise, the threat of anti-American terrorism is likely to increase prejudice toward the threatening outgroup and fuel punitive action against them (Bar-Tal & Labin, 2001; Friedland & Merari, 1985; Gibson, 1998; Gordon & Arian, 2001; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, & Wood, 1995; Sullivan, Pierson, & Marcus, 1982; see Morgan, Wisneski, & Skitka, 2011, this issue, for a more complete discussion of this topic).

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[3] The first wave of the survey was conducted by telephone with a national sample of 1,549 adults between early October 2001 and early March 2002 and focused on psychological reactions to 9/11 and support for government antiterrorism policy. The second wave occurred in October 2002, and the third occurred from March until June 2003. The second and third waves focused on emotional reactions to terrorism and the Iraq war (for more detail, see Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007).

The psychology of terrorist threat differs further depending on whether it is viewed as a threat to the nation or to oneself more personally. In research on reactions to 9/11, *personal threat* is defined as the perceived risk of terrorism to oneself or family members. The probability of an individual American being killed or injured on 9/11 was vanishingly small (Marshall et al., 2007), but this did not prevent a sizeable minority of the public from believing that they were personally at risk from future terrorism in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 (Huddy, Khatib, & Capelos, 2002). In the months after the 9/11 attacks, 31% of Americans in the TNSS said they were very concerned, and 37% said they were somewhat concerned, for a combined total of 68% who were concerned that they, a friend, or a relative might be a victim of a terrorist attack, a perception that began to decline almost immediately after the event (Huddy et al., 2005). In more recent surveys, just under one third of Americans reported feeling personally threatened by terrorism (Associated Press/GfK Poll, 2011; Shambaugh et al., 2010).[4]

In the context of disaster research, threats to one's physical safety typically elevate a sense of personal vulnerability and motivate self-protective action (Browne & Hoyt, 2000; Ferraro, 1996; Sattler, Kaiser, & Hittner, 2000; D. A. Smith & Uchida, 1988). There is similar evidence that those who worried about being personally victimized by terrorism took steps to protect their personal safety after 9/11. In the month after the attacks, individuals living in Queens and Long Island (in close proximity to the WTC towers in Manhattan) who felt personally threatened by terrorism used more caution in handling their mail (in response to the anthrax scare), spent more time with their families, delayed or dropped their plans to travel by air, and used public transportation in Manhattan less frequently (Huddy, Feldman, Capelos, & Provost, 2002). These effects were independent of perceived levels of national threat.

Anger Versus Anxiety

In addition to the domain of perceived threat (national vs. personal), people can feel very different emotions in response to a terrorist attack. Recent political research has focused on anger and anxiety as divergent emotional reactions to threat (Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007). In research on political emotions, anxiety is typically measured as a series of self-reported feelings, such as worried, frightened, or anxious, and anger is measured by feelings such as angry, hostile, and disgusted (Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Skitka, Bauman, Aramovich, & Morgan, 2006). The political relevance of anger and anxiety derives from their typical psychological effects. Anxiety is linked to avoidance behavior, whereas anger has been identified as an approach emotion (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004; Carver, 2004; Harmon-Jones & Sigelman, 2001; Lazarus, 1991; Stein, Trabasso, & Liwag, 2000). Self-reported fear and anxiety among Spanish respondents after the 2004 Madrid terrorist bombings increased avoidant behaviors,

such as staying at home, avoiding air travel, and avoiding contact with Muslims (Conejero & Etxebarria, 2007).

In addition to their influence on behavior, anger and anxiety are also associated with different cognitive consequences. Anger leads to less careful and systematic processing of events, reduced risk perception, and increased tolerance of risky action (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004; Carver, 2004; Harmon-Jones & Sigelman, 2001). In contrast, anxiety produces a heightened sensitivity and attention to threat, an overestimation of risks, and more careful information processing very generally (Eysenck, 1992; Fischhoff, Gonzalez, Lerner, & Small, 2005; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; Loewenstein, Weber, Hsee, & Welch, 2001; Raghunathan & Pham, 1999). Lerner et al. (2003; Fischhoff et al., 2005) exposed a random sample of Americans to an angry or fearful video concerning the attacks and found that experimentally induced anxiety heightened the perceived threat of national and personal terrorism, whereas anger led to lower future risk estimates (Lerner et al., 2003).

The predicted and observed effects of anger and anxiety in response to threat are grounded in Lerner and Keltner's (2000, 2001) emotional appraisal model. From their perspective, anxiety is linked to a sense of uncertainty and lack of control concerning a negative outcome, which, once aroused, further elevates judgments of perceived future risk. Moreover, anxiety increases risk aversion because anxious individuals are motivated to reduce their anxiety, leading to a preference for less risky options. In contrast, anger stems from personal harm or a frustrated personal goal (or harm to others) caused by a specific individual or entity, which is associated with a sense of certainty about both the event and its cause. Anger thus motivates someone to "change the situation" and "re-establish the situation that existed prior to the offense" (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006, p. 118).

In the TNSS, Americans varied in the degree to which they felt anxious in the months after 9/11. Respondents were asked, "How much, if any, have the terrorist attacks shaken your own sense of personal safety and security?" A small minority (almost 18%) of the sample said that the attacks had shaken their sense of personal safety and security a great deal, and an additional 34% said that it had shaken them some. That left 47% who said the attacks had little or no effect on their sense of safety and security. Respondents were also asked how often they had felt four anxiety-related emotions: anxious, scared, frightened, or worried. Almost half reported feeling anxious at least sometimes (36%) or very often (11%). In addition, just under one third reported feeling scared sometimes (23%) or very often (8%). However, that left a majority who did not feel frightened or scared or felt that way only occasionally.

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[4] Exact levels of personal threat vary with survey question wording. In the Associated Press/GfK poll conducted in May 2011, respondents were asked, "How concerned are you about the chance that you or your family might be a victim of a terrorist attack?" Six percent said a great deal, and 27% said somewhat, for a combined total of 33%.

More extreme anxious reactions to 9/11 were confined to a subset of Americans. A minority of adults and children experienced increased depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress symptoms after 9/11 in studies conducted at both the national and local level (Galea et al., 2002; Marshall et al., 2007; Sattler, 2003; Schlenger et al., 2002; Schuster et al., 2001; Silver, Holman, McIntosh, Poulin, & Gil-Rivas, 2002; see Eisenberg & Silver, 2011, this issue, and Neria, DiGrande, & Adams, 2011, this issue, for an expanded discussion on this point).

Positive Emotions and Resilience

Americans differed in how anxious or threatened they felt in response to 9/11; they also differed in their degree of psychological resilience and level of positive emotion after the attacks. The majority of Americans emerged from 9/11 showing little psychological distress and considerable resilience. In the TNSS, 81% of Americans felt very (45%) or somewhat (36%) secure after the 9/11 attacks, and similar numbers felt very (46%) or somewhat (36%) confident (Huddy, Feldman, & Weber, 2007).[5] Other studies also reported high levels of psychological resilience after 9/11. Six months after the attacks, 60% of the residents of New York City exhibited resilience, defined as having one or fewer symptoms of PTSD (Bonanno, Galea, Bucciarelli, & Vlahov, 2007), and in a national panel study, 58% of Americans reported some positive benefit of the 9/11 attacks (Poulin, Silver, Gil-Rivas, Holman, & McIntosh, 2009).

One explanation for differences in positive feelings and resilience after 9/11 lies in attachment theory, an evolutionary–developmental account of social behavior developed by Bowlby (1969/1982). Attachment theory suggests that a sense of security depends on successfully attaching to parents in infancy and transferring this into a lifelong ability to positively cope with negative events through a secure attachment to others. According to attachment theory, a standing sense of security dampens reactions to adverse events, such as war and terrorism, because individuals who are securely attached to others are better able to cope with stressful events (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Typically, roughly 75% of adults exhibit a secure attachment style, as assessed by a standard measure based on questions about romantic relationships (Hazan & Shaver 1987).

Research conducted in Israel demonstrates a direct link between a secure attachment and positive psychological reactions to threatening events, such as war. During the 1991 Gulf war and Iraqi Scud missile attacks, securely attached Israelis perceived lower levels of threat, reported higher levels of self-efficacy, actively sought out social support, and pursued constructive problem solving strategies (Mikulincer, Florian, & Weller 1993). Former Israeli prisoners of war with a secure attachment style recalled positive memories or encounters with others to help cope with their imprisonment, in essence seeking symbolic proximity to internalized attachment figures (Z. Solomon, Ginzburg, Mikulincer, Neria, & Ohry, 1998).

Those with a secure attachment also coped more successfully psychologically with the events of 9/11. Among a sample of individuals who had been within a few blocks of the WTC on 9/11, those with secure attachment exhibited fewer symptoms of PTSD and depression than did insecure individuals seven months after the attacks (Fraley, Fazzari, Bonanno, & Dekel, 2006). These findings are bolstered by evidence that secure individuals tend to react to mortality salience with an increased desire for intimacy, whereas less secure individuals are more likely to severely punish someone who has caused harm to another (Mikulincer & Florian, 2000). This raises the possibility that individuals who have reacted positively to the events of 9/11 seek different and less aggressive political solutions to the attacks than those with an insecure attachment.

Political Consequences of Terrorism: National Security Policy

National Terrorism Threat

Perceived national threat had a powerful effect on support for domestic national security policy after 9/11. Americans who perceived substantial terrorist threat were more supportive of policies that would restrict the number of foreign visitors to the United States, expose Arabs applying for a U.S. visa to more intensive security checks, and place Arab Americans under special surveillance. Support for a national identification card and government monitoring of telephone calls and e-mail rose significantly as the perceived threat of future terrorism increased. Similarly, perceived threat led to greater concern that the government would fail to enact strong antiterrorism measures than that such laws would place undue restrictions on Americans' civil liberties (Davis & Silver, 2004; Hetherington & Suhay, 2011; Huddy et al., 2005; Kam & Kinder, 2007).

Perceived terrorist threat also increased support for a strong foreign policy, including overseas military action in Afghanistan and broadening U.S. "action to include other countries that harbor and support terrorists" (Huddy, Feldman, & Weber, 2007, p. 147) in the months after 9/11 and support for military action in Iraq in 2002 (Huddy et al., 2005; Huddy, Feldman, & Weber, 2007; Kam & Kinder, 2007). Merolla and Zechmeister (2009) exposed subjects in 2004 to a video about ongoing terrorism (or good times in the United States) and observed stronger support for the view that the United States should take an active role in world affairs in the terror condition.

The effects of perceived threat on support for domestic and foreign security policies are independent of broad political beliefs, such as political ideology, partisanship, or authoritarianism (Huddy et al., 2005; Kam & Kinder, 2007; Merolla & Zechmeister, 2009). Some studies report an interaction between threat and authoritarianism, although the direction of the effect differs across studies. Hethering-

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[5] Anxiety and felt security were modestly related ($r = -.35$ in a measurement model) but had distinct origins. Unlike anxiety, feelings of security were unrelated to emotional or physical proximity to the attacks (Huddy, Feldman, & Weber, 2007).

ton and Suhay (2011) found a greater effect of threat on foreign policy among low than high authoritarians. In contrast, Cohrs, Kielmann, Maes, and Moschner (2005) found greater support for surveillance policies among high than low authoritarians who perceived future terrorist threat.

In a further wrinkle to these data, Americans who felt insecure in the days after 9/11 and saw the nation as threatened felt the greatest need for government national security policies (Huddy, Feldman, & Weber, 2007). They were more likely to support a national identification card, government monitoring of Americans' phones and e-mail, various foreign security policies such as increased surveillance of Arabs in the United States, and tougher restrictions on visas for foreign students. Overall, feeling insecure after the 9/11 attacks dramatically increased the political effects of perceived threat on support for various national security policies. These effects are independent of anxiety, partisanship, and political ideology.

Political Effects of Anger and Anxiety

Anger and anxiety should have very different effects on support for an aggressive military response to terrorism. On the basis of their typical psychological effects, anger should reduce the perceived risks of aggressive action against terrorists and should increase support for outwardly focused acts of government retaliation, whereas anxiety should lead to an overestimation of risk associated with aggressive government action, foster risk-averse behavior, and limit support for aggressive and potentially dangerous antiterrorism policies.

Data from national surveys support these predictions. In the months after 9/11, anxiety was associated with less approval of President Bush and increased opposition to military action and overseas involvement in Afghanistan (Huddy et al., 2005). In the second and third waves of the TNSS, respondents were asked a series of questions about terrorism and the war, including feelings of anxiety and anger at anti-United States terrorists. In these data, anxiety was associated with reduced support for the Iraq war, greater perceived risk of the war, and the perception that Saddam Hussein posed a risk to the United States. In all respects, anxious individuals were more likely than nonanxious individuals to oppose war (Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007). Anxiety about terrorism was also associated with decreased support for aggressive military action against terrorists in other national survey data (Skitka et al., 2006) and adult convenience samples (Sadler, Lineberger, Correll, & Park, 2005). These findings are consistent with psychological evidence that anxious individuals are risk avoidant.

In contrast, angry individuals, especially those angry at terrorists, were less inclined to see military action as risky and more supportive of it as a consequence (Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007; Sadler et al., 2005; Skitka et al., 2006). In the TNSS data, anger toward Saddam Hussein and terrorists was linked to the view that a war in Iraq was not risky. Anger was associated with the perception that the war would not hurt the U.S. economy and would not weaken cooperation from allies, heighten terrorism, or have other adverse consequences for the United States. At the same time, angry people supported the war more strongly than those who were not angry at terrorists

(Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007). Anger in response to 9/11 was linked to support for a strong military response to terrorism (Sadler et al., 2005).

Finally, Lambert et al., (2010) undertook a series of carefully crafted experiments to demonstrate the existence and differing political consequences of anger and anxiety in reaction to 9/11. They randomly assigned subjects to watch a video about 9/11 and found that it generated both anger and anxiety. The two emotions had differing political effects: Anger increased support for war, whereas anxiety undercut it. They also demonstrated that experimentally aroused anger unrelated to 9/11 increased support for prowar political candidates, whereas experimentally heightened feelings of anxiety (again unrelated to terrorism) undercut support for such candidates. Their research provides strong empirical evidence that anxiety undercuts support for an aggressive response to terrorism, whereas anger promotes it.

Political Consequences of Terrorism Beyond National Security Policy

American attitudes toward antiterrorism policy were linked in complex ways to psychological reactions to 9/11: Support was heightened among those who felt angry at terrorists and weakened (on foreign policy) among those who felt anxious. However, perhaps increased political conservatism was apparent more broadly in support for politicians such as George W. Bush and on other political issues not directly related to terrorism (Nail & McGregor, 2009)? We review this evidence next.

Approval of President Bush

There was a sharp increase in support for George W. Bush after the 9/11 attacks, but it was confined to a subset of the U.S. population. In the American National Election Studies (ANES) panel study conducted first in 2000 and then again in 2002, ratings of Bush went from an average of 56.1 in 2000 to 66.0 in 2002 on a 0 to 100 thermometer rating scale (Ladd, 2007). This did not simply reflect a broad increase in support for Bush among all Americans, however. The most knowledgeable Americans became more polarized in their views of Bush on the basis of their initial support for military spending in 2000, consistent with the TMT notion of ideological intensification, resulting in no net gain in his ratings. In contrast, less knowledgeable Americans became more supportive of Bush regardless of their initial position on defense spending, in line with the notion of a broad conservative shift (Ladd, 2007).[6]

Merolla and colleagues' (Merolla, Ramos, & Zechmeister, 2007; Merolla & Zechmeister, 2009) experimental research confirmed the positive effects of terrorism on ratings of President Bush among the least politically knowledgeable. Subjects in their study were assigned to view either a video clip about ongoing terrorism (including a reminder of 9/11), a video clip containing positive information about the United States, or a control condition

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[6] Knowledge was assessed with a battery of five factual questions about American politics.

without a video clip. The terrorism condition increased Bush's rated charisma (measured with 12 trait words, including *vision, sense of purpose,* and *confidence*) independently of partisanship or ideology, but this effect was largely confined to participants with lower levels of factual political information. Not surprisingly, Democrats rated Bush as lower in charisma than did Republicans. However, Democrats and Republicans with less political information rated Bush as more charismatic in the terrorism condition than did their partisan counterparts in the other conditions (Merolla & Zechmeister, 2009).

Moreover, patterns of support and opposition to President Bush in national surveys conducted after the 9/11 attacks confirmed that his ratings were tied to Americans' specific responses to the attacks. Perceived national terrorist threat was linked to an increased approval of Bush, independent of partisanship or political ideology (Huddy et al., 2005; Kam & Kinder, 2007). Feeling angry was associated with increased support for Bush, and experimentally induced anger increased support for a hypothetical prowar political candidate (Lambert et al., 2010). Anxiety, however, was associated with increased disapproval of Bush and his handling of the terrorist situation (Huddy et al., 2005; Lambert et al., 2010). These findings are at odds with Janoff-Bulman and Sheikh's (2006) conclusion that anxiety linked to events such as 9/11 "can be used by politicians and government officials not only to justify encroachments upon civil liberties but to create support for candidates who play the 'fear' card" (p. 330).

Ideological Self-Placement

There is little evidence that 9/11 led to a conservative shift in Americans' self-reported political ideology in nationally representative survey data from the ANES and the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey (GSS). The standard self-identification measure of ideology in which participants are asked to describe themselves as liberal, moderate, or conservative and then indicate the strength of their affiliation did not demonstrate a significant conservative shift between 2000 and 2002 in either the ANES surveys or the GSS.

As can be seen in Table 1, 26% of Americans in the GSS called themselves liberal in 2000, and a similar percentage called themselves liberal in 2002. The percentage of conservatives increased slightly but not significantly from 34% in 2000 to 35% in 2002, and the percentage of moderates dropped slightly from 40% to 39% (http://sda.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/hsda?harcsda+gss10).The ANES contains a second measure of ideology: the difference between 100-point feeling thermometer ratings of liberals and conservatives in which respondents report 0 if they feel very cold toward a group, 100 if they report feeling very warm, and 50 if their feelings are neither warm or cold. It too shows no significant movement between 2000 and 2002 (http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/nesguide.htm).

Social Policies

There is also little evidence that 9/11 led to a conservative shift on government policies unrelated to national security between 2000 and 2002 in the GSS. Table 1 summarizes support for several key social policies at both time points. Across six social policies, only two exhibit significant change between 2000 and 2002: There was a slight increase in the percentage of Americans who believed pornography should be made illegal (from 35% to 39%) and a slight decrease in the percentage who believed the courts do not deal harshly enough with criminals. The change in views on pornography is in a conservative direction, whereas there is a decline in support for the conservative position on how the courts deal with criminals. Other attitudes on the death penalty, gun permits, legalized abortion, and divorce laws remained the same before and after 9/11. In addition to the policy issues included in Table 1, there is no evidence of change in a range of other social attitudes between 2000 and 2002 in the GSS. There was no decline in tolerance of atheists, socialists, and homosexuals, no change in views on whether women or men were better suited to politics, no decline in support for sex education in schools, and no change in approval of homosexual relationships in additional analyses of the GSS data (http://sda.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/hsda?harcsda+gss10).

Origins of Threat Reactions

Divergent psychological reactions to terrorism raise obvious questions about their origins. Why do some people feel personally at risk from a terrorist threat, whereas others do not? Why do some people feel angry, whereas others feel anxious? We briefly examine the factors known to heighten various threat reactions.

Physical and Emotional Proximity to Violence

Exposure to terrorism worsens the psychological effects of an attack. Social or psychological proximity in the form of knowing someone who was victimized by a terrorist event heightened a sense of personal vulnerability and feelings of anxiety after 9/11 (Huddy et al., 2005; Neria et al., 2011; Silver et al., 2002). Physical proximity also increased a sense of vulnerability and anxiety in response to the 9/11 attacks for those who lived in the immediate vicinity of the WTC in New York. Residents of New York City, city residents who lived close to the WTC, and those who viewed the attacks in person, were injured, involved in rescue efforts, or lost a friend or relative were more likely to experience symptoms of PTSD (Bonanno et al., 2007; Schlenger et al., 2002; Schuster et al., 2001). New York City residents or those who lived within a 100-mile radius of the city were more likely to feel at greater risk of future terrorism and reported higher levels of anxiety about terrorism (Fischhoff, Gonzalez, Small, & Lerner, 2003; Huddy et al., 2005; Huddy, Feldman, & Weber, 2007). Residents of the Northeast expressed greater fear in response to 9/11 than Americans living in other regions of the country and felt more personally threatened by terrorism (Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004).

Table 1
Political Orientations Before and After 9/11: General Social Survey

Political orientation	2000 (%)	2002 (%)	χ^2	df	p
Ideology			0.64	2	.73
Liberal	26.1	26.1			
Moderate	39.9	38.7			
Conservative	34.0	35.2			
Death penalty			0.02	1	.89
Favor	69.6	69.8			
Permits for guns			0.05	1	.82
Favor	81.0	81.4			
Do courts deal with criminals			6.63	2	.04
Too harshly	8.1	10.0			
Not harshly enough	75.2	71.5			
About right	16.7	18.5			
Pornography should be			8.89	2	.01
Illegal to all	35.2	39.1			
Illegal under 18	61.7	56.4			
Legal	3.1	4.5			
Abortion should be legal			1.20	1	.27
Yes	38.9	41.1			
Divorce laws should be			0.67	2	.72
Easier	24.9	25.9			
More difficult	52.5	52.8			
Stay the same	22.5	21.3			

Note. Sample sizes for each question vary because of some missing data and the use of multiple forms on these surveys. The range of sample size ranges from 881 for the question on divorce laws in 2002 to 2,644 for ideology in 2000. Data are from the 2000 and 2002 General Social Surveys of the National Opinion Research Center (http://sda.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/hsda?harcsda+gss10).

Physical proximity to a terrorist attack can have long-lasting effects on amygdala activation that suggest lingering consequences of a direct experience with terrorism, persisting years after the attacks. Among a group of normal adults, those who lived within 1.5 miles of the WTC site demonstrated heightened amygdala response to fearful faces more than three years after the attacks. This heightened response was associated with symptoms of posttraumatic stress (Ganzel, Casey, Glover, Voss, & Temple, 2007).

Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

The 9/11 terrorist attacks were an unusual disaster, however, because elevated levels of posttraumatic stress symptoms were also observed among Americans who were not personally affected by the attacks (Schlenger et al., 2002; Silver et al., 2002). A series of factors were linked to feeling anxious and personally threatened by terrorism. In general, women feel more anxious and less secure than men in response to international acts of aggression (Arian & Gordon, 1993; Bar-Tal, Jacobson, & Freund, 1995; Raviv, Sadeh, Raviv, Silberstein, & Diver, 2000). In numerous studies, women have reported higher levels of anxiety, personal vulnerability, and depression in response to terrorism (Fischhoff et al., 2003; Goodwin, Wilson, & Gaines, 2005; Huddy, Feldman, Capelos, & Provost, 2002; Huddy et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2003; Skitka et al., 2004).

Several national studies found that women were more likely than men to experience posttraumatic distress and exhibit severe symptoms following the 9/11 terror attacks (e.g., Schlenger et al., 2002; Silver et al., 2002). Similar gender differences in response to terrorism have been observed in Israel (Raviv et al., 2000; Z. Solomon, Gelkopf, & Bleich, 2005).

Latinos and African Americans reported higher levels of threat and anxiety than did Whites in response to the events of 9/11 (Huddy, Feldman, Capelos, & Provost, 2002; Huddy et al., 2005). In general, African Americans and women responded with greater emotion to the terrorist attacks (Chu, Seery, Ence, Holman, & Silver, 2006). Blacks were somewhat more likely than Whites to assess a higher risk of future terrorism, although they did not experience higher levels of anxiety. Latinos experienced higher levels of depression (Huddy et al., 2005; Schlenger et al., 2002). One explanation for these observed findings is that those lower in social status tend to experience higher levels of stress in general, potentially heightening their affective response to threatening events (Fischhoff et al., 2003; Perilla, Norris, & Lavizzo, 2002; Vaughan, 1993; Wilkinson, 2005). Evidence of more adverse psychological symptoms among Latinos and to a lesser extent African Americans after 9/11 lends tentative support to the life stressor hypothesis (Galea et al., 2002; T. W. Smith & Rasinksi, 2002).

Collective National Strength

What drives an angry as opposed to an anxious reaction to terrorism? We approach this question from the perspective of intergroup emotions theory (IET), which is tied to appraisal theory (discussed earlier in connection to Lerner & Keltner's, 2000, 2001, work on the origins of anger and anxiety; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Maitner, Mackie, & Smith, 2006; E. R. Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007). From an IET perspective, threat is most likely to produce anger among group members who are certain that a negative event has occurred and can attribute it to a specific individual or entity. Feeling confident that one's group can deal successfully with an offending agent contributes further to feelings of anger within IET. When applied to terrorism, IET predicts that citizens who view their country as strong militarily are most likely to feel outraged and angry at an attack by a known weaker opponent.

Small, Lerner, and Fischhoff (2006) demonstrated a link between anger and causal attributions for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. When asked to write about what made them feel angry or sad about the attacks, those who wrote about anger wrote many more causal attributions for the attacks than those in the sad condition. In the anger condition, research participants attributed the events of 9/11 to people or groups, such as al Qaeda or Osama bin Laden, religious entities, and weak foreign governments. Those in the sad condition, however, made many fewer attributions about the cause of the attacks. This suggests that anger about 9/11 is linked to causal attributions for the event.

Within IET, strong group identifiers are also more likely to feel angry in response to threat. In the context of 9/11, there is clear evidence that patriotic Americans were angrier than others at terrorists a year after the attacks (Feldman, Huddy, & Cassese, in press). Other studies document a connection between patriotism, an increased tendency to blame terrorists for the 9/11 attacks (as opposed to U.S. foreign policy), and increased support for the war in Afghanistan (Sadler et al., 2005; Sahar, 2008). This link between anger and patriotism has been replicated in other countries affected by terrorism. Conejero and Etxebarria (2007) found that strong Spanish identity increased both anger and sadness in response to the Madrid terrorist bombings, and feelings of anger were more common than fear a month after the attacks. Fischer, Haslam, and Smith (2010) manipulated the salience of subjects' British (or gender) identity and then exposed participants to photos of the July 2005 terrorist bombings in London. They observed higher levels of aggression and greater support for the war on terror when British identity was made salient.

There is much that is intuitively appealing in an intergroup emotions explanation of anger in response to threat. It is easy to understand, for example, why Americans felt angry after the 9/11 attacks: Levels of patriotism among Americans are generally high and increased further after 9/11 (Carroll, 2005), and Americans are likely to see the United States as far more powerful militarily than al Qaeda. When taken together, the combination of a strong national identity and a standing sense of military superiority would predict greater anger than anxiety among Americans in response to the attacks of 9/11. In general, IET suggests that citizens of strong military entities, such as Israel or the United States, should feel more angry than anxious when threatened, inclining their governments to respond with disproportionate force in response to threat as a way to placate their angry citizens.[7]

The divergent origins of anger and anxiety hold implications for their longevity over time as a response to terrorism. Anger dissipates once aggressive action is taken against an opponent, but anxious individuals continue to feel anxiety in the face of aggressive action (Maitner et al., 2006). This implies that the effects of anxiety may be longer lasting than the shorter term forces of anger because anxiety does not dissipate until some form of avoidant action is taken to minimize risk.

Conclusions

Americans' political reactions to the 9/11 attacks were linked to their subjective responses to terrorism. Perceiving a future threat of terrorism was associated with increased support for President George W. Bush and a strong national security policy. The effects of threat depended on a psychological sense of security. Those who felt insecure and saw the nation as at threat of future terrorism were most likely to demand that the U.S. government respond powerfully to the attacks; they supported heightened domestic security policies and were most supportive of going to war in Afghanistan.

Feelings of anger and anxiety had distinct and opposite effects on presidential approval and policy support. Anger was linked to support for Bush and an aggressive foreign policy. Individuals who were angry at terrorists were especially likely to support the Iraq War and saw it as less risky than did others. In contrast, those who felt anxious about terrorism were least supportive of an aggressive foreign policy in Afghanistan and Iraq and were most likely to see risks associated with the Iraq War. The differing effects of anger and anxiety on war support are largely based on correlational survey data, but in at least one experimental study, induced anger increased support for war and a prowar political candidate, whereas induced anxiety had the opposite effect (Lambert et al., 2010).

A number of factors were associated with differing emotional reactions to the events of 9/11, helping to shed light on political reactions to possible future acts of terrorism. Anger at terrorists was more pronounced among highly patriotic Americans and those who blamed terrorists and al Qaeda for the attacks. Feelings of personal vulnerability and anxiety were more pronounced among women, Blacks, and Latinos and those who lived in New York City or knew someone who was killed in the attacks.

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[7] Perceptions of national strength are not entirely devoid of objective reality. It is difficult to argue with the global military might of the United States or the strength and power of Israel in the Middle East. Yet, even powerful countries can be defeated by weaker entities through civil unrest, unconventional wars, and terrorist actions. In these instances, such collective action hinges on members of the weaker group feeling confident that they can defeat a more powerful enemy.

The political effects of 9/11 were largely confined to antiterrorism policies. National surveys uncover little or no change in Americans' self-identified political ideology between 2000 and 2002, and there is no evidence of increased support for conservative positions on a range of social policies, such as gun control, the death penalty, or legalized abortion. When it comes to general social attitudes, Americans interviewed in the ANES actually became somewhat more positive toward African Americans, Asians, Latinos, and Whites between 2000 and 2002 (Merolla & Zechemister, 2009), and in experimental research, reminders of 9/11 increased support for multiculturalism (Davies, Steele, & Markus, 2008).

The psychology underlying American support for national security policies enacted after 9/11 reflects a focused response to terrorism. The perceived threat of terrorism lends support to strong national security policy but does not affect Americans' broad political ideology or their position on social policies more broadly. A focused political response to 9/11 can still translate into broad support for expensive and ill-advised overseas military interventions or a domestic crackdown on civil liberties. However, support for such policies is likely to wax and wane with the threat of terrorism, anger at terrorists, and feelings of personal vulnerability. Events such as the killing of Osama bin Laden are likely to decrease perceived terrorist threat and weaken support for an aggressive national security policy. A high-profile terrorist attack in a popular U.S. tourist destination could arouse anxiety in those affected by the attacks, weakening their support for an aggressive military response to terrorism. Overall, research on American political reactions to 9/11 suggests that support for a strong government response to terrorism is most likely when members of a population perceive a high risk of future terrorism and feel angry at terrorists.

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