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# Fear or Rage?: Assessing Public Opinion and Policy Responses to Terrorist Attacks

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## **Fear or Rage?: Assessing Public Opinion and Policy Responses to Terrorist Attacks**

Gabriel Rubin, Montclair State University

Presented at 2009 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association on September 3, 2009 in Toronto, Canada.

### **Abstract:**

Mass fear has been posited as the main emotional outcome of terror attacks. Indeed, the term “terrorism” itself emphasizes that such attacks are meant to stoke fear. Yet, a critical piece of the post-terror attack dynamic has been largely ignored: the public rage that comes in response to terror attacks. Witness the call for politicians to step down after the November 2008 attacks in Mumbai or the placard reading “Nuke ‘Em Till They Glow” at the 2001 World Series. It is the contention of this paper that, after a major terror attack has occurred, the public is more angry than fearful and that it desires revenge, not to cower and hide. Moreover, government responses to terror attacks can better be explained through the lens of rage than through the lens of fear. The paper proves this point by evaluating outcomes from the U.S., U.K., Israel, India, and other cases. It begins by establishing how public fears are normally stoked after terror attacks by analyzing opinion trends from these cases. Then it moves into an analysis of the role of rage in both shaping opinion in the immediate aftermath of attacks and, in turn, pushing the actual policy responses to terror attacks on liberal democracies. In the end it will be shown that rage and the concomitant desire for revenge that terrorist attacks ignite serve as better casual explanations for the policy responses that come in terrorism’s wake than does fear.

## Introduction

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks on America, studies of the effects of terrorism on mass publics have proliferated<sup>1</sup>. Because terrorists seek to affect public opinion in order to change democracies' policies or to bate them into an unwise response<sup>2</sup>, scholars have rightfully focused on the emotional responses that terrorism conjures. Though human post-crisis emotional responses can span the gamut from shock to grief to anger to fear, only mass fear responses, and relatedly feelings of being threatened, have been elaborated upon in the literature on post-terror responses.

The brunt of the research of public opinion responses to terrorist attacks has focused on the degree to which public fear levels rise after such events. After all, the term "terrorism" itself emphasizes that such attacks are meant to stoke public fears. Yet, a critical piece of the post-terror attack dynamic has been largely ignored: the public rage that comes in response to terrorism. Witness the call for politicians to step down after the November 2008 attacks in Mumbai or the placard reading "Nuke 'Em Till They Glow" at the 2001 World Series.

This paper is guided by the following question: "What is a greater contributor to policy responses to terrorist attacks: public fear or public rage?" It is my contention here that spikes in mass fear and feelings of sociotropic threat alone do not do a very good job of explaining public and policy responses to terror attacks. Instead, I will argue that the level of societal rage (or

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Davis, Darren W. *Negative Liberty: Public Opinion and the Terrorist Attacks on America*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation 2007), Huddy, Leonie, Stanley Feldman, Charles Taber, Gallya Lahav, "Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies," *American Journal of Political Science* 49: 3 (July 2005), Mueller, John. *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them*. (New York: Free Press 2006), and Stone, Geoffrey R. *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime From the Sedition Act of 1798 to the War on Terrorism*. (New York: WW Norton & Co. 2004).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Mueller, *Overblown* and Lustick, Ian S. *Trapped in the War on Terror*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2006).

anger) after a terror attack occurs is a better predictor of both public and government reactions to these attacks.

This paper will be organized as follows. First, I will display some findings on the dynamics of mass fear after terror attacks. Then, I will introduce two post-terror attack narratives—one focused on a Rage response to terrorism, the other focused on Fear—and outline the ramifications of each narrative. The third section, will go over the public and government responses to terrorism in the US, UK, India, Israel, and other countries with an eye toward deciphering whether the Fear or Rage Narrative has more explanatory power in these cases. Finally, the conclusion will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the Rage and Fear Narratives. In the end it will be shown that the desire for revenge and the anger that terrorist attacks ignite serve as better casual explanations for the policy responses that come in terrorism’s wake than does fear.

### **The Dynamics of Mass Fear after Terror Attacks: The Existing Evidence**

To date, research on emotional responses to terror attacks has largely focused on public opinion’s role in the post-terror attack process that leads to the abridgment of civil liberties<sup>3</sup>. Typically, the concept of mass fear is measured by looking at the percentage of people in a given country fearful of terrorism. By fear I mean a feeling that implies that one is not safe, that one is under threat. Fear guides the individual to seek guidance from his leaders. As Clemente and Kleiman underline, fear need not be based upon any real threat, making the perception of danger

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<sup>3</sup> See Davis, Darren W. *Negative Liberty: Public Opinion and the Terrorist Attacks on America*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation 2007) and Huddy, Leonie, Stanley Feldman, Charles Taber, Gallya Lahav, “Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies,” *American Journal of Political Science* 49: 3 (July 2005).

fomented by seemingly random terrorist attacks so inimical to democracy<sup>4</sup>. What I define as “fear” in the charts below is a combination of Huddy, et al.’s concepts of threat and anxiety<sup>5</sup>. The anxiety portion of fear may make the individual averse to certain situations, however the threat portion forces the individual to recognize that the crisis must be addressed if he is ever to feel safe again.

Mass fear, as contrasted with individual fear, simply means a large public or society’s fear. Terrorism touches off mass fear (really an aggregation of many people’s individual fears) by making large publics feel anxious and under threat even though they are probably safe<sup>6</sup>.

In this section, trend analysis will be used to look at the dynamics of mass fear after terror attacks. Here the concept of mass fear will be measured by looking at the percentage of people in a given country fearful of terrorism. Thus, it is not the presence of mass fear that will be important but what the *level* of mass fear is, that is the percentage of people fearful of terrorism, in a given society<sup>7</sup>. More specifically, fear trends will be looked at, so that the *change in mass fear levels* after terrorist attacks will be of utmost importance. Specific polls will get at mass fear in different ways, some look at individuals’ fears of becoming terror victims while other polls examine the salience of terrorism in the public’s mind by measuring individuals’ perceptions of the likelihood of future terror attacks. The following charts exemplify how mass fears have typically moved after recent terror attacks.

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<sup>4</sup> Clemente, Frank and Michael B. Kleiman. “Fear of Crime in the United States: A Multivariate Analysis,” *Social Forces*, 56: 2 (December 1977), pg. 520.

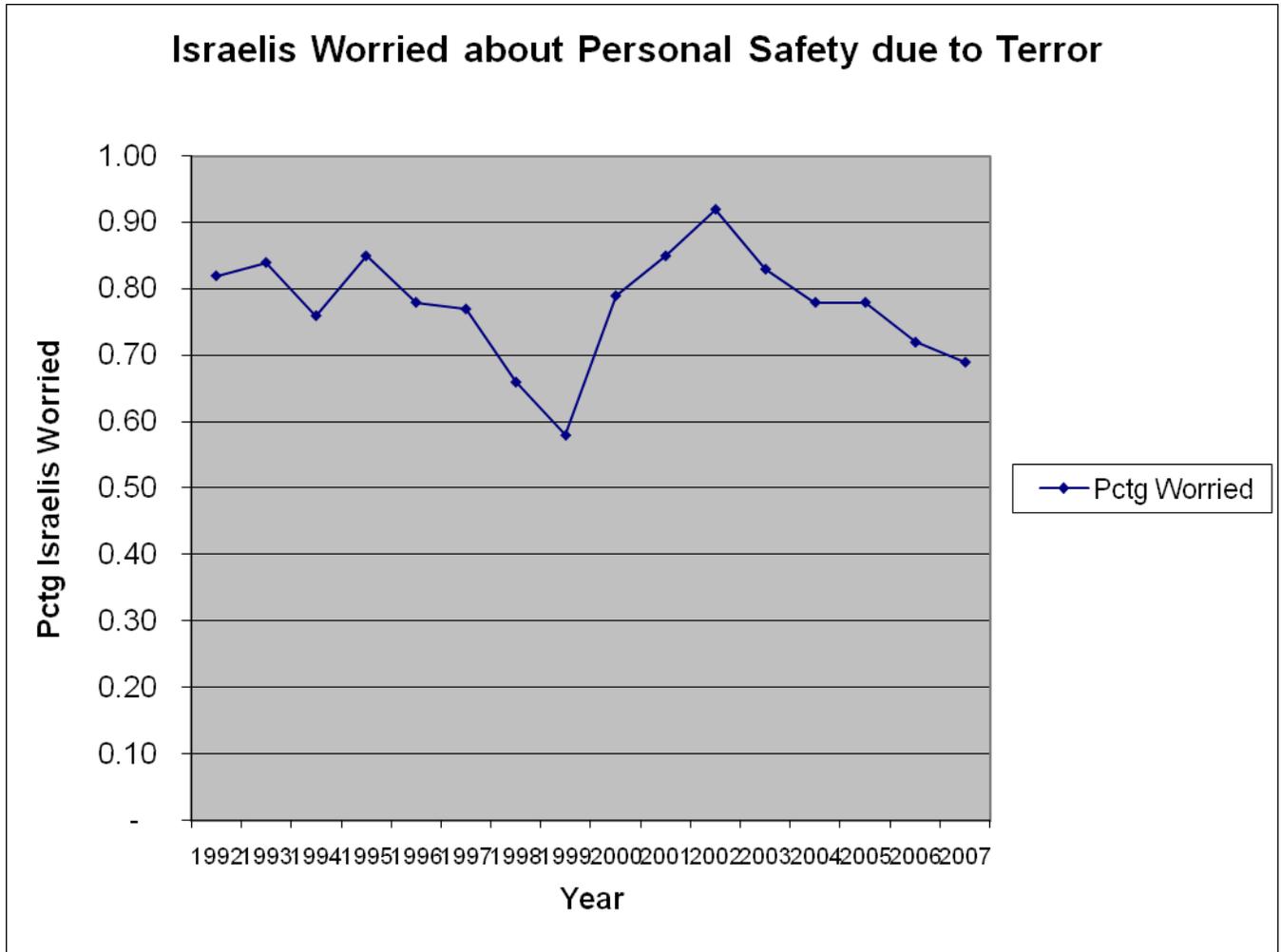
<sup>5</sup> See Huddy, et al., “Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies.”

<sup>6</sup> See Mueller, John. *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them*. (New York: Free Press 2006).

<sup>7</sup> More specifically, fear trends will be looked at, so that the *change in mass fear levels* after terrorist attacks will be of utmost importance.

Chart One:

This chart maps the percentage of Israelis worried about themselves or a family member becoming a victim of terror. At the height of the second intifada, in 2002, mass fear levels spiked in Israel.

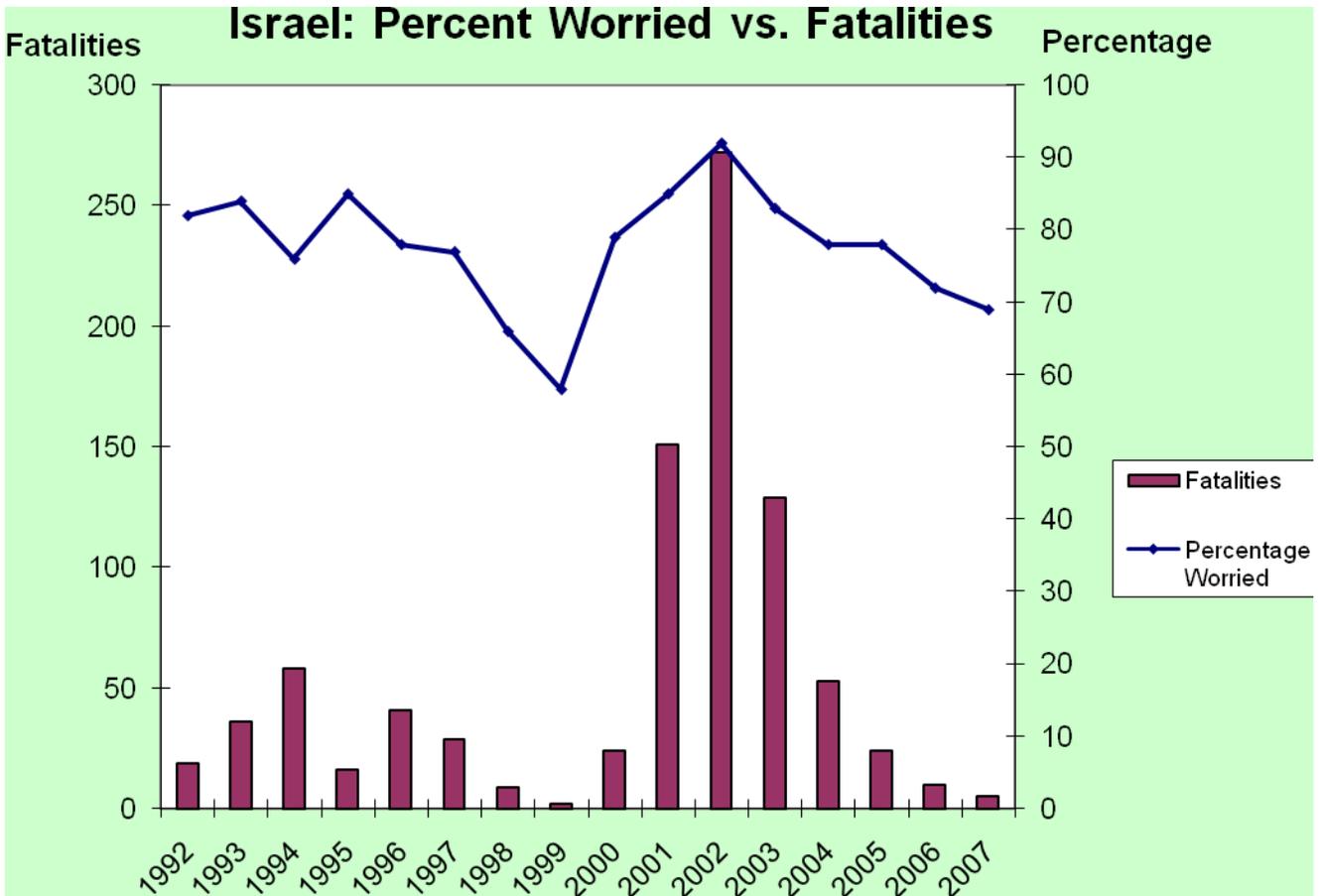


Citation: Data from 1999 and 2003 published polls by Asher Arian as well as a “Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2007” poll by Yehuda Ben-Meir and Dafna Shaked published by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University. All polls asked Israelis if they are worried that themselves or a family member might become a victim of a terrorist attack. Very and somewhat worried responses aggregated.

Chart Two:

This chart combines chart one above with a graph of Israeli terror fatalities from 1992- 2007.

Mass fear levels here generally rise with terror fatalities.

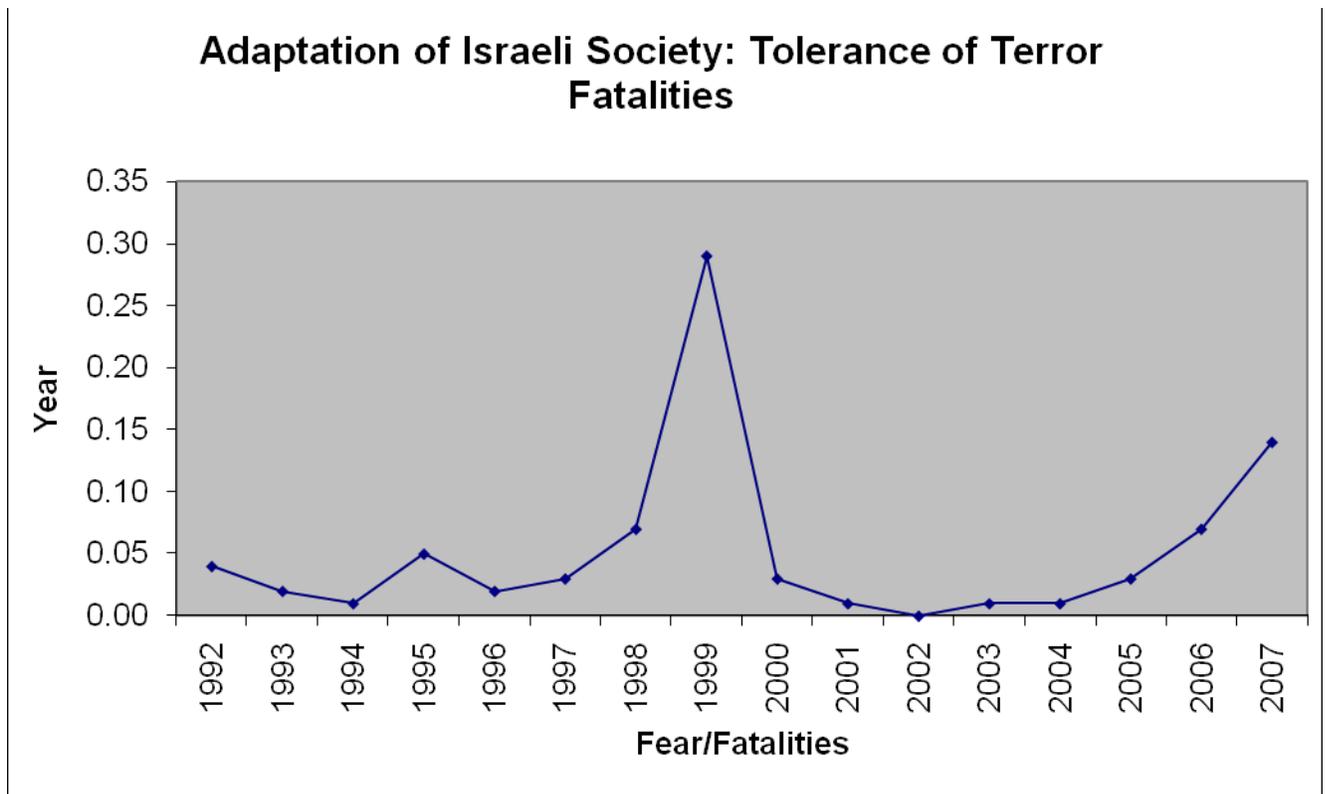


Citation: Btselem human rights group figures on fatalities of Israeli civilians and data from Arian and Ben-Meir/Shaked polls.

Chart Three:

This chart displays a simple calculation made using the data from the previous chart (chart 2).

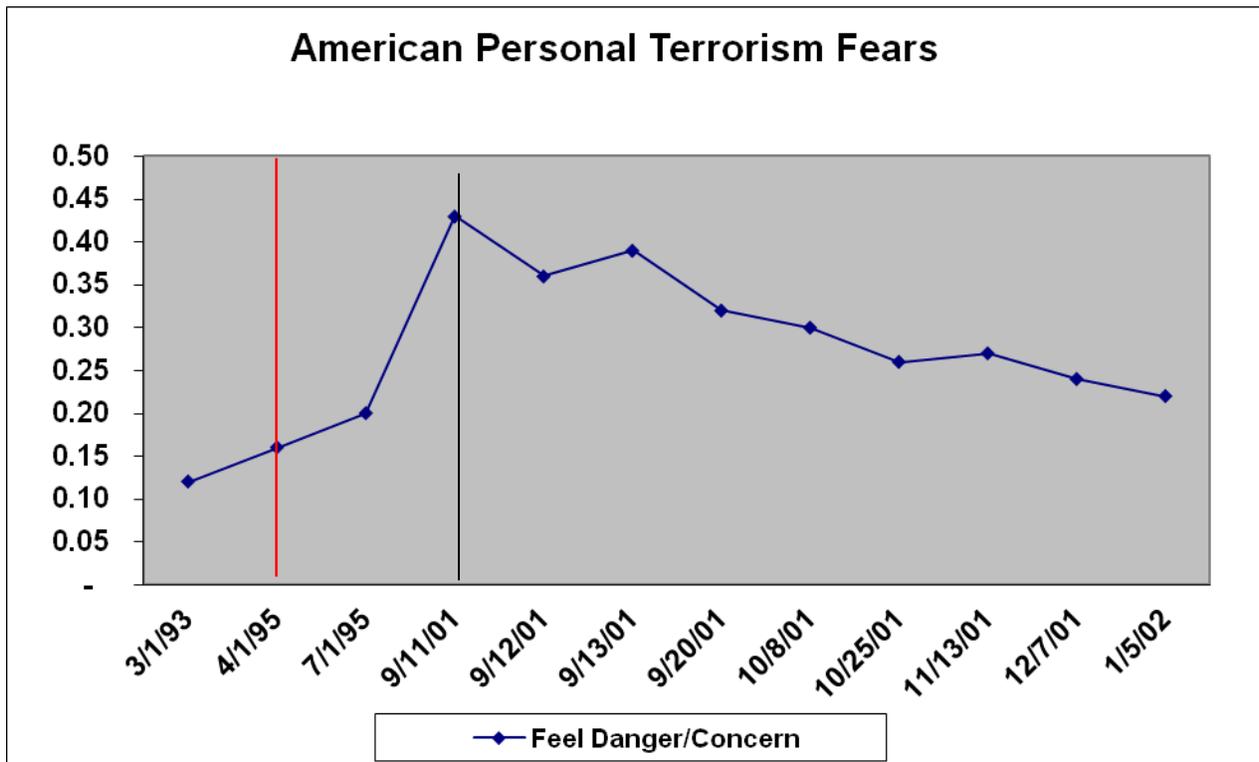
Here I simply divided the percentage of Israelis' fearful of terror by the number of terror fatalities to see the connection between the two figures. As is evident, the jump in fear levels per fatality rises as fatalities recede (1999 provides a rather stark example). The chart shows that higher terror fatalities yield lower responses to each fatality. Though perhaps a certain percentage of society (see 1999) will be fearful of even a few fatalities and a certain percentage of society (see 2002) will never be fearful no matter how many fatalities there are.



Citation: Same as above.

Chart Four:

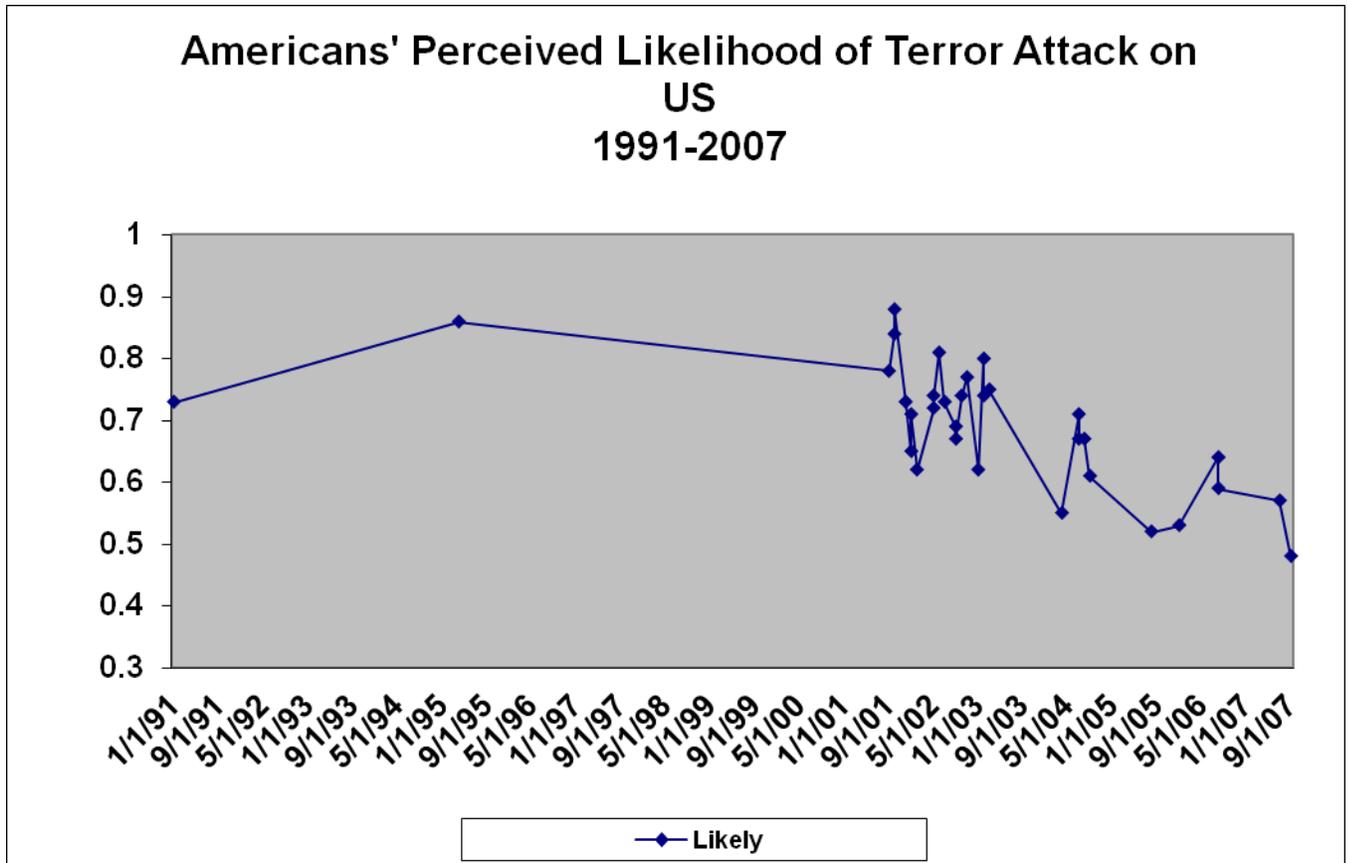
This chart displays Americans' personal terrorism fears from 1993- 2002. Mass fear levels in the US were higher after the Oklahoma City Bombing than after the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993. Mass fear levels leapt after the 9/11 attacks, but rather quickly receded to a stable, moderately high level.



Citation: Data mostly from CBS and CBS/*New York Times* polls asking "Would you say you personally are very concerned about a terrorist attack in the area where you live, or not?" Some data from other polls asking similar question.

Chart Five:

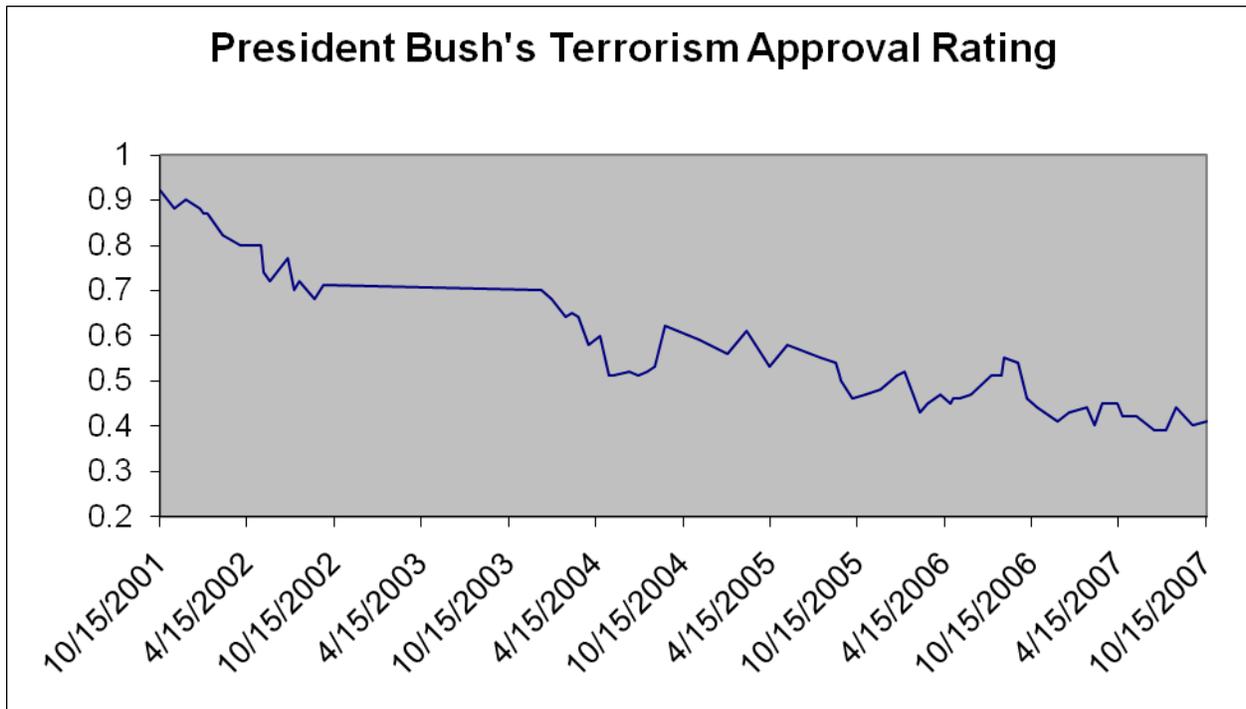
This chart examines American's perceived likelihood of a future terror attack on the US. The numbers spike after 9/11 and after the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing.



Citation: Data from polling asking Americans their view of the likelihood of a future terrorist attack. Polls were taken by CBS/*New York Times*, except in 4/95, where the poll was taken by Yankelovich/Time/CNN (See Question 11 in the data appendix on mass fear levels).

Chart Six:

Here President George W. Bush's approval rating for his handling of the war on terror is tracked. A comparison of this chart with charts 4 and 5 shows that approval of Bush's handling of terrorism spiked when mass fear levels were high and receded when mass fear levels eroded. As mass fear levels declined after the 9/11 terror attacks, Bush's terror approval rating dropped.



Citation: Data from CBS/*New York Times* poll asking “Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the campaign against terrorism?” (See Question 16b in data appendix on executive approval ratings).

### Summarizing the Data

It is rather obvious from the charts that there is a spike in mass fear levels after terrorist attacks. There is an evident bump in fear figures in Israel during the second intifada, in the US after 9/11 and, less so, in the US after the Oklahoma City Bombing. It is also clear that different attacks yield different mass fear levels as the movement in the charts indicates. Indeed, in April 1995, after the Oklahoma City bombing, 89% of Americans viewed terrorism as a very or somewhat important issue. Only 63% of Americans fell in the same category in March 1993 after the first World Trade Center bombing<sup>8</sup>.

The trickier findings have to do with fear's decay (the rate at which fear levels drop after the initial spike in terror attacks) and the magnitude of attacks. Chart three clearly shows that Israeli society adapted to terrorism deaths to the point that increased terror deaths yielded diminishing returns in the number of Israelis' fearful of terrorism. Still, in Israel and the US mass fear levels rose higher than they previously had after more recent attacks/campaigns. Admittedly, this is also because terrorist attacks have yielded greater casualties of late. Chart five shows that in 1991 and 1995 Americans viewed a future terrorist attack on the US as being about as likely as they did before 9/11 in 2001. On fear's decay, chart five demonstrates that George W. Bush's approval rating for his dealing of the war on terrorism gradually declined after 9/11.

Carol Lewis finds that terrorism and crime follow similar public fear patterns in that, despite news accounts to the contrary, fears of both are relatively stable<sup>9</sup>. John Mueller notes that, "Consistently since the end of 2001 some 40 percent [of Americans] say they are very

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<sup>8</sup> Lewis, Carol. "The Terror that Failed: Public Opinion in the Aftermath of the Bombing in Oklahoma City," *Public Administration Review*, 60:3 (May/June 2000), pg. 204.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, "The Terror that Failed," pg. 206.

worried or somewhat worried about becoming a victim of terrorism. Moreover, well over 50 percent hold the likelihood of a terrorist attack in the US over ‘the next few months’ to be very or somewhat likely while less than 10 percent have chosen the option that has [so far] proved to be correct, ‘not at all likely’<sup>10</sup>. Yet terror fears do decline. Chart four, for instance, shows that fear levels went down after 9/11, but there were bumps along the way<sup>11</sup>. Huddy, et al. found “a slight decline in perceived threat and anxiety over time, but the effect [was] nonlinear. Perceived threat and anxiety declined more rapidly after 9/11 but showed little further decline after the New Year”<sup>12</sup>.

Terrorism fears seem to recede over time, but there is no evidence that they go down from case-to-case. Israeli society adapted to terrorism fatalities but terrorism is, thankfully, so rare in most societies that systematically comparing fatality figures versus mass fear levels is difficult. CNN/Gallup/*USA Today* polls show that 42% of Americans were worried about themselves or family members becoming terror attack victims after Oklahoma City, while 58% were worried about the same after 9/11. Does that mean that Americans were inured to terrorism after 9/11 given the much higher casualties of the 2001 attacks? Clearly, this is not the case.

There is, thus, insufficient data to prove that the more casualties an attack yields, the longer the public will approve of government and be willing to give up liberties. Even if there were sufficient data, it is hard to compare attacks. Some attacks yield 200 dead, but many yield two. While casualty rates can go into the thousands, public opinion percentages can only go up to 100%. Further, public fear levels seem to decrease over time after terror attacks, but these effects do not carry over from campaign-to-campaign. Marked increases in casualty levels, as well as heightened government-issued threat levels, can stop fear’s decay within a campaign.

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<sup>10</sup> Mueller, “Terrorism and Bumps in the Night, pg. 10.

<sup>11</sup> These bumps, as I will show later, coincide with threat alerts.

<sup>12</sup> Huddy, Feldman, Taber, Lahav, “Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies,” pg. 5.

But, there is insufficient evidence to show that the reason that we do not see a decay in fear levels between campaigns is due to higher magnitude attacks. Fear levels can only rise so far, and, sadly, some of the terrorist attacks of the past decade have caused very many casualties—while others, still following the “many people watching, not many people dying” paradigm, yielded few.

In sum, the findings on fear are that fear levels spike after terror attacks, and then gradually decline over time. The next step for enterprising scholars is to link the existence of fear to other factors, such as public willingness to restrict civil liberties and desire to capture terrorists. In the next section, I will outline how a Fear Narrative might work and compare it to a Rage Narrative. The rest of the paper will evaluate these two narratives, looking for shortcomings in the prevalent Fear Narrative that might be bolstered by the Rage Narrative.

### **The Fear Narrative**

The prevailing theory for how terrorism yields harsh policy responses such as war and the abridgement of civil liberties uses mass fear as the mechanism that drives public support for such outcomes. If the dependent variable, is incidence of war or passage of counterterror law or hate crimes against Muslims, then the independent variable is mass fear borne from the terror attack. The independent variable could be elite incitement or some other factor, but, in the least, mass fear plays a supporting role.

The Fear Narrative can be described as follows. During a crisis or emergency, public fear rises to extremely high levels. People become afraid to engage in their normal daily activities. When anxiety and terror reach a peak, public willingness to cede liberties rises.

Further, mass fears lead the public looks to a leader to unite behind, thus creating an opportunity for elite incitement.

Indeed, as John Mueller has found, the “rally ‘round the flag” effect typically provides an increase in support of the chief executive after important international events<sup>13</sup>. Further, as Timur Kuran and Cass Sunstein write, “Public officials know that they might be severely punished for downplaying a risk that is perceived as serious. ... To avoid charges of insensitivity, even to avoid having to justify an unpopular position, [an official] may make speeches and promote policies that convey deep concern about the very waste spill that he actually considers harmless”<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, as a study by Landau, et al. shows, simply reminding people of the threat of terrorism increased support for the Bush administration<sup>15</sup>.

Fear allows for elite manipulation. It also creates a willingness to cede civil liberties for increased security. For example, a full 88% of Britons wanted to give the police extra powers to deport and/or detain terrorists after the July 7 London Bombings<sup>16</sup>. Yet, when liberties are broken down, the findings vary. Darren Davis writes that, “Abstract support for democracy and civil liberties usually garner overwhelming support, but in applied contexts where citizens have to practice what they preach, democracy ... suffers”<sup>17</sup>. His data show that while 45% of Americans’ abstractly supported security over civil liberties after 9/11, when the question was made more specific about the actual liberty being traded the numbers varied greatly. For

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<sup>13</sup> Mueller, John E. *War, Presidents and Public Opinion*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1973), pg. 208.

<sup>14</sup> Sunstein, Cass. *Risk and Reason: Safety, Law, and the Environment*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2004), pg. 90.

<sup>15</sup> Landau, Mark J. Sheldon Solomon, Jeff Greenberg, Florette Cohen, Tom Pyszczynski, Jamie Arndt, Claude H. Miller, Daniel M. Ogilvie, and Alison Cook. “Deliver Us From Evil: The Effects of Mortality Salience and Reminders of 9/11 on Support for President George W. Bush,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30: 9 (2004).

<sup>16</sup> Data from 7/19/2005 ICM/News World poll asking Britons, “There are a number of people living in Britain who the authorities have identified as posing a potential terrorist threat. Do you think extra powers should or should not be made available to deport or detain them?”

<sup>17</sup> Davis, Darren W. *Negative Liberty: Public Opinion and the Terrorist Attacks on America*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation 2007), pg. 4.

instance, 72% of Americans supported guilt by association, 49% supported detaining non-citizens while only 18% backed racial profiling<sup>18</sup>.

While fear might explain a desire to cower behind leaders and abridge the liberties of scary “out-groups,” not every public and policy response can be explained by an incidence of high mass fear levels. Further, some of the responses that are attributed to high fear levels might be better explained by the Rage Narrative. For instance, the Rage Narrative may do a better job of explaining incidence of war and heightened Islamophobia after terror attacks.

### **Refining Fear and Defining Rage**

Though fear is a common term whose definition seems obvious, it seems that authors that have studied responses to terror have grouped too broad an emotional range under the label “fear.” To this end, it is important to succinctly define fear<sup>19</sup> and rage. Scholars that study emotions differentiate them by five characteristics: arousal, expression, feeling, cognitive antecedent, and action tendency<sup>20</sup>. For the purposes of this paper, the latter two characteristics are most important.

In defining anger, Roger Petersen and Sarah Zukerman write that, “The cognitive antecedent of anger is that an individual or group has committed a blameworthy action against one’s self or group”<sup>21</sup>. The corresponding action tendency of anger or rage is to exact revenge by punishing the perpetrating group or individual<sup>22</sup>. Anger makes risky behaviors look less risky

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<sup>18</sup> Davis, *Negative Liberty*, figure 3.1, pg. 50.

<sup>19</sup> Most studies that purportedly study fear prefer to dub the emotion “threat.” I would equate feeling that one’s life or well-being or society is threatened with fear.

<sup>20</sup> Petersen, Roger and Sarah Zukerman. “Anger, Violence, and Political Science” in Potegal, Michael, Gerhard Stemmler, and Charles Spielberger eds., *International Handbook of Anger: Constituent and Concomitant Biological, Psychological, and Social Processes* (New York: Springer 2009), pg. 5 of print-out. Pages correspond to print-out of article sent to me by author.

<sup>21</sup> Petersen and Zukerman, “Anger, Violence, and Political Science,” pg. 5 of print-out.

<sup>22</sup> Petersen and Zukerman, “Anger, Violence, and Political Science,” pg. 1 of print-out.

and also causes heightened prejudice and stereotyping<sup>23</sup>. When people are angry, they yearn to turn the tables on the person or group that wronged them. Through vengeance, they make themselves superior to the person or group that made them feel less-than. Further, revenge “also creates a sense of one’s power and control”<sup>24</sup>. As opposed to fear’s somewhat slow decline, “social psychologists have found that anger rises quickly and then declines at a slower rate”<sup>25</sup>.

While anger causes one to seek vengeance in order to “even the score.” Fear causes a person to perceive even innocuous situations as threatening. Contrary to anger, fear makes an individual or group feel like their life or well-being is being threatened. People hide from or avoid things that they fear. As Eliot R. Smith has found, “appraisals of in-group strength lead people to respond to inter-group conflict with anger and confrontation, whereas appraisals of in-group weakness lead people to respond to inter-group conflict with fear and avoidance”<sup>26</sup>. Further, Diane Mackie found that when insulted by an out-group member, angry responses predicted confrontation while fearful responses predicted avoidance<sup>27</sup>.

We avoid the things we fear. But, obviously, there are some threats that cannot be avoided or that must be eradicated or dealt with for us to go on with our daily lives. Americans’ overblown fear of terrorism has led them to try myriad responses to stop the problem. The creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the passage and re passage of the Patriot Act, and the wars in

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<sup>23</sup> Petersen and Zukerman, “Anger, Violence, and Political Science,” pg. 6 of print-out.

<sup>24</sup> Petersen and Zukerman, “Anger, Violence, and Political Science,” pg. 12 of print-out.

<sup>25</sup> Petersen and Zukerman, “Anger, Violence, and Political Science,” pg. 6 of print-out.

<sup>26</sup> Skitka, Linda J., Christopher Bauman, Nicholas Aramovich, and G. Scott Morgan. 2006. “Confrontational and preventative policy responses to terrorism: Anger wants a fight and fear wants ‘them’ to go away.” *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 28, pg. 376; Smith, Eliot R. 1993. “Social identity and social emotions: Toward new conceptualizations of prejudice” in D. M. Mackie & D. L. Hamilton eds., *Affect, cognition, and stereotyping: Interactive processes in group perception* (pp. 297–315). San Diego, CA: Academic Press; Smith, Eliot R. 1999. “Affective and cognitive implications of a group becoming part of the self: New models of prejudice and of the self-concept” in D. Abrams & M. A. Hogg (Eds.), *Social identity and social cognition* (pp. 183–196). Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell.

<sup>27</sup> Skitka, et al., “Confrontational and preventative policy responses to terrorism,” pg. 376; Mackie, Diane M., T. Devos, and Eliot R. Smith. 2000. “Intergroup emotions: Explaining offensive action tendencies in an intergroup context.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79, 602–616.

Afghanistan and Iraq all were pushed through on the heels of mass fear. But, if Americans were so fearful of terrorists, they showed their fear in a funny way. Why stir up a hornet's nest if you fear being stung? The calls to "nuke" the terrorists (or all Arabs or Muslims)<sup>28</sup> and the wanton cases of anti-Muslim violence and property damage<sup>29</sup> speak to a response that is more consistent with rage than fear. War seems to be a response based more on anger (eradicate the enemy) than on fear.

The Rage Narrative states that people will respond to terror attacks with angry protests, hate crimes, and hate speech. Anti-out-group violence will rise. People will seek revenge through violence or war. Governments will try to punish out-groups and engage in risky wars as a means of evening the score. The next section of the paper will catalogue some responses to terror that are consistent with the Rage Narrative. The strengths and weaknesses of both the Fear and Rage Narratives will be listed in the conclusion.

### **The Overall Response to Terror and the Rage Response**

Regardless of the type of democracy, major terror attacks yield civil liberty-abridging counterterror legislation. They also frequently lead to mass protests, bumps or dips in government approval, war, violence against out-groups, and retrenching of homeland defenses. In this section, I will review some of the responses to recent terror attacks that support the Rage Narrative. The evidence will be organized by outcome.

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<sup>28</sup> On this point see Skitka, et al., "Confrontational and preventative policy responses to terrorism," pg. 375.

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, Council on American-Islamic Relations, "The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States 2002: Executive Summary," <http://www.cair.com/CivilRights/CivilRightsReports/2002Report.aspx>.

## *Studies in Anger*

Though people responded with a wide range of emotions after the September 11 attacks, anger was particularly salient. A University of Chicago study conducted in the immediate days and weeks after the attacks found that “the dominant reaction [to the attacks] was anger” with 65% of respondents answering in this way. New York residents, 73% of whom reported experiencing anger after the attacks, were even more filled with rage<sup>30</sup>. More evidence for the salience of anger comes from Lerner, et al. who established that in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 (they polled study participants on September 20 and November 10, 2001), on average participants self-reported as being markedly angrier than they were fearful. Their study also found that people viewed the world as a less risky one when they were angry and a more risky one (a world full of threats) when fearful<sup>31</sup>.

Anecdotal public evidence for anger has also been prevalent in reactions to terror attacks. As the *New York Times* wrote after the November 2008 bombings in Mumbai that killed more than 170 people, “In India, the government faces lasting and deep-seated anger among the population over the Mumbai attacks and years of suspicion among the governing elite that Pakistan will never really be ready to make peace”<sup>32</sup>. In the US, a prominent sign held behind home plate at the 2001 World Series read, “Nuke ‘Em Till They Glow.” In Israel, terror bombings are typically met with mass protests by Orthodox Jews chanting “Mavet La’Aravim,” or “Death to

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<sup>30</sup> Smith, Tom W., Kenneth A. Rasinski, and Marianna Toce, “America Rebounds: A National Study of Public Response to the September 11th Terrorist Attacks,” The University of Chicago: NORC, 25 October 2001.

<sup>31</sup> Lerner, Jennifer S., Roxana M. Gonzalez, Deborah A. Small, and Baruch Fischhoff, “Effects of Fear and Anger on perceived Risks of Terrorism: A National Field Experiment,” *Psychological Science*, 14:2 (March 2003), pg. 146.

<sup>32</sup> Polgreen, Lydia. “Hints of Cooperation Put Leaders of Pakistan and India on the Defensive at Home,” *The New York Times*, 5 August 2009.

the Arabs”<sup>33</sup>. Public anger at perpetrators of violence is a common denominator when discussing crime, but has not been when discussing terrorism. Yet it is prevalent.

Consistent with the Rage Narrative, Nehemia Friedland and Ariel Merari found in 1985 that terror attacks “hardened” Israelis’ attitudes towards terror groups and Palestinians<sup>34</sup>. Social scientists have long used the term “hardening” of attitudes as a euphemism for the emotion of rage<sup>35</sup>. As Friedland and Merari’s polling study found, “there was no evidence of any willingness [on Israelis’ part] to concede to terrorists”<sup>36</sup>. In fact, the opposite was true. Will Josiger shows that the second intifada only served to make Israelis see the prospects of peace as increasingly dismal<sup>37</sup>. If fear were at work here, perhaps it could be argued that Israelis would seek peace to stop the violence against them. Instead, here the Rage Narrative is supported by the “hardening” of Israeli attitudes, i.e. their anger.

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<sup>33</sup> I witnessed such a rally myself after a terror bombing in Jerusalem in 1997.

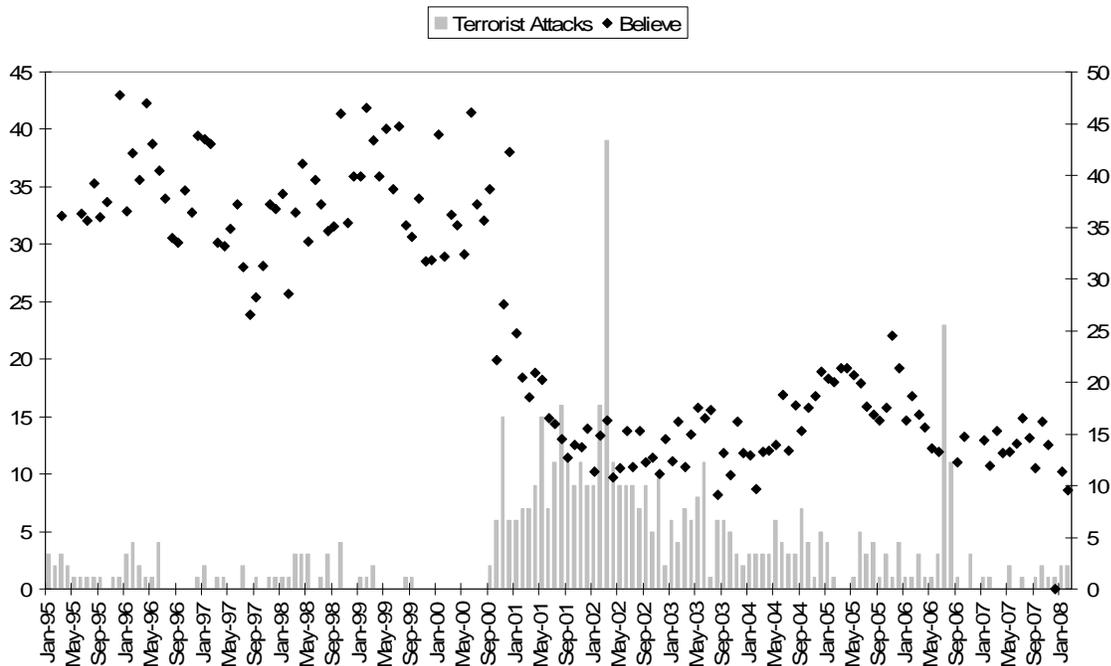
<sup>34</sup> Friedland, Nehemia and Ariel Merari, “The Psychological Impact of Terrorism: A Double-Edged Sword,” *Political Psychology* 6: 4 (1985), pg. 598.

<sup>35</sup> See Petersen and Zukerman, “Anger, Violence, and Political Science,” pg. 1 of print-out.

<sup>36</sup> Friedland and Merari, “The Psychological Impact of Terrorism,” pg. 599.

<sup>37</sup> Josiger, William J. 2008. “Fear Factor: Terrorism’s Impact and Effectiveness,” Master’s Thesis prepared for St. Andrew’s University, pg. 53.cha

Chart Seven: Likelihood of Peace Between Israelis and Palestinians



Question asked Israelis: “Do you believe there will be peace between Israel and the Palestinians in the coming years?” Graph shows combination of greatly and somewhat believe. Questions translated from Hebrew by Gabriel Rubin. Data garnered from the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research polling data at [www.tau.ac.il/peace/](http://www.tau.ac.il/peace/)

### *Hate Crimes and Islamophobia*

Increases in violence toward out-groups seen to be responsible for terrorism and Islamophobia in response to terror attacks further buttress the Rage Narrative. For example, 60 percent of Americans polled soon after 9/11 supported ethnic profiling as long as it targeted Arabs and Muslims<sup>38</sup>. Brigitte Nacos and Oscar Torres-Reyna also show that fear of Muslims jumped after 9/11<sup>39</sup>. These high fear levels led to desires to curb the liberties of Muslims in America. The authors point to polls that show a solid majority of Americans favoring reducing

<sup>38</sup> Cole and Dempsey, *Terrorism and the Constitution*, pg. 220.

<sup>39</sup> Nacos, Brigitte L. and Oscar Torres-Reyna. *Fueling Our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2007), pg. 56.

the rights of Muslim or Arab foreign nationals in America and that 20% of Americans favored reduced rights for Muslim or Arab-American *citizens*<sup>40</sup>.

The liberties of Muslims were not the only things targeted after terror attacks. Anti-Muslim crimes spiked in the UK after the London bombings and in the US after 9/11<sup>41</sup>. Indeed, one in five British Muslims stated in an ICM/*Guardian* poll that “they or a family member have faced abuse or hostility since” the 2005 London Bombings<sup>42</sup>.

### *Detentions and Torture*

Detaining terror suspects for increasingly long periods of time with no legal recourse has become an all-too-common response of liberal democracies to the terror threat. Detentions and torture could be seen as either Fear or Rage responses. If detention and torture is viewed as punishment or vengeance then it falls within the Rage Narrative. If they are viewed as methods for simply containing a threatening populace and perhaps reducing a threat by extracting vital information then they fall within the Fear Narrative. Clearly, elements of both narratives seem to be present in the desire to detain and torture terror suspects.

James Dempsey and David Cole have closely examined the recent spate of terrorism-inspired detentions and deportations. Cole and Dempsey count over 5,000 foreign nationals detained by the federal government after September 11. Four years later, not one of these detainees stood “convicted of a terrorist crime”<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Nacos and Torres-Reyna, *Fueling Our Fears*, pg. 62.

<sup>41</sup> Nacos and Torres-Reyna, *Fueling Our Fears*, pg. 31. I will always remember a week or so after 9/11 watching a man become livid at a gas station attendant for giving him wrong change in Philadelphia. The man proceeded to pound on the plastic barrier separating them while calling the (dark-skinned, but by no means clearly Muslim or Arab) worker an “Afghanistan-ass motherfucker.”

<sup>42</sup> Dodd, Vikram. “Two-thirds of Muslims consider leaving UK,” *The Guardian*, 26 July 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Cole, David and James X. Dempsey, *Terrorism and the Constitution: Sacrificing Civil Liberties in the Name of National Security*. (New York: The New Press 2006), pg. 178; Cole, *Enemy Aliens*, pg. xxiii.

Cole has written extensively on the fact that non-citizen Arabs and Muslims, not the general public, have suffered from dramatically reduced liberties after 9/11. Fear of the other pushes citizens to view post-crisis situations as “us versus them” scenarios. As Cole writes, “crises often inspire the demonization of ‘aliens’ as the nation seeks unity by emphasizing differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’”<sup>44</sup>. Cole in a 2006 piece for the *New York Review of Books* wrote that since September 11, 2001, “the [Bush] administration subjected 80,000 Arab and Muslim immigrants to fingerprinting and registration, sought out 8,000 Arab and Muslim men for FBI interviews, and imprisoned over 5,000 foreign nationals in antiterrorism preventive detention initiatives”<sup>45</sup>. According to Cole of these 93,000 individuals interviewed, made to register with the government, or detained “not one stands convicted of a terrorist crime”<sup>46</sup>. Bush further subverted the judiciary with the creation of secret CIA detention facilities abroad<sup>47</sup>, and with the prolonged detention of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay<sup>48</sup> and of those who have been declared enemy combatants without charges being brought against them.

For its part, Israel treats many Arab prisoners as “security prisoners,” which is a similar categorization to the US’ “enemy combatant.” Security prisoners do not have the rights of a regular prisoner, but they are afforded Geneva Convention protections<sup>49</sup>. That said, Israel does

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<sup>44</sup> Cole, David. *Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terror*. (New York: The New Press 2005), pg. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Cole, David. “Are We Safer?,” 9 March 2006, *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 53, no. 4, pg. 5 of printout.

<sup>46</sup> Cole, “Are We Safer?,” pg. 6 of printout.

<sup>47</sup> Allen, Joanne. “CIA uses secret prisons abroad: report,” 2 November 2005. <http://www.reuters.co.uk>.

<sup>48</sup> Laura Donohue writes that, “A year and a half after attacking Afghanistan, America continues to hold more than 600 men from 43 countries at Guantanamo Bay” (Donohue, Laura K. “The British Traded Rights For Security, Too,” *The Washington Post*, 6 April 2003).

<sup>49</sup> Gal-Or, Noemi. “Countering Terrorism in Israel” in Charters, David ed. *The Deadly Sin of Terrorism: Its Effect on Democracy and Civil Liberty in Six Countries*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1994),, pg. 149.

use tactics such as sleep deprivation and stress positions on Palestinian prisoners, which arguably can be dubbed “torture”<sup>50</sup>.

Moreover, a staggering number of Palestinians are being held in Israeli jails. Btselem statistics estimated in 2006 that 8,085 Palestinians were being imprisoned in Israeli civilian jails, 2,384 of them without charge<sup>51</sup>. Further, over 400 Palestinians (the figure differs over time) are being held by Israel under “administrative detention”<sup>52</sup>. According to Btselem, “Administrative detention is detention without charge or trial, authorized by administrative order rather than by judicial decree.” Much like America’s “enemy combatants,” Israel has held Palestinians, “in prolonged detention without trying them and without informing them of the suspicions against them. While detainees may appeal the detention, neither they nor their attorneys are allowed to see the evidence”<sup>53</sup>.

In the United Kingdom, Gordon Brown recently narrowly passed legislation that allows the state to hold terror suspects for 42 days without charge<sup>54</sup>. Lest I give the impression that only Muslims have been targeted with repressive tactics following terror attacks, we quickly turn to Britain’s treatment of Irish terrorists. Hadden, Boyle, and Campbell write that regarding Britain’s treatment of Irish terrorists, “There have been repeated allegations of unlawful killings by the security forces, of torture during interrogation, of widespread and random arrests, of

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<sup>50</sup> See Gross, Emanuel. *The Struggle of Democracy Against Terrorism: Lessons from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel*. (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press 2006), pgs. 76-80; Also see the B’tselem human rights group joint report with HaMoked, “Absolute Prohibition: The Torture and Detention of Palestinian Detainees,” May 2007, [http://www.btselem.org/english/Publications/Summaries/200705\\_Utterly\\_Forbidden.asp](http://www.btselem.org/english/Publications/Summaries/200705_Utterly_Forbidden.asp).

<sup>51</sup> BBC News, “Who are the Mid-East prisoners?,” BBC News, 26 July 2006, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle\\_east/5211930.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/5211930.stm).

<sup>52</sup> Btselem human rights group, “Statistics on Administrative Detention,” [http://www.btselem.org/english/Administrative\\_Detention/Statistics.asp](http://www.btselem.org/english/Administrative_Detention/Statistics.asp).

<sup>53</sup> Btselem human rights group, “Administrative Detention,” <http://www.btselem.org/English/Administrative%5FDetention/>.

<sup>54</sup> Porter, Andrew. “Gordon Brown wins crucial 42 day vote thanks to Ulster MPs,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 October 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/politics/labour/2112553/Gordon-Brown-wins-crucial-42-day-vote-thanks-to-Ulster-MPs.html>.

‘assembly line’ justice and show trials, of mass detentions without trial and of systematic ill-treatment of prisoners”<sup>55</sup>.

### *Erosion of Rights*

Especially after the September 11 attacks on America, large omnibus counterterror bills have been passed all over the world. The most famous of them is the USA Patriot Act, which increased government surveillance powers at the cost of individual liberties. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, the Act gave the “government the power to access your medical records, tax records, information about the books you buy or borrow without probable cause, and the power to break into your home and conduct secret searches without telling you for weeks, months, or indefinitely”<sup>56</sup>.

The Patriot Act, however, was not the only law passed in response to the attacks on the World Trade Center and Washington, DC. In Canada, Bill C-36 was passed about one month after the September 11, 2001 attacks in America. Bill C-36 expanded government wiretapping powers and allowed police to preventively arrest terror suspects. It also banned the existence and funding of terrorist groups in Canada<sup>57</sup>. France passed legislation expanding police search-and-seizure powers<sup>58</sup>, and Australia and Japan also passed a new anti-terror bills after 9/11<sup>59</sup>.

Further, Germany, a country especially sensitive to the passage of liberty-reducing laws that

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<sup>55</sup> Hadden, Tom, Kevin Boyle, and Colm Campbell. “Emergency Law in Northern Ireland: The Context.” In Jennings, Anthony ed. *Justice under Fire: the Abuse of Civil Liberties in Northern Ireland* (London: Pluto Press 1990), pg. 1.

<sup>56</sup> American Civil Liberties Union, “USA Patriot Act,” 14 November 2003, <http://www.aclu.org/safefree/resources/17343res20031114.html>.

<sup>57</sup> Department of Justice Canada, “Backgrounder: Royal Assent of Bill C-36: The Anti-terrorism Act,” [http://www.justice.gc.ca/en/news/nr/2001/doc\\_28217.html](http://www.justice.gc.ca/en/news/nr/2001/doc_28217.html).

<sup>58</sup> BBC News, “France adopts new terror law,” BBC News, 31 October 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1630864.stm>.

<sup>59</sup> Hocking, Jenny. *Terror Laws: ASIO, Counter-Terrorism and the Threat to Democracy*. (Sydney: UNSW Press 2004), pgs. 10-11; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Statement by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on the Passing of the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law by the Diet of Japan,” 29 October 2001, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/terro0109/speech/pm1029.html>.

might erode “the foundation of the polity,” passed two new counterterrorism laws after 9/11<sup>60</sup>. The passage of these counterterror laws speaks to the enormity and worldwide effect of the September 11 attacks.

Case studies from India and Russia also exhibit the quick passage of liberty-abridging legislation after terror attacks. AB Vajpayee’s passage of the repressive Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) after the 2001 Parliament bombing in India is a case in point<sup>61</sup>. In Russia, by no means a liberal democracy, President Vladimir Putin has used the threat of Chechen terrorism to erode democratic rights in the country and centralize power in the office of the presidency<sup>62</sup>. France’s dealings with Algerian extremist terrorism, in the form of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) also fits the pattern of a terror campaign yielding greater executive power and reduced civil liberties<sup>63</sup>.

The abridgment of individual rights in the name of national security is nothing new. Clearly, part of the story has to do with government elites fomenting fear of terrorism and about legislators responding to a new threat. Here it is harder to make the case for the Rage Narrative except to say that perhaps it is not just fear that leads one to support liberty-reducing law. Perhaps it could be the type of rage that raises one’s willingness to take a small hit in the hopes of demolishing one’s enemy.

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<sup>60</sup> Katzenstein, “Same War—Different Views: Germany, Japan, and Counterterrorism,” pgs. 740, 749-50.

<sup>61</sup> Singh, Ujjwal Kumar. *The State, Democracy and Anti-Terror Laws in India*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications 2007), pg. 14; In.Rediff.com, “It is goodbye to PoTA,” 18 September 2004, <http://in.rediff.com/news/2004/sep/18spec1.htm>; For full text of the Prevention of Terrorism Act see <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/document/actandordinances/POTA.htm>.

<sup>62</sup> Weir, Fred and Scott Peterson, “Russian Terrorism Prompts Power Grab,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 September 2004.

<sup>63</sup> See Shapiro, Jeremy. “France and the GIA” in Art, Robert J. and Louise Richardson eds., *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past*. (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press 2007), chapter 5.

## War

Though fear could explain war through the mechanism of eradicating threats, the Rage Narrative provides a sounder basis for explaining wars against terrorists. The overly broad categorization of George W. Bush's "war against terror" and his delineation of an axis of evil speak to this fact. When rage is involved, all of one's enemies must be destroyed. In Bush's infamous words, "you are either with us or against us"<sup>64</sup>. The war in Afghanistan, regardless of its justifiability, was clearly fought to exact revenge on both Osama bin-Laden and those who dared harbor him.

The war in Iraq, which Bush began pushing for on the one year anniversary of 9/11, speaks more to a Rage response than to one involving Fear. There was no imminent threat coming from Iraq at the time. Instead, the U.S. was flexing its muscles with this war and exacting vengeance on the Arab world that produced the terrorists of 9/11.

Israel's response to the second intifada, referred to by Israelis as "the War," was equally rage-fueled. Israel continued its long-running policy of destroying the homes of terrorist bombers, a policy that is more about vengeance than about justice or fear.

Israel's tit-for-tat response to the second intifada was encapsulated by Operation Journey of Colors (February 28- March 15, 2002) and Operation Defensive Shield (March 29-April 28, 2002), both of which entailed a military reoccupation of Palestinian Authority land that supports the Rage Narrative<sup>65</sup>. Operation Defensive Shield, which included a siege of PA President Yasir Arafat's compound, was especially brutal<sup>66</sup>. Cheryl Rubenberg writes:

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<sup>64</sup> CNN.com, "You are either with us or against us," 6 November 2001, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/>.

<sup>65</sup> Rubenberg, Cheryl. *The Palestinians: In Search of a Just Peace*. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers 2003), pgs. 347-50.

<sup>66</sup> Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams*, pg. 372.

“Operation Defensive Shield was qualitatively and quantitatively different than anything that had preceded it. Israel reoccupied every major city, refugee camp, and Palestinian locale in the West Bank. The population was placed under curfew; water, electricity, and phone lines were cut; tanks bulldozed their way through every street and alley”<sup>67</sup>.

More politically significant was the wanton destruction of the PA’s civil institutional structure. Forty years of final examination scores were destroyed at the Ministry of Education, the information held by the Palestinian Census Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Health was obliterated, and the Palestine International Bank and the Ministry of Culture were ransacked<sup>68</sup>. These sorts of responses have become typical of Israel’s angry response to terror. The December 2008- January 2009 Gaza War was just the latest incarnation of such rage.

### **Conclusion: Fear vs. Rage**

The prevailing paradigm, which I call here the Fear Narrative, does not do a sufficiently good job of explaining public and government responses to terror attacks. Fear is bad at explaining the desire for revenge after terrorism. Fear dictates that people would probably rally behind authorities, but, as seen with Tony Blair’s approval ratings after the London bombings, chief executives do not always see a large bump in approval ratings in terrorism’s aftermath<sup>69</sup>. Most importantly, the Fear Narrative leaves out a large and important part of the story of responses to terrorism that the Rage Narrative aptly fills in.

The quest to engage in risky, many times brutal wars fits a paradigm built upon rage better than one built on fear. The shameful torture methods that have frequently been used the world

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<sup>67</sup> Rubenberg, *The Palestinians*, pg. 351.

<sup>68</sup> Rubenberg, *The Palestinians*, pg. 352.

<sup>69</sup> Though mass fears did spike (according to Ipsos-MORI polls) after the London bombings, Tony Blair’s monthly approval ratings after the bombings went from 39% (6/2005) to 44% (7/2005) and then back to 39% (8/2005) according to Ipsos-MORI polls.

over in response to terrorism buttress the Rage Narrative. The rise in hate crimes, and more recently Islamophobia, and the incidence of anti-government or anti-out group protests after terror attacks are also consistent with a response guided by anger. Additionally, the Rage Narrative has great explanatory power in cases where terrorism yields low-intensity wars of attrition such as in Sri Lanka and Israel. Indeed, as Petersen and Zukerman write, “one of the core models of conflict in political science is ‘the spiral model’ which explains how retaliatory cycles of escalation and violence are initiated and maintained”<sup>70</sup>. Rage does a better job of describing these cycles of violence than does Fear.

That said, the Fear Narrative does well in explaining the erosion of rights through the passage of counterterror legislation in terrorism’s wake. It also is apt at explaining desires to retreat to the homeland and to bolster homeland security. Lastly, it can well explain the incidence of increasingly long detentions without charge for terrorists.

This paper does not seek to throw out the Fear Narrative in favor of one centered on Rage. Indeed, as argued above, both Fear and Rage explain some elements of liberal democracies’ emotional responses to terrorism. The ramifications of looking at both Rage and Fear are myriad.

For example, both rage and fear reduce feelings of tolerance toward out-groups. But, as Dunya van Troost has found, “Tolerance regarding high proximity items is determined mainly by fear, while tolerance in respect to low contact scenarios is driven by anger”<sup>71</sup>. This finding is consistent with the effects of global terror attacks. The September 11 attacks, the recent Mumbai attacks and the 2005 wedding bombing in Amman, Jordan produced widespread rage. For this finding to travel across cases, cultural proclivities to anger would have to be accounted for and a

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<sup>70</sup> Petersen and Zukerman, “Anger, Violence, and Political Science,” pg. 9 of print-out.

<sup>71</sup> Van Troost, Dunya. “The Fearful, the Angry and the Intolerant: The impact of anger and fear on political tolerance,” Paper presented at the European Consortium for Political Research in Pisa, Italy, 9/6-8/2007.

more systematic study of proximity to out-groups would have to be done. Still, by studying both emotions van Troost may have led researchers to an important predictor of emotional responses.

The argument made in this paper is significant in that it can lead to better safeguards against overreactions to terror attacks. Since fear is the prevailing narrative in the extant literature, scholars have so far prescribed against cowering from terrorism and retreating to the homeland<sup>72</sup>. But, because rage is also an integral part of the emotional reaction to terrorism worldwide, governments and publics should be seen in the aftermath of terrorism as being prone to take uncalculated risks, to commit wanton violence, to target out-groups (particularly those who are seen as connected to the terrorist perpetrators), and to torture terror suspects and perhaps engage in ill-advised conflicts as a means of exacting revenge. Terrorism works not only by making a mass public fearful of a small force but also by filling that public and its leaders with rage that leads liberal democracies to seek revenge. Knowing this fact will hopefully allow us to better calibrate our responses to terror attacks in the future.

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<sup>72</sup> See Mueller, *Overblown* and Lustick, *Trapped in the War on Terror*.