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### Six Rather Unusual Propositions about Terrorism

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## Discussion

### **Six Rather Unusual Propositions about Terrorism**

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*The costs of terrorism very often come mostly from the fear and consequent reaction (or overreaction) it characteristically inspires (qualities stoked by the terrorism industry), not from its direct effects which are usually comparatively limited. Therefore, policies designed to deal with terrorism should focus more on reducing fear and anxiety as inexpensively as possible than on objectively reducing the rather limited dangers terrorism is likely actually to pose. Doing nothing (or at least refraining from overreacting) after a terrorist attack is not necessarily unacceptable, and, despite U. S. overreaction, the campaign against terror is generally going rather well because, no matter how much they might disagree on other issues (most notably on war in Iraq), there is a compelling incentive for states to cooperate to deal with a common problem.*

“The chances of any of us dying in a terrorist incident is very, very, very small,” filmmaker-provocateur Michael Moore happened to remark on 60 minutes on February 16, 2003. His interviewer, Bob Simon, promptly admonished, “But no one sees the world like that.” Both statements, remarkably, are true—the first only a bit more so than the second.

This article investigates this incongruity. It is devoted especially to exploring the policy consequences that arise from what author Mark Bowden has characterized as “housewives in Iowa. . . watching TV afraid that al-Qaeda’s going to charge in their front door,”<sup>1</sup> or more generally from the fact that many people have developed what Leif Wenar of the University of Sheffield has aptly labeled “a false sense of insecurity” about terrorism in the United States.

#### ***Terrorism Generally Has Only Limited Direct Effects***

For all the attention it evokes, terrorism—in reasonable context—actually causes rather little damage and, as Moore suggests, the likelihood that any individual will become a victim in most places is microscopic. Although those adept at hyperbole like to proclaim that we live in “the age of terror,” the number of people worldwide who die as a result of international terrorism is generally only a few hundred a year, tiny compared to the numbers who die in most civil wars or from automobile accidents. In fact, until 2001 far fewer Americans were killed in any grouping of years by all forms of international terrorism than were killed by lightning. And except for

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2001, virtually none of these terrorist deaths occurred within the United States itself. Indeed, outside of 2001, fewer people have died in America from international terrorism than have drowned in toilets.

Even with the September 11 attacks included in the count, however, the number of Americans killed by international terrorism since the late 1960s (which is when the U.S. State Department began its accounting) is about the same as the number killed over the same period by lightning—or by accident-causing deer or by severe allergic reactions to peanuts. In almost all years the total number of people worldwide who die at the hands of international terrorists is not much more than the number who drown in bathtubs in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Some of this is definitional. When terrorism becomes really extensive we generally no longer call it terrorism, but war. But people are mainly concerned about random terror, not sustained warfare. Moreover, even using an expansive definition of terrorism and including domestic terrorism in the mix, it is likely that far fewer people were killed by terrorists in the entire world over the last hundred years than died in any number of unnoticed civil wars during that century.

Obviously, this could change if international terrorists are able to assemble sufficient weaponry or devise new tactics to kill masses of people and if they come to do so routinely—and this, of course, is the central concern.<sup>3</sup> The weapons most feared in the hands of terrorists are so-called “weapons of mass destruction,” a phrase systematically and extensively embellished after the cold war to embrace chemical and biological weapons as well as nuclear ones. This escalation of language is highly questionable.<sup>4</sup>

Chemical arms do have the potential, under appropriate circumstances, for panicking people; killing masses of them in open areas, however, is beyond their modest capabilities. Although they obviously can be hugely lethal when released in gas chambers, their effectiveness as weapons has been unimpressive, and their inclusion in the weapons-of-mass-destruction category is highly dubious unless the concept is so diluted that bullets or machetes can also be included. Biologist Matthew Meselson calculates that it would take a ton of nerve gas or five tons of mustard gas to produce heavy casualties among unprotected people in an open area of one square kilometer. Even for nerve gas this would take the concentrated delivery into a rather small area of about three hundred heavy artillery shells or seven 500-pound bombs. A 1993 analysis by the Office of Technology Assessment of the U.S. Congress finds that a ton of sarin nerve gas perfectly delivered under absolutely ideal conditions over a heavily populated area against unprotected people could cause between three thousand and eight thousand deaths. Under slightly less ideal circumstances—if there was a moderate wind or if the sun was out, for example—the death rate would be only one-tenth as great.<sup>5</sup> Although gas was used extensively in World War I, it accounted for less than 1 percent of the battle deaths.<sup>6</sup> In fact, on average it took over a ton of gas to produce a single fatality.<sup>7</sup>

Properly developed and deployed, biological weapons could indeed (if thus far only in theory) kill hundreds of thousands—perhaps even millions—of people. The discussion remains theoretical because biological weapons have scarcely ever been used. Belligerents have eschewed such weapons with good reason: biological weapons are extremely difficult to deploy and to control. Terrorist groups or rogue states may be able to solve such problems in the future with advances in technology and knowledge, but the record thus far is unlikely to be very encouraging to them. In the 1990s, Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese cult that had some three hundred scientists in

its employ and an estimated budget of \$1 billion, reportedly tried at least nine times over five years to set off biological weapons by spraying pathogens from trucks and wafting them from rooftops, hoping fancifully to ignite an apocalyptic war. These efforts failed to create a single fatality—in fact, nobody even noticed that the attacks had taken place.<sup>8</sup> For the most destructive results, biological weapons need to be dispersed in very low-altitude aerosol clouds: aerosols do not appreciably settle, and anthrax (which is not easy to spread or catch and is not contagious) would probably have to be sprayed near nose level. Explosive methods of dispersion may destroy the organisms. Moreover, except for anthrax spores, long-term storage of lethal organisms in bombs or warheads is difficult and, even if refrigerated, most of the organisms have a limited lifetime. The effects of such weapons can take days or weeks to have full effect, during which time they can be countered with civil defense measures. And their impact is very difficult to predict and in combat situations may spread back on the attacker.<sup>9</sup>

The science with respect to chemical and biological weaponry has been known with considerable sophistication for more than a century, and that science has become massively more developed over the last hundred years. Moreover, governments (not just small terrorist groups) have spent considerably over decades in an effort to make the weapons more effective. Yet although there have been great increases in the lethality and effectiveness of conventional and nuclear weapons during that time, the difficulties of controlling and dispersing chemical and biological substances seem to have persisted.

Nuclear weapons, most decidedly, can indeed inflict massive destruction, and it is certainly reasonable to point out that an atomic bomb in the hands of a terrorist or rogue state could kill tens of thousands of people. But it may also be worthwhile to note that making such a bomb is an extraordinarily difficult task and that warnings about the possibility that small groups, terrorists, and errant states could fabricate nuclear weapons have been repeatedly uttered at least since 1947,<sup>10</sup> and especially since the 1950s when the “suitcase bomb” appeared to become a practical possibility. It has now been three decades since terrorism specialist Brian Jenkins published his warnings that “the mass production and widespread distribution of increasingly sophisticated and increasingly powerful man-portable weapons will greatly add to the terrorist’s arsenal” and that “the world’s increasing dependence on nuclear power may provide terrorists with weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>11</sup> We continue to wait.

Actually, it is somewhat strange that so much emphasis has been put on the dangers of high-tech weapons at all. Some of the anxiety may derive from the post-September 11 anthrax scare, even though that terrorist event killed only a few people. The events of September 11, by contrast, were remarkably low tech and could have happened long ago: both skyscrapers and airplanes have been around for a century now.

Two careful reports from the late 1990s—one from the Gilmore Panel, the other from the General Accounting Office—stress the great difficulties a terrorist group would have in acquiring and developing devices with the capacity to cause mass casualties, and they pointedly warn against the worst case scenarios “that have dominated domestic preparedness planning.”<sup>12</sup> The September 11 attackers did not use such weapons and the anthrax terrorism killed only a few people. Nonetheless, those events have caused these sensible warnings to become much neglected.

Thus, recent books by Graham Allison and Joshua Goldstein issue dire warnings about nuclear terrorism. Of particular concern in this are Russia’s supposedly

missing suitcase bombs—even though a careful assessment by the Center for Nonproliferation Studies has concluded that it is unlikely that any of these devices have indeed been lost and that, regardless, their effectiveness would be very low or even nonexistent because they require continual maintenance.<sup>13</sup> And in 2004 testimony, CIA adviser and arms inspector Charles Duelfer stressed that “nuclear weapons development requires thousands of knowledgeable scientists as well as a large physical plant.”<sup>14</sup> It is also worth noting that, although nuclear weapons have been around now for well over half a century, no state has ever given another state (much less a terrorist group) a nuclear weapon that the recipient could use independently. There is always the danger that the weapon would be used in a manner the donor would not approve of—or even, potentially, on the donor itself. Allison thinks a dedicated terrorist group could get around these problems in time and eventually produce or procure a “crude” bomb—one that, by Allison’s own admission, would be “large, cumbersome, unsafe, unreliable, unpredictable, and inefficient.”<sup>15</sup>

Goldstein is alarmed because he considers nuclear terrorism to be “not impossible,” and Allison more boldly declares his “own considered judgment” that, unless his policy recommendations (which include a dramatic push toward war with North Korea) are carried out, “a nuclear terrorist attack on America in the decade ahead is more likely than not.”<sup>16</sup> Allison’s declaration is far more likely to be remembered if it proves true than if, as is far more likely, it goes the way of C. P. Snow’s once much-heralded alarmist broadside published in 1961:

We are faced with an either-or, and we haven’t much time. The *either* is acceptance of a restriction of nuclear armaments. . . . The *or* is not a risk but a certainty. It is this. There is no agreement on tests. The nuclear arms race between the United States and the U.S.S.R. not only continues but accelerates. Other countries join in. Within, at the most, six years, China and several other states have a stock of nuclear bombs. Within, at the most, ten years, some of those bombs are going off. I am saying this as responsibly as I can. *That* is the certainty.<sup>17</sup>

It should also be kept in mind that September 11 was an extreme event: until then no more than a few hundred had ever been killed in a single terrorist attack, and during the entire twentieth century fewer than twenty terrorist attacks resulted in the deaths of more than one hundred people. The economic destruction on September 11 was also unprecedented, of course. However, extreme events often remain exactly that—aberrations, rather than harbingers.<sup>18</sup> A bomb planted in a piece of checked luggage was responsible for the explosion that caused a PanAm jet to crash into Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988. Since that time, hundreds of billions of pieces of luggage have been transported on American carriers and none has exploded to down an aircraft.<sup>19</sup> This doesn’t mean that one should cease worrying about luggage on airlines, but it does suggest that extreme events do not necessarily assure repetition—any more than Timothy McVeigh’s Oklahoma City bombing of 1995 has. Since its alarming release of poison gas in the Tokyo subway in 1995, the apocalyptic group Aum Shinrikyo appears to have abandoned the terrorism business and its example has not been followed. Moreover, although there have been many terrorist incidents in the world since 2001, all (thus far, at least) have relied on conventional methods.<sup>20</sup>

This should not be taken, of course, to suggest that all extreme events prove to be the last in their line or that nothing bad ever happens. At the time, World

War I—called the Great War for decades—was the worst war of its type. Yet an even more destructive one followed. Moreover, while Aum Shinrikyo and Qaddafi may be under control, Al Qaeda and like-minded terrorist groups are unlikely to die out any time soon: September 11, after all, marked their second attempt to destroy the World Trade Center. In addition, the suicidal nature of many attacks, while not new, can be very unsettling because deterring by threatening punishment to the would-be perpetrator becomes impossible. And, of course, terrorism itself will never go away: it has always existed and always will.

A central issue, however, is whether such spectacularly destructive terrorist acts will become commonplace and will escalate in their destructiveness. “Policy must consider the capacity for action,” notes Russell Seitz, “not intent alone.” The American communist party comprised a dedicated band of conspirators in league with foreign enemies who were devoted to using subversion and violence to topple democracy and capitalism and, if successful, they would presumably have established a murderous tyranny. The intent was there—but not, as it turned out, the capacity. In the present instance, one should not, as Seitz continues, “equate the modern ubiquity of high technology with terrorists becoming omniscient or infallible.”<sup>21</sup> Although there is no reason to think Al Qaeda will never strike again, the record suggests that it will find it difficult to match or top what it accomplished on September 11 and that terrorism’s destructiveness, despite the creative visions of worst case scenarists, may well fail to escalate dramatically. Moreover, the extreme destruction of September 11 has raised the bar, possibly reducing the impact of less damaging attacks.

***The Costs of Terrorism Very Often Come Mostly from the Fear and Consequent Reaction (or Overreaction) It Characteristically Inspires***

The costs of terrorism commonly come much more from hasty, ill-considered, and over wrought reactions (or overreactions) to it than from anything the terrorists have done. For example, responding to several vicious acts of terrorism apparently perpetrated by Chechens, the Russian government in 1999 reinstated a war against the breakaway republic that has resulted in far more destruction of Russian (and, of course, Chechen) lives and property than the terrorists ever brought about. Ronald Reagan bombed Libya in 1986 after terrorists linked to that country had set off an explosive in a Berlin discotheque killing two people, a raid that then apparently led to the blowing up of an airliner, killing 270 and toppling the airline company into bankruptcy.<sup>22</sup> When two American embassies in Africa were bombed in 1998, killing over 200 (including a few Americans), Bill Clinton retaliated by bombing a suspect pharmaceutical factory in Sudan, the loss of which may have led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Sudanese over time.<sup>23</sup> Also bombed were some of Osama bin Laden’s terrorist training camps in Afghanistan, which caused the Afghan government—the Taliban—to renege on pledges to extradite the troublesome and egoistic bin Laden to Saudi Arabia, made him into an international celebrity, essentially created his Al Qaeda organization by turning it into a magnet for funds and recruits, and converted the Taliban from reluctant hosts to allies and partners.<sup>24</sup>

The costs of reaction outstripped those inflicted by the terrorists even in the case of the September 11 attacks, which were by far the most destructive in history. The direct economic costs of September 11 amounted to tens of billions of dollars, but the economic costs in the United States of the much-enhanced security runs several times that. The yearly budget for the Department of Homeland Security, for

example, is approaching \$50 billion per year while state and local governments spend additional billions.<sup>25</sup> The costs to the tourism and airline industries have also been monumental: indeed, three years after September 11 domestic airline flights in the United States were still 7 percent below their pre-September 11 levels, and one estimate suggests that the economy lost 1.6 million jobs in 2001 alone, mostly in the tourism industry.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, safety measures carry additional consequences: economist Roger Congleton calculates that strictures effectively requiring people to spend an additional half hour in airports cost the economy \$15 billion per year; in comparison, total airline profits in the 1990s never exceeded \$5.5 billion per year.<sup>27</sup> The reaction to the anthrax attacks will cost the U.S. Postal Service alone some 5 billion—that is, 1 billion for every fatality inflicted by the terrorist.<sup>28</sup> Various September 11-induced restrictions on visas have constricted visits and residencies of scientists, engineers, and businesspeople vital to the economy—restrictions that, some predict, will dampen American economic growth in a few years.<sup>29</sup>

The reaction to September 11 has even claimed more—far more—human lives than were lost in the terrorist attacks. Out of fear, many people canceled airline trips and consequently traveled more by automobile than by airline after the event, and one study has concluded that over one thousand people died in automobile accidents in 2001 alone between September 11 and December 31 because of this.<sup>30</sup> If a small percentage of the one-hundred-thousand-plus road deaths since 2001 occurred to people who were driving because they feared to fly, the number of Americans who have perished in overreaction to September 11 in road accidents alone could well surpass the number who were killed by the terrorists on that terrible day. Moreover, the reaction to September 11 included two wars that are yet ongoing—one in Afghanistan, the other in Iraq—neither of which would have been politically possible without September 11. The number of Americans—civilian and military—who have died thus far in those enterprises probably comes close to the number killed on September 11. Moreover, the best estimates are that the war in Iraq resulted in the deaths of one hundred thousand Iraqis during its first eighteen months alone.<sup>31</sup> This could represent more fatalities than were inflicted by all terrorism, domestic and international, over the last century.

In addition, the enormous sums of money being spent to deal with this threat have in part been diverted from other, possibly more worthy, endeavors. Some of that money doubtless would have been spent on similar ventures under earlier budgets, and much of it likely has wider benefits than simply securing the country against a rather limited threat. But much of it, as well, has very likely been pulled away from programs that do much good. As Clark Chapman and Alan Harris put it, “our nation’s priorities remain radically torqued toward homeland defense and fighting terrorism at the expense of objectively greater societal needs.”<sup>32</sup> Or, in the words of risk analyst David Banks, “If terrorists force us to redirect resources away from sensible programs and future growth, in order to pursue unachievable but politically popular levels of domestic security, then they have won an important victory that mortgages our future.”<sup>33</sup>

### ***The Terrorism Industry Is a Major Part of the Terrorism Problem***

The most common reaction to terrorism is the stoking of fear and the encouragement of overreaction by members of what might be called the “terrorism industry,” an

entity that includes not only various risk entrepreneurs and bureaucrats, but also most of the media and nearly all politicians.

There is no reason to suspect that George W. Bush's concern about terrorism is anything but genuine. However, his approval rating did receive the greatest boost for any president in history in September 2001, and it would be politically unnatural for him not to notice. His chief political adviser, Karl Rove, in fact had already declared in 2003 that the war on terrorism would be central to Bush's reelection campaign the next year.<sup>34</sup> It was, and it worked. The Democrats, scurrying to keep up, have stumbled all over each other with plans to expend even more of the federal budget on the terrorist threat, such as it is, than President Bush.

Meanwhile, Bush's hastily assembled and massively funded Department of Homeland Security seeks to stoke fear by officially intoning on the first page of its defining manifesto that "Today's terrorists can strike at any place, at any time, and with virtually any weapon."<sup>35</sup> This warning is true in some sense, of course, but it is also fatuous and misleading. As Benjamin Friedman notes, "Telling Kansan truck drivers to prepare for nuclear terrorism is like telling bullfighters to watch out for lightning. It should not be their primary concern. For questionable gains in preparedness, we spread paranoia." Such warnings, continues Friedman, also facilitate the bureaucratically and politically appealing notion that "if the threat is everywhere, you must spend everywhere," and they help develop and perpetrate "a myth of the all-knowing, all-seeing terrorists." Threat exaggeration is additionally encouraged, even impelled, because politicians and terrorism bureaucrats also have, as Jeffrey Rosen points out, an "incentive to pass along vague and unconfirmed threats of future violence, in order to protect themselves from criticism" in the event of another attack.<sup>36</sup>

Since September 11 the American public has been treated to endless yammering about terrorism in the media. Politicians and bureaucrats may feel that, given the public concern on the issue, they will lose support if they appear insensitively to be downplaying the dangers of terrorism. But the media like to tout that they are devoted to presenting fair and balanced coverage of important public issues. As has often been noted, however, the media appear to have a congenital incapacity for dealing with issues of risk and comparative probabilities—except, of course, in the sports and financial sections. If a baseball player hits three home runs in a single game, press reports will include not only notice of that achievement, but also information about the rarity of the event as well as statistics about the hitter's batting and slugging averages and about how many home runs he normally hits. I may have missed it, but I have never heard anyone in the media stress that in every year except 2001 only a few hundred people in the entire world have died as a result of international terrorism.

Even in their amazingly rare efforts to try to put terrorism in context—something that would seem to be absolutely central to any sensible discussion of terrorism and terrorism policy—the process never goes very far. For example, in 2001 the *Washington Post* published an article by a University of Wisconsin economist which attempted quantitatively to point out how much safer it was to travel by air than by automobile even under the heightened atmosphere of concern inspired by the September-attacks. He reports that the article generated a couple of media inquiries, but nothing more. Gregg Easterbrook's cover story in the October 7, 2002, *New Republic* forcefully argued that biological and especially chemical weapons are hardly capable of creating "mass destruction," a perspective relevant not only to concerns about terrorism, but also to the drive for war against Iraq that

was going on at the time. *The New York Times* asked him to fashion the article into an op-ed piece, but that was the only interest the article generated in the media.

Moreover, the monied response to September 11 has created a vast and often well-funded coterie of risk entrepreneurs. Its members would be out of business if terrorism were to be back-burnered, and accordingly they have every competitive incentive (and they are nothing if not competitive) to conclude it to be their civic duty to keep the pot boiling. “Dependent on the public for status and recognition,” notes Rosen, terrorism experts have an “incentive to exaggerate risks and pander to public fears.”<sup>37</sup>

Doomsayers are difficult to refute in part because there is more reputational danger in underplaying risks than in exaggerating them. Disproved doomsayers can always claim that caution induced by their warnings prevented the predicted calamity from occurring (call it the Y2K effect). Disproved Pollyannas have no such convenient refuge.<sup>38</sup>

Not only are failed predictors of doomsday rarely held to account, but they have proved remarkably agile at creative nuance and extrapolation after failure. Thus, in 2004 the terrorism industry repeatedly insisted that some big terrorist event was likely in connection with (a) the Athens Olympics, (b) the Democratic Party convention in Boston, (c) the Republican party convention in New York, (d) the election campaign, or (e) the presidential vote in November. When nothing happened (a terrorist wearing kilts did show up to disrupt the marathon in Athens briefly but this, I should think, did not count), the argument was floated that a taped encyclical issued by bin Laden in late October somehow demonstrated that he was too weak to attack before the election and also that he was marshalling his resources such that the several months *after* the election had now become especially dangerous.<sup>39</sup> A notable terrorist attack during that interval would have generated hundreds of thousands of news items not to mention a veritable paroxysm of breast-beating by the terrorism industry. The absence of an attack during the same time was scarcely noticed.

Members of the terrorism industry are truly virtuosic at pouring out, and poring over, worst case scenarios—or “worst case fantasies,” as Bernard Brodie once labelled them in different context.<sup>40</sup> “Many academic terrorism analyses,” notes Bruce Hoffman, “are self-limited to mostly lurid hypotheses of worst-case scenarios, almost exclusively involving CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear) weapons, as opposed to trying to understand why—with the exception of September 11—terrorists have only rarely realized their true killing potential.”<sup>41</sup> That is, if terrorism is so easy and terrorists so omniscient, why isn’t there more of it? For example, why don’t they snipe at people in shopping centers, collapse tunnels, poison food, cut electrical lines, derail trains, set forest fires, blow up oil pipelines, and cause massive traffic jams?

Retaining his worst case perspective, however, Joshua Goldstein worries about terrorists exploding nuclear weapons in the United States in a crowded area and declares this to be “not impossible” or the likelihood “not negligible.” Meanwhile, to generate alarm about such dangers and to reshape policy to deal with them, Graham Allison’s recent book opens by grimly (and completely irrelevantly) recycling Einstein’s failed half-century-old prediction about nuclear war: “Since the advent of the Nuclear Age, everything has changed except our modes of thinking and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe.” Both of these members of the terrorism industry want to massively increase expenditures to hedge against these “not impossible” scenarios, and Allison designates the North Korean problem a “supreme priority” and is fully prepared if necessary to launch a war, potentially

costing a million lives, against that country (and presumably also against Iran) to reduce the likelihood that his worst case fantasy will materialize. (He would, however, humanely evacuate Seoul before attacking the North.)<sup>42</sup>

But there are, of course, all sorts of things that are “not impossible.” Thus, a colliding meteor or comet could destroy the earth, Tony Blair or Vladimir Putin and their underlings could decide one morning to launch a few nuclear weapons at Massachusetts, George W. Bush could decide to bomb Hollywood, an underwater volcano could erupt and cause a civilization-ending Tsunami, bin Laden could convert to Judaism, declare himself the Messiah, and hire a group of Italian mafiosi to have himself publicly crucified.

That is, what we mostly get is fear-mongering, and much of it borders on hysteria. An insightful discussion seeking to put the terrorist threat into context was published in the journal *Skeptical Inquirer* by astronomers Clark Chapman and Alan Harris. They suggested that terrorism deserves exceptional attention only “if we truly think that future attacks might destroy our society.” But, they overconfidently continued, “who believes that?”<sup>43</sup> The article triggered enormous response, and much of—to their amazement—came from readers who believed exactly that. Those readers have a lot of company in the terrorism industry.

Some prominent commentators, like David Gergen, have argued that the United States has become “vulnerable,” even “fragile.” Others, like Indiana Senator Richard Lugar, are given to proclaiming that terrorists armed with weapons of mass destruction present an “existential” threat to the United States—or even, in columnist Charles Krauthammer’s view, to “civilization itself.”<sup>44</sup> Allison, too, thinks that nuclear terrorists could “destroy civilization as we know it” while Goldstein is convinced they could “destroy our society” and that a single small nuclear detonation in Manhattan would “overwhelm the nation.”<sup>45</sup> Two counterterrorism officials from the Clinton administration contend that a small nuclear detonation “would necessitate the suspension of civil liberties,” halt or even reverse “the process of globalization,” and “could be the defeat that precipitates America’s decline,” while a single explosion of any sort of weapon of mass destruction would “trigger an existential crisis for the United States and its allies.”<sup>46</sup> A recent best-selling book by an anonymous CIA official repeatedly assures us that our “survival” is at stake and that we are engaged in a “war to the death.”<sup>47</sup>

Apocalyptic alarmism by the terrorism industry reached a kind of pinnacle during the orange alert at the end of 2003. At the time Homeland Security czar Tom Ridge was given bravely to declaring that “America is a country that will not be bent by terror. America is a country that will not be broken by fear.” Meanwhile, however, General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was assuring a television audience that if terrorists were able to engineer a catastrophic event which killed ten thousand people, they would successfully “do away with our way of life.”<sup>48</sup>

The sudden deaths of that many Americans—although representing less than four thousandths of 1 percent of the population—would indeed be horrifying and tragic, the greatest one-day disaster the country has suffered since the Civil War. But the only way it could “do away with our way of life” would be if we did that to ourselves in reaction. The process would presumably involve repealing the Bill of Rights, boarding up all churches, closing down all newspapers and media outlets, burning all books, abandoning English for North Korean, and refusing evermore to consume hamburgers. It seems, then, that it is not only the most-feared terrorists who are suicidal. Ultimately the enemy, in fact, is us.

However, it does not seem unreasonable to point out that the United States regularly loses forty thousand lives each year in automobile accidents and still somehow manages to continue to exist. Or that countries have endured massive, sudden catastrophes without collapsing: in 1990 and then again in 2003, for example, Iran suffered earthquakes that nearly instantly killed some thirty-five thousand in each case, but the country clearly survived the disasters. They were major tragedies, of course, but they hardly proved to be “existential.” In fact, there is extensive evidence that the most common reaction to disaster is not self-destructive panic, but “resourcefulness, civility, and mutual aid.”<sup>49</sup> The main concern would be that in the aftermath people would adopt skittish, overly risk-averse behavior that would much magnify the impact of the terrorist attack, particularly economically. Most importantly in all this, public and private members of the terrorism industry must be able to restrain and contain any instinct to destroy their own societies in response should they ever be provoked. In the meantime, however, as Seitz puts it, “the rhetoric of extinction . . . serves to inflate into satanic stature a merely evil man.”<sup>50</sup>

All societies are “vulnerable” to tiny bands of suicidal fanatics in the sense that it is impossible to prevent every terrorist act. But the United States is hardly “vulnerable” in the sense that it can be toppled by dramatic acts of terrorist destruction, even extreme ones. In fact, the country can readily, if grimly, absorb that kind of damage—as it “absorbs” some forty thousand deaths each year from automobile accidents.

In 1999, the Gilmore Commission forcefully made a point they considered to be “self-evident,” but one that nonetheless required “reiteration” because of “the rhetoric and hyperbole with which the threat of CBRN terrorism is frequently couched.” The point was:

As serious and potentially catastrophic as a domestic CBRN attack might prove, it is highly unlikely that it could ever completely undermine the national security, much less threaten the survival, of the United States as a nation. . . . To take any other position risks surrendering to the fear and intimidation that is precisely the terrorist’s stock in trade.<sup>51</sup>

The fact that terrorists subsequently managed to ram airplanes into three buildings does not render this “self-evident” point less sound, and “reiteration” continues to be required.

***Policies Designed to Deal With Terrorism Should Focus More on Reducing Fear and Anxiety as Inexpensively as Possible than on Objectively Reducing the Rather Limited Dangers Terrorism Is Likely Actually to Pose***

Where risks are real—as in the cases of smoking, obesity, alcoholism, and automobile driving—it makes sense to stoke fear: people should be *more* afraid, less complacent, and less in denial about these dangers than they are at present. However, where the real risks for any given individual are far smaller—as with terrorism, shark attacks, and airplane flying—fear becomes the problem, and accordingly it makes policy sense to use smoke, mirrors, and any other handy device in an attempt to reduce it.

Additionally the reduction of fear and anxiety is in fact actually quite central to dealing with terrorism. The revolutionary, Frantz Fanon, reportedly held that “the

aim of terrorism is to terrify.” And the inspiration of consequent overreaction seems central to bin Laden’s strategy. As he put it mockingly in a videotaped message in 2004, it is “easy for us to provoke and bait. . . All that we have to do is to send two mujahidin . . . to raise a piece of cloth on which is written al-Qaeda in order to make the generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic, and political losses.” His policy, he extravagantly believes, is one of “bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy,” and it is one that depends on overreaction by the target: he triumphantly points to the fact that the September 11 terrorist attacks cost Al Qaeda \$500,000 while the attack and its aftermath inflicted, he claims, a cost of more than \$500 billion on the United States.<sup>52</sup>

Since the creation of insecurity, fear, anxiety, and hysteria is central for terrorists, they can be defeated simply by not becoming terrified and by resisting the temptation to overreact: as Friedman aptly puts it, “One way to disarm terrorists is to convince regular Americans to stop worrying about them.”<sup>53</sup> The 2001 anthrax attacks, Hoffman argues, suggest that “five persons dying in mysterious circumstances is quite effective at unnerving an entire nation.”<sup>54</sup> To the degree that is true, policies for limiting terrorist damage should focus on such unwarranted reactions.

The shock and tragedy of September 11 does demand a dedicated program to confront international terrorism and to attempt to prevent a repetition, of course. But part of this reaction should include an effort by politicians, bureaucrats, officials, and the media to inform the public reasonably and realistically about the terrorist context instead of playing into the hands of terrorists by effectively seeking to terrify the public: in Friedman’s words, “Policies that encourage fear are a self-inflicted wound.”<sup>55</sup> What is needed then, as one statistician suggests, is some sort of convincing, coherent, informed, and nuanced answer to a central question: “How worried should I be?” Instead, the message, as one concerned Homeland Security official puts it, is “Be scared. Be very, very scared. But go on with your lives.”<sup>56</sup>

Thus, a sensible policy approach for confronting terrorism might be to stress that any damage terrorists are able to accomplish likely can be absorbed and that, while judicious protective and policing measures are sensible, extensive fear and anxiety over what at base could well prove to be a rather limited problem is misplaced, unjustified, and counterproductive. In risk analyst Howard Kunreuther’s words, “More attention needs to be devoted to giving people perspective on the remote likelihood of the terrible consequences they imagine.”<sup>57</sup> That would seem to be at least as important as boosting the sale of duct tape, issuing repeated and costly color-coded alerts based on vague and unspecific intelligence, and warning people to beware of Greeks, or just about anybody, bearing almanacs.

What we need, then, is more pronouncements like the one in a recent book by Senator John McCain: “Get on the damn elevator! Fly on the damn plane! Calculate the odds of being harmed by a terrorist! It’s still about as likely as being swept out to sea by a tidal wave. . . Suck it up, for crying out loud. You’re almost certainly going to be okay. And in the unlikely event you’re not, do you really want to spend your last days cowering behind plastic sheets and duct tape? That’s not a life worth living, is it?”<sup>58</sup> But admonitions like that are exceedingly rare, almost nonexistent. Instead, we get plenty of alarmism from the terrorism industry and almost nothing—*nothing*—about realistic risks and probabilities.

For example, there is at present a great and understandable concern about what would happen if terrorists are able to shoot down an American airliner or two,

perhaps with shoulder-fired missiles. Obviously, this would be a major tragedy in the first instance. But the ensuing public reaction to it, many fear, could come close to destroying the industry. It would seem to be reasonable for those with that fear to consider the following: how many airliners would have to crash before flying becomes as dangerous as driving the same distance in an automobile? It turns out that someone has made that calculation. The conclusion is that there would have to be one set of September 11 crashes a month for the risks to balance out. More generally, they calculate that an American's chance of being killed on one nonstop airline flight is about 1 in 13 million (even taking the September 11 crashes into account), while to reach that same level of risk when driving on America's safest roads (rural interstate highways) one would have to travel a mere 11.2 miles.<sup>59</sup>

Or there ought to be at least some discussion of the almost completely unaddressed but seemingly obvious observation that, in the words of risk analyst David Banks, "It seems impossible that the United States will ever again experience take-overs of commercial flights that are then turned into weapons—no pilot will relinquish control, and passengers will fight." The scheme worked in 2001 because the hijackers had the element of surprise working for them: previous airline hijackings had mostly been fairly harmless as hijackers generally landed the planes someplace and released the passengers. The passengers and crew on the fourth plane on September 11 had fragmentary knowledge about what the earlier hijackings that day had led to, and they prevented the plane from reaching its target. This is likely to hold even more for any later attempted hijackings. Nonetheless, notes Banks, "enormous resources are being invested to prevent this remote contingency." There is a distinction, he argues, "between realistic reactions to plausible threats and hyperbolic overreaction to improbable contingencies."<sup>60</sup>

It is easy, even comforting, to blame politicians, bureaucrats, experts, and the media for the distorted and context-free condition under which terrorism is so often discussed. In many respects, however, that circumstance arises not so much from their own proclivities, but rather from those of their customers. In Tocqueville's words, "the author and the public corrupt one another at the same time."<sup>61</sup> That is, hysteria and alarmism often sell.

In the end, it is not clear how one can deal with the public's often irrational, or at least erratic, fears about remote dangers. Some people say they prefer dangerous forms of transportation like the private passenger automobile (the necessary cause of over 3 million American deaths during the twentieth century) to safe ones like commercial airliners because they feel they have more "control." But they seem to feel no fear on buses and trains—which actually are a bit more dangerous than airplanes—even without having that sense of control and even though derailing a speeding train or crashing a speeding bus are likely to be much easier than downing an airliner. And people tend to be more alarmed by dramatic fatalities—which the September 11 crashes certainly provided—than by ones that cumulate statistically. Thus, in the United States the 3,000 deaths of September 11 inspire far more grief and fear than the 150,000 deaths from auto accidents that have taken place there since then.

In some respects, fear of terror may be something like playing the lottery except in reverse. The chances of winning the lottery or of dying from terrorism may be microscopic, but for monumental events which are (or seem) random, one can irrelevantly conclude that one's chances are just as good (or bad) as those of anyone else.

The communication of risk, then, is no easy task. Risk analyst Paul Slovic points out that people tend greatly to overestimate the chances of dramatic or sensational

causes of death; that realistically informing people about risks sometimes only makes them more frightened; that strong beliefs in this area are very difficult to modify; that a new sort of calamity tends to be taken as a harbinger of future mishaps; that a disaster tends to increase fears not only about that kind of danger but of all kinds; and that people, even professionals, are susceptible to the way risks are expressed—they are far less likely, for example, to choose radiation therapy if told the chances of death are 32 percent rather than that the chances of survival are 68 percent.<sup>62</sup> Studies have also shown that when presented with two estimations of risk from reasonably authoritative sources, people choose to embrace the high risk opinion regardless of its source; that is, there is a “predilection toward alarmist responses and excessive weighting of the worst case scenario.”<sup>63</sup>

Risk tends to be more nearly socially constructed than objectively calculated.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, risk assessment and communication should at least be part of the policy discussion over terrorism, something that may well prove to be a far smaller danger than is popularly portrayed.

An unorthodox, but potentially beneficial, policy approach might be systematically to determine which policy measures actually do reduce fear and then to put the least expensive of these into effect. If a measure actually does increase safety, that would be all to the good. But since the dangers terrorists present appear to be quite minor (barring some very massive technological breakthroughs on their part), the actual effect on safety would be only a secondary consideration. Indeed, any problems caused by radiological, chemical, and perhaps biological weapons are likely to stem far more from the fear and panic they may induce than from the direct harm the weapons may inflict themselves, so in these cases the potential for fear and panic should be a primary concern, not an ancillary one.

Thus, to the degree that people are less fearful when they have a sense of control, policies should seek to advance that rather vaporous quality whether it actually makes them safer or not. For example, if some people somehow sense they gain control when they purchase duct tape and plastic sheeting, that act would be of value—not because it reduced danger but because it reduced anxiety.

Instead of maintaining that the terrorists might strike anywhere at any time, and thereby stoking the fear of random violence, it might make sense to suggest that only certain (relatively small) areas are primarily at risk. If the benefit from the reduction of fear in the excluded areas is greater than the costs of fear enhancement in the designated ones, the measure would presumably be, on balance, sound public policy.

Policy makers might also be on the lookout for cheap, even costless, measures that could reduce fear. For example, when concerns about shark attacks soared in the summer of 2001, a Florida commission heroically forbade the feeding of sharks.<sup>65</sup> Whether this measure actually reduced fears is a matter for empirical investigation, but if it did its value certainly outweighed its cost.

It might also be useful to plumb the “cry wolf” phenomenon for possibilities. The boy who repeatedly and alarmingly proclaims to his village that he has seen a wolf among the sheep ends up relaxing fear because people become less concerned about wolves when his alarms repeatedly prove false. Therefore if there are in fact no threatening wolves out there, or if the villagers generally are more concerned about wolf attacks than is objectively justified, he is providing a community service by reducing fear.

However, for this to work there are four special issues. First, because the people in charge are aware of the cry wolf problem, it is important that they not give in to

the temptation to refrain from issuing too many warnings after they have been repeatedly mistaken: they must keep it up. Second, the warnings must be specific enough to be falsifiable: according to one version, Aesop's boy cries "Wolf! Wolf! The wolf is chasing the sheep!"—a claim the villagers are able quickly to falsify. He does not issue such unfalsifiable outcries as "I have intercepted some chatter recently suggesting that a wolf might chase the sheep at some time in the indefinite future, or, then again, maybe not." Third, it would be important to consider the cost of the alert itself: for example, orange alerts cost the Los Angeles airport alone \$100,000 per day.<sup>66</sup> And fourth, it is crucial to the process that the community remembers the false alarms and tallies them up. In the real world, doomsday scenarists are rarely held to account because few remember their extravagant predictions when they fail to materialize.

Taking the last point more generally, a useful public service would be to cumulate a record of the many false warnings that have been issued by the Department of Homeland Security and by the terrorism industry, and to publicize them routinely and repeatedly. Although each warning has tended to elevate short-term concern, the cumulative impact of the series of false alarms could be—if people are jogged into remembering them—to reduce fears beneficially. There are, in this regard, a number of studies indicating that trust in the source of the information can be important.<sup>67</sup> The Department of Homeland Security and President Bush tend to enjoy considerable trust on this issue, and they have been, mostly inclined to stoke fears of terrorism. Efforts to undermine their credibility, therefore, could potentially have the effect of reducing fear.

Some studies suggest that people deeply angered at the September 11 attacks also tended to be less fearful.<sup>68</sup> It is not clear how one stokes anger rather than fear, nor is it clear that doing so would necessarily be a good idea. But further research on this issue might be of value.

Studies should also be made of safety measures currently in effect, with an eye toward reducing costs. For example, one might suspect that airline passengers are not made to feel any safer because they are often forced to remove their shoes as they pass through inspection, or because they are required to show their boarding passes twice to uniformed authority figures rather than once, or because cars picking them up are not allowed to loiter at curbside even when such traffic is light. Experimental studies could easily be set up in airports to test whether these suspicions are valid.

Also useful might be to reconsider the standards about what is harmful in some cases. For example, while a "dirty bomb" might raise radiation 25 percent over background levels in an area and therefore into a range the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officially considers undesirable, there ought to be some discussion about whether that really constitutes "contamination" or indeed much of a danger given the somewhat arbitrary and exceedingly cautious levels declared to be acceptable by the EPA.<sup>69</sup> If trusted governmental officials can truthfully say that the contamination does not reach levels considered unsafe, undesirable negative reactions might be beneficially reduced and might far outweigh any risks involved.

### ***Doing Nothing (or at Least Refraining from Overreacting) after a Terrorist Attack Is not Necessarily Unacceptable***

Although it is often argued that it is imperative that public officials "do something"—which usually means overreact—when a terrorist event takes place, there

are many instances where no reaction took place and the officials did not suffer politically or otherwise. Ronald Reagan's response to a terrorist bomb in Lebanon in 1983 that killed 241 American Marines was to make a few speeches and eventually to pull the troops out. Bill Clinton responded similarly after an unacceptable loss of American lives in Somalia ten years later. Although there were the (apparently counterproductive) military retaliations after the U.S. embassy bombings in Africa in 1998 as noted earlier, there was no notable response to terrorist attacks on American targets in Saudi Arabia (Khobar Towers) in 1996 or to the bombing of the USS *Cole* in 2000. The response to the anthrax attacks of 2001 was the same as to terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center in 1993 and in Oklahoma City in 1995—the dedicated application of police work to try to apprehend the perpetrator—and this proved to be politically acceptable.

The demands for retaliation tend to be more problematic in the case of suicide terrorists since the direct perpetrators of the terrorist act are already dead. Nonetheless, the attacks in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and against the *Cole* were all suicidal, yet no direct retaliatory action was taken.

Thus, despite short-term demands that some sort of action must be taken, experience suggests politicians can often successfully ride out this demand after the obligatory (and inexpensive) expressions of outrage are issued.

### ***Despite U.S. Overreaction, the Campaign against Terror Is Generally Going Rather Well***

Insofar as international terrorism—particularly Al Qaeda—is a problem, it seems likely that things are improving. This is not so much because the United States has spent so wisely and effectively, however.

In fact, the war in Iraq will probably prove encouraging to international terrorists because they will take even an orderly American retreat from the country as a great victory—even greater than the one against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.<sup>70</sup> Osama bin Laden's theory that the Americans can be defeated, or at least productively inconvenienced, by inflicting comparatively small, but continuously draining, casualties on them will achieve apparent confirmation, and a venture designed and sold in part as a blow against international terrorists will end up emboldening and energizing them. A comparison might be made with Israel's orderly, even overdue, withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 that insurgents there took to be a great triumph for their terrorist tactics—and, most importantly, so did like-minded Palestinians who later escalated their efforts to use terrorism to destroy Israel itself. People like bin Laden believe that America invaded Iraq as part of its plan to control the oil in the Persian Gulf area. But the United States does not intend to do that (at least not in the direct sense bin Laden and others doubtless consider to be its goal), nor does it seek to destroy Islam as many others also bitterly assert. Thus just about any kind of American withdrawal will be seen by such people as a victory for the harassing terrorist insurgents who, they will believe, are due primary credit for forcing the United States to leave without accomplishing what they take to be its key objectives.

Despite this, the campaign against terrorism is generally succeeding because, no matter how much they might disagree on other issues (most notably on America's war on Iraq), there is a compelling incentive for states—including Arab and Muslim ones, who are also being targeted—to cooperate to deal with this international threat. And since methodical, persistent policing of individuals and small groups

is most needed, the process seems to be on the right track. It is not clear that this policing has prevented international terrorism in the United States, however. The number of such incidents in the three years after September 11 was zero, but that was the same number registered in the three years before the attacks at a time when antiterrorist policing exertions were much lower.

Actually, by some standards, it may all be nearly over. Stephen Flynn, like others in the terrorism industry, likes to begin articles with such dramatic lines as “the United States is living on borrowed time—and squandering it,” and end them with “the entire nation . . . must be organized for the long, deadly struggle against terrorism.” However, in midcourse he also supplies a standard for “how much security is enough” and determines that to be when “the American people can conclude that a future attack on U.S. soil will be an exceptional event that does not require wholesale changes in how they go about their lives.”<sup>71</sup> It seems reasonable to suggest that they can so conclude right now, though that might require them to stop listening to the terrorism industry.

Hysteria and hysterical overreaction about terrorism are hardly required and can be costly and counterproductive. There are uncertainties and risks out there, and plenty of dangers and threats. But these are highly unlikely to prove to be existential. The sky, as it happens, is not falling—nor is apocalypse on the horizon. Perhaps we can relax a little.

## Notes

1. Mark Bowden, remarks, *Tucker Carlson Unfiltered*, PBS, November 19, 2004.

2. In almost all years fewer than ten Americans die worldwide at the hands of international terrorists: U.S. State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism, 1997* (April 1998), 85. An average of ninety people are killed each year by lightning in the United States: National Safety Council, *Accident Facts* (Chicago: National Safety Council, 1997), 120. About hundred Americans die per year from accidents caused by deer: Andrew C. Revkin, “Coming to the Suburbs: A Hit Squad for Deer,” *New York Times*, (November 30, 1998). And about 320 drown in bathtubs and 4 in toilets: John Stossel, *Give Me a Break* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 77.

3. See, for example, Walter Laqueur, *No End to War: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 226–28.

4. For an excellent overview of this issue, see Gregg Easterbrook, “Term Limits: The Meaninglessness of ‘WMD,’” *New Republic*, October 7, 2002.

5. Matthew Meselson, “The Myth of Chemical Superweapons,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, April 1991, 13; Office of Technology Assessment, United States Congress, *Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: Assessing the Risks, OTA-559* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 54.

6. H. L. Gilchrist, *A Comparative Study of World War Casualties from Gas and Other Weapons* (Edgewood Arsenal, MD: Chemical Warfare School, 1928), 7.

7. Steve Fetter, “Ballistic Missiles and Weapons of Mass Destruction: What Is the Threat? What Should Be Done?” *International Security* 16, no.1 (1991): 15.

8. David C. Rapoport, “Terrorists and Weapons of the Apocalypse,” *National Security Studies Quarterly* 5, no.1 (1999): 57.

9. Office of Technology Assessment, *Proliferation of Weapons*, 48–49, 62; Easterbrook “Term Limits.”

10. Graham Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe* (New York: Times Books, 2004), 104.

11. Brian Jenkins, “International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict,” in *International Terrorism and World Security*, eds. David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf, 33 (New York: Wiley, 1975).

12. Norman J. Rabkin, "Combating Terrorism," GAO/T-NSIAD-00-145 (Washington DC: U.S. General Accounting Office, 2000), 4, 12.

13. "'Suitcase Nukes': A Reassessment" (Research Story of the Week, September 22, 2002), 4, 12.

14. Charles Duelfer, testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (Washington DC, October 6, 2004); see also Russell Seitz, "Weaker Than We Think," *American Conservative*, December 2004.

15. Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism*, 97.

16. Joshua S. Goldstein, *The Real Price of War: How You Pay for the War on Terror* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 128, 132. Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism*, 15; on Korea, 168–71.

17. C. P. Snow, "The Moral Un-Neutrality of Science," *Science*, January 1961.

18. See also John Mueller, "Harbinger or Aberration? A 9/11 Provocation," *National Interest*, Fall 2002; Seitz, "Weaker." By contrast, in 2004 Charles Krauthammer characterized the post-September 11 period as "three years in which, contrary to every expectation and prediction, the second shoe never dropped": "Blixful Amnesia," *Washington Post*, July 9, 2004. Allison also noted that "in the weeks and months following 9/11, the American national security community focused on what was called the question of the 'second shoe.' No one believed that the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were an isolated occurrence": *Nuclear Terrorism*, 6.

19. And millions of passengers who checked bags at hotels and retrieved them before heading to the airport have routinely lied to an airline agent when answering the pointlessly obligatory question about whether their luggage had at all times been in their possession.

20. On the preference of terrorists for weapons that they know and understand, see Rapoport, "Terrorists and Weapons," 51.

21. Seitz, "Weaker."

22. Jeffrey D. Simon, *The Terrorist Trap: America's Experience with Terrorism*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 197–200.

23. Werner Daum, "Universalism and the West: An Agenda for Understanding," *Harvard International Review*, Summer 2001, 19.

24. Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror* (New York: Tauris 2003), 167–68; Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 400–2, 414–15. On this process more generally, see David A. Lake, "Rational Extremism: Understanding Terrorism in the Twenty-first Century," *Dialog-IO*, Spring 2002. Reactions to terrorism have also often led to massive persecution. The Jewish pogroms in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, for instance, were impelled in part because Jews were notable in terrorist movements at the time: David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," in *Attacking Terrorism*, eds. Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes, (68) (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004). On the often deadly and indiscriminant overreaction to anarchist terrorism in the United States and elsewhere, see Richard Bach Jensen, "The United States, International Policing and the War against Anarchist Terrorism, 1900–1914," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no.1 (2002): 15–46.

25. Benjamin Friedman, "Leap before You Look: The Failure of Homeland Security," *Breakthroughs* 13, no.1 (2004): 35.

26. *Financial Times*, September 14, 2004, 8. Dean Calbreath, "Attacks to Cost 1.6 Million Jobs," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, January 12, 2002.

27. Roger D. Congleton, "Terrorism, Interest-Group Politics, and Public Policy," *Independent Review*, Summer 2002, 62.

28. Jeffrey Rosen, *The Naked Crowd* (New York: Random House, 2004), 68. On the \$9 billion Los Angeles airport plan to (marginally) improve security from terrorist bombs, see Sara Kehaulani Goo, "Going the Extra Mile," *Washington Post*, April 9, 2004.

29. Kenneth Rogoff, "The Cost of Living Dangerously," *Foreign Policy*, November/December 2004.

30. Michael Sivak and Michael J. Flannagan, "Consequences for Road Traffic Fatalities of the Reduction in Flying Following September 11, 2001," *Transportation Research Part F* 7 (2004): 301–5.

31. See *Economist*, November 6–12, 2004, 81–82. The wars have also, of course, been quite costly economically.

32. Clark Chapman and Alan W. Harris, "A Skeptical Look at September 11th: How We Can Defeat Terrorism by Reacting to It More Rationally," *Skeptical Inquirer* 26, no.5 (2002): 30.

33. David L. Banks, "Statistics for Homeland Defense," *Chance* 15, no.1 (2002): 10.

34. Francis X. Clines, "Karl Rove's Campaign Strategy Seems Evident: It's the Terror, Stupid," *New York Times*, May 10, 2003. The war imagery suggests that people should be asked somehow to make sacrifices. This popular conclusion is at least partly fanciful. Few Americans except those directly involved in the wars in Korea or Vietnam really made much of a sacrifice and, although there were inconveniences on the homefront during World War II, consumer spending by the "Greatest Generation" generally surged. A goal of terrorism presumably is to hamper the economy, and therefore the best response to it—hardly much of a "sacrifice"—would be to go out and buy a refrigerator or to take an airplane to a vacation resort. The war imagery suggests we should be cutting back; but cutting back actually helps the terrorists.

35. Office of Homeland Security, "The National Strategy for Homeland Security," (July 2002).

36. Friedman, "Leap," 33–34, 36; Rosen, *Naked Crowd*, 79.

37. Rosen, *Naked Crowd*, 222.

38. See also Siobhan Gorman, "Fear Factor," *National Journal*, May 10, 2003, 1464.

39. Siobhan Gorman, "War on Terror, Phase Two," *National Journal*, November 20, 2004, 3534.

40. Bernard Brodie, "The Development of Nuclear Strategy," *International Security* 2, no.4 (1978): 68.

41. Bruce Hoffman, "Rethinking Terrorism and Counterterrorism Since 9/11," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 25 (2002): 311–12. See also John Mueller, "Why Isn't There More Violence?" *Security Studies* 13 (2004): 191–203.

42. Goldstein, *Real Price*, 128, 132; Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism*, 1, 171. One Pentagon estimate is that a full-scale war on the peninsula could kill 1,000,000 people (including 80,000 to 100,000 Americans) cost over \$100 billion, and do economic destruction on the order of \$1 trillion. Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic, 2001), 324.

43. Chapman and Harris, "Skeptical Look," 32.

44. David Gergen, "A Fragile Time for Globalism," *U.S. News and World Report*, February 11, 2002 41; Richard Lugar, remarks on *Fox News Sunday*, June 15, 2003; Krauthammer, "Blixful Amnesia."

45. Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism*, 191. Goldstein, *Real Price*, 145, 179.

46. Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002), 398–99, 418.

47. Anonymous, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's 2004), 160, 177, 226, 241, 242, 250, 252, 263. For a contrast with such views, see Daniel L. Byman, "Al-Qaeda as an Adversary: Do We Understand Our Enemy?" *World Politics* 56, no.1 (2003), 160, 163; Seitz, "Weaker."

48. Jennifer C. Kerr, "Terror Threat Level Raised to Orange," Associated Press, December 21, 2003.

49. Thomas A. Glass and Monica Schoch-Spana, "Bioterrorism and the People: How to Vaccinate a City against Panic," *CID* 34 (2002), 214–15.

50. Seitz, "Weaker."

51. Gilmore Commission (Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction), *First Annual Report: Assessing the Threat* (1999), 37, <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/terrpanel/terror.pdf>. Accessed 31 July 2005.

52. "Full transcript of bin Laden's speech," <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/79C6AF22-98FB-4A1C-B21F-2B36E87F61F.htm>. Accessed 31 July 2005.

53. Friedman, "Leap," 32.

54. Hoffman, "Rethinking Terrorism," 313.

55. Friedman, "Leap," 29.

56. Gorman, "Fear Factor," 1461–62.

57. Howard Kunreuther, "Risk Analysis and Risk Management in an Uncertain World," *Risk Analysis* 22 (2002), 663. For a rare instance in which this is attempted, see

Gwynne Dyer, "Politicking Skews Needed Perspective on Terror War," *Columbus Dispatch*, September 6, 2004 (also at [www.gwynnedyer.com](http://www.gwynnedyer.com)).

58. John McCain and Mark Salter, *Why Courage Matters: The Way to a Braver Life* (New York: Random House, 2004), 35–36. The imperatives of full disclosure require me to report that the ellipses in that statement conceal the following remarkable assertion: "Watch the terrorist alert and go outside again when it falls below yellow." Since the ever-watchful and ever-cautious Department of Homeland Security seems unlikely *ever* to lower the threat level below yellow, McCain's admonition seems effectively to contradict the spirit in the rest of the passage by encouraging everyone to cower inside for the rest of their lives. An e-mail inquiring about this curiosity was sent to Senator McCain's office in August 2004, but it has yet to generate a reply.

59. Michael Sivak and Michael J. Flannagan, "Flying and Driving after the September 11 Attacks," *American Scientist* 91, no.1 (2003): 6–9.

60. Banks, "Statistics" 10.

61. Quoted in Rosen, *Naked Crowd*, 77.

62. Paul Slovic, "Informing and Educating the Public about Risk," *Risk Analysis* 6 (1986): 403–15. On these issues, see also Cass R. Sustein, "Terrorism and probability neglect," *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, 26(2003): 121–136.

63. W. Kip Viscusi, "Alarmist Decisions with Divergent Risk Information," *Economic Journal*, November, 1997: 1669.

64. For a discussion, see Bernd Rohrmann and Ortwin Renn, "Risk Perception Research—An Introduction," in *Cross-Cultural Risk Perception: A Survey of Empirical Studies*, eds. Ortwin Renn and Bernd Rohrmann, (40–41) (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000).

65. Rosen, *Naked Crowd*, 79.

66. Goo, "Extra Mile."

67. Rohrmann and Renn, "Risk Perception," 31.

68. Jennifer Lerner, Roxana M. Gonzalez, Deborah A. Small, and Baruch Fischhoff, "Effects of Fear and Anger on Perceived Risks of Terrorism," *Psychological Science* 14, no.2 (2003): 144–50.

69. Since "dirty" bombs simply raise radiation levels somewhat above normal background levels in a small area, a common recommendation from nuclear scientists and engineers is that those exposed should calmly walk away. But this bit of advice has not been advanced prominently (or even, perhaps, at all) by those in charge. Effectively, therefore, they encourage panic, and, as one nuclear engineer points out, "if you keep telling them you expect them to panic, they will oblige you. And that's what we're doing." Theodore Rockwell, "Radiation Chicken Little," *Washington Post*, September 16, 2003. See also Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism*, 8, 59, 220.

70. For discussion on this point, see John Mueller, "The Politics of Cutting and Running," *History News Network*, <http://hnn.us/articles/5324.html>. Accessed 31 July 2005. See also Neil MacFarquhar, "Rising Tide of Islamic Militants See Iraq as Ultimate Battlefield," *New York Times*, August 13, 2003.

71. Stephen E. Flynn, "The Neglected Home Front," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2004, 20, 27, 33.