SIMPLICITY AND SPOOK:
TERRORISM AND THE DYNAMICS OF THREAT EXAGGERATION

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ABSTRACT It has been common to exaggerate and to overreact to foreign threats, something that seems to be continuing with current concerns over international terrorism. This paper assesses threat exaggeration and overreaction from Pearl Harbor to the post-Cold War period and applies that experience to post-9/11 fears of, and policies toward, international terrorism. Alarmism and overreaction can be harmful, particularly economically. And, in the case of terrorism, they can help create the damaging consequences the terrorists seek but are unable to perpetrate on their own. Moreover, stoked by the terrorism industry, many of the forms alarmism has taken verge on hysteria. The United States is hardly likely to be facing an existential threat in the sense that it will be toppled by dramatic acts of terrorist destruction, even extreme ones. The country can, however grimly, readily absorb considerable damage if necessary, and it has outlasted more potent threats in the past. A reasonable policy might be to seek to reduce fears about what may well prove to be quite a limited problem.

1. Introduction

"At the summit of foreign policy," Warner Schilling once observed, "one always finds simplicity and spook."

This paper deals with two results of that proposition as it pertains to American foreign policy over the last several decades: the tendency to exaggerate threats and then, partly in consequence, to overreact to them. Of particular interest is the way this proclivity seems to be continuing with current concerns over international terrorism. To carry this out, I consider threat exaggeration and overreaction from Pearl Harbor to the present day and apply the experience before September 11, 2001, to the current era and, specifically, to the extravagant, sometimes even hysterical, fears international terrorism has fostered and to the expensive policies those fears have inspired.

Section 2 of the paper begins the discussion by assessing the Pearl Harbor experience, an event often taken to have parallels to 9/11. It suggests that the trauma and fury triggered by the Pearl Harbor attack impelled the country into a savage, revenge-oriented war while a far less costly potential alternative

policy, stressing containment and harassment, went unexamined.

Section 3 focuses on the Cold War. It argues that the threat presented by international Communism and by the domestic subversion that formed a key part of its stock in trade proved to be much exaggerated and that the policies designed to deal with it turned out to be overly militaristic, were far too expensive, and, ultimately, were probably unnecessary.

Section 4 looks at other threats during the Cold War that proved to be overblown such as unfulfilled fears about strategic nuclear war, at overreactions to essentially minor acts of terrorism against Americans in distant lands, and at unjustified anxieties about the challenge presented by an economically resurgent Japan.

Section 5 assesses policy in the immediate post-Cold War period in which problems previously considered minor were elevated into a position of prominence when the big one--the challenge presented by international Communism--disappeared. Of particular concern are the misguided anxieties about the spread of ethnic warfare and the tendency to become preoccupied with a newly-fabricated category of "rogue states," countries with unpleasant regimes which present little actual threat. Also assessed is the process by which the designation, "weapons of mass destruction," has deftly and unwisely been expanded to embrace not only those capable of extensive devastation, nuclear weapons, but also ones that are not likely to be remotely so destructive: chemical and biological weapons.

Sections 6, 7, and 8 then extend and extrapolate the discussion to current--post 9/11--concerns about international terrorism.

Section 6 assesses the damage international terrorism has caused in the past and is most likely to inflict in the future. It concludes that this is probably limited and therefore readily, if grimly, absorbable.

Section 7 argues that most of the harm caused by terrorism arises from the overreactive--sometimes even hysterical--policies designed to deal with it. It also explores the makeup and impact of the terrorism industry--politicians, bureaucrats, journalists, commentators, and risk entrepreneurs who systematically exaggerate, play on, and profit from fear-mongering and alarmism.

And section 8 proposes an alternative policy toward terrorism, one that focuses primarily on reducing its principal cost: the knee-jerk fears, anxieties, and acts of overreaction that it too regularly inspires.

The tendencies to exaggerate threat and to overreact are hardly new--they could be seen as well, for example, in the responses to the challenges presented by international anarchism in the years before World War I and by international Communism in the years just after it. However, I do not wish to suggest in this paper that all fears are unjustified or that threats are never *under*estimated. Indeed, I suspect that some of the tendency to overestimate threats in the period after World War II derives from the fact that the dire threat presented by Adolf Hitler's Germany had been underappreciated in the period before it. This underestimate, however, was premised in part and in turn on an overestimate: the exaggerated supposition that the next war would lead to human annihilation, an assumption that led to the logical conclusion that Hitler could not possibly be willing to risk one (see Mueller 1989, 57-60). The postwar proclivity toward exaggeration and overreaction may also stem in part from the prewar experience with Japan. There had been something of a tendency to underestimate its capacity and its willingness to take risks, and the traumatic experience of Pearl Harbor led to embracing the over-learned lesson never to do that again.

Robert Jervis has suggested that "those who remember the past are condemned to making the opposite mistakes" (1976, 275). It is a central burden of this paper that the prewar experience with Hitler and with Japan may have been too well remembered and that, in our present era of anxiety over the threat presented by tiny bands of international terrorists, it is time to think again.

THREAT EXAGGERATION AND OVERREACTION BEFORE SEPTEMBER 11

2. Japan, Pearl Harbor...and 9/11

When the terrorist assault of September 11, 2001, took place, many commentators looked for parallels in American history, and the one most commonly embraced was the experience of Pearl Harbor some 60 years earlier in which about the same number of Americans were sent to their deaths by foreign attackers.

The comparison is flawed in a number of respects, of course--the strike in 1941 was carried out by a state with massive military forces, and it directly triggered formal declarations of war. However, the reactions (or overreactions) to the attacks were similar. The shock, outrage, and fury they inspired impelled an intense desire to lash out militarily at the source of the assault without regard to cost. Moreover, in both cases the results of the reaction proved to be far more costly for the United States than those suffered in the attack itself. And there was little or no examination of alternative policies and a lack of systematic, careful thinking. The spasm of rage ignited by Pearl Harbor inspired, I will argue, a policy of overreaction that resulted in a great number of needless deaths of Americans and others. And, I will argue in section 7, much the same could be said for the reaction to 9/11.

The damage at Pearl Harbor. Postmortems of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, generally describe it in dramatic, almost apocalyptic, terms. The Joint Congressional Committee that investigated the event after the war labeled the attack "the greatest military and naval disaster in our Nation's history" (U.S. Congress 1946b, 65), and leading students of the attack use similar language. John Toland has characterized Pearl Harbor as a "catastrophe" (1961, 38) and as "the worst military disaster in [American] history" (1970, 237), while Samuel Eliot Morison calls the attack "devastating" and an "overwhelming disaster" for the United States (1963, 68, 70). Gordon Prange dubs the attack a "debacle" (1986, 534) and "one of the worst defeats the United States suffered in its 200 years" (1988, xiii). Ronald Spector, Roberta Wohlstetter, and Louis Morton call it a "disaster" as well, and Spector and Wohlstetter also agree on "catastrophe" (Spector 1985, 93; Morton 1962, 144; Wohlstetter 1962, 3, 398). Melvin Small finds it a "crushing blow" and "our worst military disaster" (1980, 234, 253).

In a direct military sense these dramatic characterizations are excessive: militarily, the attack on Pearl Harbor was more of an inconvenience than a catastrophe or disaster for the United States. The destruction inflicted by the Japanese was not terribly extensive, and much of it was visited upon military equipment that was old and in many cases obsolete or nearly so. In addition, much of the damage was readily and quickly repaired, and its extent was soon made all but trivial by the capacity of America's remarkable wartime industry to supply superior replacements in enormous numbers. Moreover, the attack did not significantly delay the American military response to Japanese aggression, nor did it importantly change the pace of the war: the United States was unprepared to take the offensive at that time in any case, and the damage at Pearl Harbor increased this unpreparedness only marginally (Mueller 1995, 86-97).

The Pearl Harbor policy shift. However, the attack utterly closed off careful thought within the United States and propelled the country heedlessly into a long, ghastly war in Asia when the United States might have rolled back the Japanese empire at lower cost to all involved if it had continued its pre-Pearl Harbor policies of containment and harassment. And in broadest focus, the war triggered by Pearl Harbor may have been a disaster in that the vicious international overlordship it demolished in Asia at great cost was replaced with a set of local tyrannies that in many cases, especially China, were even worse.

Before Pearl Harbor, American policy toward Japanese expansion was essentially one of containment--although, as Paul Schroeder observes, after the summer of 1941 American policy became

more dynamic, demanding that Japan not merely stop its expansion, but that it withdraw from China (1958, ch. 8). American tactics stressed economic pressure, a military buildup designed to threaten and deter, and assistance to anti-Japanese combatants, especially to China where the Japanese had become painfully bogged down--although Japan's problems there were due far more to Chinese resistance than to U.S. aid, which was actually quite modest (Utley 1985, 135-36).[1] Should Japan abandon its expansionary imperial policy, the United States stood ready, as the American ambassador put it at the time, to help Japan peacefully to gain "all of the desiderata for which she allegedly started fighting--strategic, economic, financial, and social security" (Butow 1961, 341). (After the war the United States had a chance to carry out this promise and did so in full measure.)

This American concern with Asia has had its critics. The observation by Warner Schilling that has provided the title for this paper was, in fact, triggered by a consideration of the process by which Japan and the United States managed to go to war with each other in 1941. Japan, he notes, launched war on the vague, unexamined hope that the United States would seek a compromise peace after being attacked, "a hope nourished in their despair at the alternatives." Meanwhile, "the American opposition to Japan rested on the dubious proposition that the loss of Southeast Asia could prove disastrous for Britain's war effort and for the commitment to maintain the territorial integrity of China--a commitment as mysterious in its logic as anything the Japanese ever conceived." And at no time, he notes, did American leaders "perplex themselves with the question of just how much American blood and treasure the defense of China and Southeast Asia was worth" (1965, 389). Similarly, Melvin Small observes that "the defense of China was an unquestioned axiom of American policy taken in along with mother's milk and the Monroe Doctrine....One looks in vain through the official papers of the 1930s for some prominent leader to say, `Wait a second, just why is China so essential to our security?'" (1980, 238-39). Jonathan Utley has a different perspective, but he comes to a similar conclusion: "It was not through a careful review of national policy or the stakes involved in Asia that the United States would place itself in the path of Japanese expansion, but incrementally, without long-range planning, and as often as not as a stopgap measure necessitated, or so the planners thought, by the events in Europe" (1985, 58).[2]

But until Pearl Harbor this policy, however spooky, was comparatively inexpensive. After the attack, however, it no longer became possible even to consider the question, as Schilling phrases it, of "just how much American blood and treasure the defense of China and Southeast Asia was worth." Americans were enraged, threatened, humiliated, and challenged by what Roosevelt called the "unprovoked and dastardly" blow that had come without warning or a declaration of war, at a time when Japanese officials were in Washington, deceptively seeming to be working for a peaceful settlement. With the attack, virtually all remaining reservations vanished as everyone united behind a concerted effort to lash back at the treacherous Japanese, to exact revenge, and to kick butt. As Morison observes, "isolationism and pacifism now ceased to be valid forces in American politics" (1963, 69). Or, in Toland's words, "With almost no exceptions 130,000,000 Americans instantly accepted total war" (1961, 37).[3]

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[1] Utley notes that U.S. aid authorizations in July 1941 were 821,000 tons for Britain, 16,000 for China. See also Russett 1972, 46.

[2] By contrast, at the time of major escalation in the Vietnam War, American decision makers carefully assessed, reassessed, and debated the policy premises of the American commitment there. See Mueller 1989, 168-76.

[3] As Morison also points out, it was Pearl Harbor, not the subsequent, more costly and more important attack on the Philippines that moved American opinion (1963, 77-78). Wohlstetter agrees: "For some reason the damage done to these other American outposts in the Pacific is not considered in the same category of crime" (1962, 340).

Thus, after suffering the loss of some 2,500 people at Pearl Harbor, the Americans, without thinking about it any further, reacted (or overreacted) by launching themselves furiously and impetuously into a war in which they lost hundreds of thousands more.

An alternative policy: containment. The war killed millions people in Asia, and it finally forced the Japanese out of their imperial possessions. But the United States could have pursued a continued policy of cold war rather than hot--that is, of harassment and containment, economic pressure, arming to deter and to threaten, assistance to anti-Japanese combatants, and perhaps limited warfare on the peripheries. The goal of a continued containment policy would have been limited. It would have sought only to compel Japan to retreat from its empire, not, like the war, to force the country to submit to occupation. Such a policy might well eventually have impelled Japan to withdraw from its empire at far lower cost to the United States, to Japan, and to the imperialized peoples.

Although the strategy of containment is associated with postwar U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union, it was also basically the initial policy of the British and French in response to the German invasion of Poland in 1939. The allies did not launch direct war, but instead harassed the Germans in places like Norway, put on economic pressure, built up their forces behind defensive barriers, looked for opportunities to aid resistance movements and to exploit fissures in the German empire, and sat back patiently. It was cold war, though it was called "phoney war."[4] The crucial defect in the containment policy directed at Germany was that Germany was (obviously) capable of invading and defeating France. By contrast, Japan could not invade and defeat the United States. Furthermore, Germany did not at the time present a ripe opportunity for punishing harassment because it was not entangled in a continental war the way Japan was in China, nor could it as readily be economically strained. Thus a policy that failed against Germany had a far greater chance of success against Japan, had it been tried.

That containment can be effective under the right conditions has of course now been demonstrated. After the war the United States and its allies were confronted with another expanding and threatening empire, this one based in Moscow and directed by Josef Stalin, one of history's greatest monsters. A major war against that empire at the time--perhaps with the Germans and Japanese now as allies and with American industry again cranked up for maximum military effort--might very well have been successful, and the costs might have been no higher than those incurred in defeating the Japanese empire. With victory in this war, the gains of 1989-91, including the toppling of Soviet Communism, might have been achieved 40 years earlier. However, although the Soviets may have been expansionary and even more murderous than the Japanese, and although they may ultimately have presented a more visceral and wideranging threat to American values than the comparatively localized Japanese, the Soviets, unlike the Japanese, were not so foolhardy in the course of expansion as to attack American property directly.[5] Accordingly, as discussed in section 3, the United States adopted and maintained a patient policy of containment, economic pressure, arms buildup, peripheral war, and harassment against its new enemy. It took a long time--some 45 years--for the Soviet empire to disintegrate (and as argued in the section 3, the containment policy might not have been necessary to bring this about).[6] But it is

[4] For a discussion, see Quester 1977, 135-138.

[5] Curiously, when American troops were being sent to Saudi Arabia in 1990 to deter a possible Iraqi attack on that country, American leaders were greatly concerned that their as yet outnumbered forces might be attacked at any moment (Woodward 1991, 274, 304). No one, it appears, considered that a would-be aggressor might find the example of the American reaction to the Pearl Harbor attack to be sobering. On this issue, see Mueller 1994, 123.

[6] Unlike the Soviets, the Japanese may not have been planning a permanent empire. They said they were willing to promise in 1941 that after peace was established in China, they would remove their troops in 25 years (Ike 1967, 210).

difficult to find people who think that fighting a war like World War II (even one without nuclear weapons) to speed that process up would have been worthwhile.

A similar firm, patient policy of cold war rather that hot might well have worked with the Japanese after Pearl Harbor--and probably much more quickly than it did against the Soviets. They were already vastly overextended by their intervention in China, begun in 1937. Their army there of a million and a half had made many initial gains but, as Willmott notes, it "was bogged down in a war it could not win. It did not have the strength to advance, and in any case there were no worthwhile objectives it could hope to secure. It could not force the `final battle' that would end the war. It could not properly pacify the areas it held. It was tied to the railways and major lines of communication, and was draining the industrial and financial resources of Japan without adequate compensation. The army had impaled itself in an impossible position, and had produced a disastrous situation for Japan herself" (Willmott 1982, 55; see also Fujiwara 1990, 155; Butow 1961, 129).

The economic drain on Japan was considerable. Military expenditures skyrocketed from 9 percent of gross national expenditures to 38 percent (Nakamura 1983, 39) and the difference was made up by the Japanese consumer: by 1941 real consumption per capita had dropped almost 20 percent from 1937 levels (Gleason 1965, 436). As early as 1938 Japan's export industries had become paralyzed, and its ability to import needed materials had plummeted. Production of almost all commodities, including steel, either fell or else rose much more slowly than the military required, and shortages of labor, especially skilled labor, developed (Barnhart 1987, 91, 96, 200-1).

Unable to bring themselves to retreat from China, and under severe economic pressure from the United States and from their own misguided economic policies, the Japanese leaders accused members of the Planning Board (which had been spewing out dire analyses and predictions) of communist activity and arrested them. Then in late 1941, although already stretched thin militarily, Japan lashed out, going to war, as Michael Barnhart notes, "on a shoestring--and a ragged one at that" (1987, 200, 238, 269). Besides attacking Pearl Harbor, Japan conquered huge areas in Southeast Asia, including some vital oil fields in the Dutch East Indies, which they hoped would provide them with adequate resources to maintain their farflung ventures.

Although these advances began with some impressive and famous victories, they hardly resolved Japan's problems. The Chinese continued to fight, and the Japanese now found themselves in charge of an empire that was even larger and even more unwieldy than before. Among the difficulties was their inability to become effective colonists, and the brutal conquerors mainly inspired an intense hatred among the imperialized peoples which in many cases still persists and which at the time guaranteed resistance and hostility and exacted enormous occupation costs.[7]

Moreover, the advance by no means solved Japan's oil problem. In principle, there was enough oil in the newly conquered areas to supply Japan's needs, but the country did not have a tanker fleet big enough to transport all the oil it required. In addition it took time and effort to get the new oil fields into production, and in the meantime it was necessary to draw on the dwindling reserves. As a result, two prewar Japanese studies calculated that even assuming there were no major naval engagements for three full years, the Japanese would be faced with a major oil crisis, or worse, by 1944 (Willmott 1982, 68-70).

Somewhat related was the problem of merchant shipping upon which the island empire depended. Before the war 40 percent of Japan's imports were delivered on foreign ships. In its attacks Japan was able

[7] As Willmott observes, "the very morale that sustained the Japanese in the advance gave rise to a casual and blind cruelty at almost every turn, and these actions ensured a lasting enmity on the part of subject peoples who might have been won over with decent treatment" (1982, 91).

to capture some merchant ships, but it was still confronted with a 25 percent drop in shipping. It could build new ships and refit old ones, but this was a slow and agonizing process at best because its shipyards were small and inefficient and because of the huge demands the military was making on the industrial sector. In its conquests Japan gained the resources of Southeast Asia, but because of these shipping reductions, its own resources actually declined (Willmott 1982, 88-89, 451).

Thus Imperial Japan was in deep trouble, and it was accordingly an auspicious target for a policy of containment. It was far more so, it would seem, than the postwar Soviet Union. The Soviets expanded their empire only marginally and in contiguous areas, and they did not have to rely on lengthy and vulnerable seas lanes for survival. Moreover, the people they conquered had little fight left in them and in many cases initially welcomed the conquerors. As suggested in section 3, the strains in their empire really began to show only after they had unwisely expanded their overseas commitments in the late 1970s. Even without direct American military efforts, Japan's huge empire in Asia was already costly and unwieldy, and in time it might have become as debilitating, as obsolete, and as pointless as the British, French, or Dutch ones there.[8] And eventually Japan might have come to realize this.

It is true that at the time of Pearl Harbor, Japan was in the control of a fanatical, militaristic group, and it is true that there was a considerable war fever among many elements in the population--though no one was anxious to have a war with the United States if it could be avoided (Fujiwara 1990, 157-59; Butow 1961, 167, 251-52, 332-33). But the grip of the romantic, imperial militarists in Japan was neither complete nor necessarily permanent. Substantial misgivings about the enervating, even disastrous, expansionary policy and about the "holy war" in China were being felt not only by some top Japanese civilians, but also by some important military leaders and by the Emperor. It seems entirely conceivable that these critics would have been able to moderate, and in time quietly to dismember, the frustratingly costly imperial policy.

It is also true that the war thoroughly and (we hope) permanently destroyed the militaristic group in Japan and its values. The postwar experience with the Soviet Union suggests (though of course it does not guarantee) that favorable results could have been achieved eventually through a policy of containment rather than war. The Soviet Union at the outset of the Cold War was similarly controlled by a set of dangerous, expansionary ideologues, but, as addressed in section 3, minds eventually changed as Soviet policies proved hopelessly unproductive.

This experience suggests, then, that the U.S. might well have been able productively to exacerbate Japan's dilemma of overexpansion helping to impel it to retreat from its empire. Moreover, this might have been accomplished with far less misery and bloodshed by using containment rather than war.[9]

The questionable "gains" of the Pacific War. What, after all, was gained by using hot rather than cold war to cause the Japanese to abandon their empire? Ronald Spector notes that the United States managed to acquire "a strong democratic ally in the new Japan" (1985, 561). This can, I suppose, be accounted a gain, but it cannot be entirely irrelevant to point out that in order to achieve the liberalization of Japan it was necessary to depopulate the country by some two million souls. Moreover, there had long been a substantial impetus toward liberalism in Japan, and in calmer times this might well have revived,

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[8] On this issue, see also Russett 1972, 44-62. For another critique of American entry into the war, see Small 1980, 215-67. See also Morison 1963, 45.

[9] Although the Japanese expansion in Asia cut the United States off from the sources of some important raw materials, these supplies were not crucial, as Roosevelt had publicly pointed out in 1940 (and as was to be demonstrated during the war) because the United States could produce synthetic rubber, acquire tin from Bolivia, and produce more manganese at home. See Utley 1985, 85.

as eventually it revived (after a long period of dedicated suppression) in Russia.

In defending the Pacific War, Spector also argues that because of it the region became "more safe and stable than the older system in which Japan, the Soviet Union, and the European powers struggled for supremacy in a weak and divided China." Things are generally looking up in much of Asia today, but for the first few decades of the postwar era most of the area did not experience much in the way of safety and stability. Rather it was the scene of bloody civil and international war, economic and social mismanagement often of spectacular proportions, and occasionally outright genocide. And Spector would not want to trade, he says, "the vibrant, rapidly growing new nations of Asia--like Singapore, Taiwan, India, and Malaysia--for the stagnant, impoverished, and exploited colonies of the 1930s" (1985, 561). But would those colonies have remained stagnant without the war? And would Spector or anyone else similarly prefer present-day North Korea or Burma?

Above all, there is the issue of China where most of the population of the former Japanese empire lived. A major reason the United States fought the Pacific War was to keep the heroic, persecuted, war-racked Chinese from being dominated by a vicious regime. As Schroeder puts it, "There is no longer any real doubt that the war came about over China" (1958, 209); and Morison observes, "The fundamental reason for America's going to war with Japan was our insistence on the integrity of China" (1963, 45). In discussing the drive toward war, Bruce Russett also stresses the importance of China in the perceptions of Roosevelt and his advisers who had become convinced that "Japanese ambitions in China posed a long-term threat to American interests," were affected by the "sentimental American attitude toward China as a `ward'," and may have seen China as a significant economic partner--although "by embargoing Japan in 1941 the United States was giving up an export trade at least four times that with China" (1972, 58-60).[10]

In the war the United States devastated Japan and saved China--for Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communists. The imperial Japanese occupiers were often cruel and murderous, but Mao seems to have surpassed them substantially in callousness, incompetence, and sheer viciousness (as well as in hostility toward the United States). In the war from 1937 to 1945, the Chinese may have lost three million people or more.[11] But in its first three years alone, the Communist regime probably executed two million (Meisner 1986, 81).[12] Then, in the four years after the start of the Great Leap Forward of 1958, the regime inflicted on the Chinese people the greatest famine in history, one that is now estimated to have taken 30 million lives (Ashton et al. 1984). It seems difficult to escape the conclusion that China could hardly have

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[10] Utley sees the China issue as less central, but he agrees it triggered the war: "it was the issue of China that in the final hours stood as an insurmountable obstacle between Japan and the United States" (1985, 177). "The final point of disagreement between the two countries was on the withdrawal of Japanese forces from China. If war was to be prevented, Japan had to yield on this point" (Fujiwara 1990, 154). "The chief issue between Japan and the United States was the future of China" (Small 1980, 238).

[11] An estimate of three million military and civilian deaths is given by Sivard (1987, 30); while Messenger estimates 2,500,000 (1989, 243). Battle deaths for the Nationalist Chinese are estimated at 1,310,224; Encyclopedia Britannica, 1991 edition, vol. 29, 1023. Some put total Chinese battle deaths as high as 2,200,000: Snyder 1982, 126. Encyclopedia Americana accepts this higher estimate and then observes that "Chinese civilian losses are unknown but probably numbered several million"; 1988 ed., Vol. 29, 530.

[12] Demographer John S. Aird notes that, while estimates generally range from one to three million, some are much higher: one Hong Kong source puts the death toll at 10 million and quotes a 1981 Chinese journal that claims 20 million people were executed or died of unnatural causes during what it calls the "anti-rightist" and "people's communication" periods (1990, 2, 111n3).

been worse off in Japanese hands. Or, to put it another way, even if the containment policy retrospectively proposed here had not been successful eventually in forcing Japan out of China, it is not at all clear that China would have been less fortunate under that fate than it was under the one supplied by the liberating war.

And it should also be pointed out that, having saved Asia from Japanese imperialism at great cost, the United States was soon back in the area centrally participating in the two bloodiest wars of the postwar era. In Korea--where it now found itself killing, rather than aiding, the Chinese--around three million civilian and military lives were lost. In Vietnam, some two million perished.[13] And insofar as the United States entered the war to preserve China as a trading partner or opportunity, the war proved to be an utter failure for decades.

The argument here deals with the Pacific War, not the European one, and it obviously relies heavily on hindsight: American decision-makers could not possibly have been able to anticipate the postwar horrors. Moreover, I am not arguing that American participation in the Pacific War was necessary for the various horrors in Asia to have taken place--they might well have happened in any case.

But, given what we now know, was it wise to pursue war after Pearl Harbor? Was the vicious and gruesome Pacific War worth it? If the point of the war was to force Japan to retreat from its empire and to encourage it to return to more liberal ways, a policy of cold war might well eventually have had the same result at a far lower overall cost. If the point of the war was to prevent further horrors and somehow to bring peace, justice, freedom, and stability to the rest of Asia, the war was a substantial failure. From that perspective it certainly seems that Pearl Harbor, which propelled the United States heedlessly into that terrible war, was a disaster after all.

3. The Cold War

During the Cold War, it seems clear in hindsight, the United States and sometimes its allies persistently and often vastly exaggerated both the capacity of international Communism to inflict damage in carrying out its threatening revolutionary goals and its willingness to accept risk to do so. In this assessment, the lessons, or supposed lessons, of Pearl Harbor loomed large for many people.[14]

The results of the exaggeration--or proclivity to err on the safe side--were economically and occasionally militarily costly, and they were often emotionally draining.

The threat. This is not to deny that Communism, a coordinated, conspiratorial, subversive, revolutionary, and state-based international movement, did pose a threat. According to its core ideology it was out to destroy capitalism and democracy. Moreover, it explicitly and repeatedly declared that violence--in particular, revolutionary violence--would be required to accomplish this central goal. There has been a considerable debate about the degree to which ideology actually impelled Soviet policy.[15] However, over the decades prominent Soviet leaders repeatedly made statements like the following:

Lenin: "The existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with the imperialist states for a

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[13] These estimates of military and civilian deaths are from Sivard 1987, 31. Battle deaths alone have been estimated at 2 million for Korea and 1.2 million for Vietnam: see Singer 1991, 60-61.

[14] For example, Albert Wohlstetter's highly influential thesis that the balance of power was "delicate" rested on the assumption that the Soviet enemy could potentially come to be as clever, lucky, diabolical, and desperate as Japan was in 1941, a thesis conveniently embellished by recommendations for his wife's excellent book on Pearl Harbor (A. Wohlstetter 1959, and seminars conducted by him at UCLA in the early 1960s; R. Wohlstetter 1962).

[15] For an able analysis and discussion, see Gould-Davies 1999.

long time is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end. And before that end supervenes, a series of frightful collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states will be inevitable" (Burin 1963, 337).

Lenin: "As soon as we are strong enough to fight the whole of capitalism, we shall at once take it by the neck" (Leffler 1994, 17).

Stalin: "The goal is to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country, using it as a base for the overthrow of imperialism in all countries" (Historicus 1949, 198).

Stalin: "To eliminate the inevitability of war, it is necessary to destroy imperialism" (Taubman 1982, 224).[16]

Khrushchev: "peaceful coexistence" means "intense economic, political, and ideological struggle between the proletariat and the aggressive forces of imperialism in the world arena" (Hudson et al. 1961, 214).

Khrushchev: "All the socialist countries and the international working-class and Communist movement recognize their duty to render the fullest moral and material assistance to the peoples fighting to free themselves from imperialist and colonial tyranny" (Hudson et al. 1961, 196).

There is some possibility, of course, that pronouncements like these are simply theological boilerplate. However, after they have been recited millions of times in speeches, books, leaflets, brochures, letterhead, tracts, training manuals, banners, pamphlets, proclamations, announcements, billboards, handbooks, bumper stickers, and T shirts, one might begin to suspect that the sentiments could just possibly actually reflect true thought processes.[17]

At any rate, since they are explicitly and lethally threatening, responsible leaders of capitalist countries ought, at least out of simple prudence, to take them seriously. And it seems clear that they did. For example, the ideological threat was stressed in the quintessential and seminal declaration of U.S. policy toward international Communism: George Kennan's "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," published in Foreign Affairs in 1947. The article is concerned about Soviet military strength, but it argues that what makes that strength threatening is an essentially expansionist ideology. In the first paragraphs of the article, Kennan outlines "the outstanding features of Communist thought." According to Kennan, these include the following notions: 1) "the capitalist system of production is a nefarious one which inevitably leads to the exploitation of the working class by the capital-owning class;" 2) "capitalism contains the seeds of its own destruction" which must "result inevitably and inescapably in a revolutionary transfer of power to the working class;" 3) countries where revolutions have been successful will "rise against the remaining capitalist world;" 4) capitalism will not "perish without proletarian revolution;" and 5) "a final push" is "needed from a revolutionary proletariat movement in order to tip over the tottering structure" (1947, 566-67.)

And others readily accepted that characterization. For example, in his last presidential press conference, Ronald Reagan was quite clear about what he felt the Cold War was about: "the expansionary

[16] As Taubman points out, Stalin was referring to wars *between* capitalist states, something often neglected when the West examined this statement. Nevertheless, even taking than into account, the declaration clearly remains profoundly threatening to capitalist states. On this issue more generally, see Burin 1963.

[17] For the forceful argument that the sentiments reflected real ideological zeal and importantly affected policy during the Cold War, see Macdonald 1995/96.

policy that was instituted in the Communist revolution, that their goal must be a one-world Communist state."[18] And in speeches in 1989, George H. W. Bush noted that the policy of containment required "checking the Soviet Union's expansionist aims, in the hope that the Soviet system itself would one day be forced to confront its internal contradictions."[19] Similar statements were frequently made by such leading Cold Warriors as Winston Churchill, John Foster Dulles, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Margaret Thatcher, and George Shultz (see Mueller 2004-05).

The reality. But to say that international Communism was threatening is not to say that it had the capacity to carry the threat out.[20] For the most part it proved, as Kennan noted, to carry the seeds of its own destruction. Although there were times in which it seemed to be, in Nikita Khrushchev's phrase, "the wave of the future," it eventually collapsed of its own weight and lack of appeal and of the failure of its misguided, even romantic, worldview. In retrospect and with the benefit of hindsight, it seems clear that although policies designed to contain and counter this threat may have sometimes speeded this process along, the fears the policies were based on were often excessive and overwrought and sometimes counterproductive. This is suggested by a brief sketch of some of the Cold War experience.

In the aftermath of World War II, Communist parties in Western Europe enjoyed a fair amount of credibility and good will. They had been admitted to cabinets in France and Italy, but their influence soon declined considerably as suspicion of, and then coordinated opposition to, international Communism grew in the West. In approaching voters and constituents, Communist parties in Western democracies were constantly belabored for their theoretical adherence to a doctrine that exalted revolutionary violence as the only method for gaining political control, and unsuccessful efforts by French and Italian Communists in the late 1940s to use extralegal means like strikes and riots to improve their political position served to reinforce this wariness. Various maneuvers by their Moscow allies, such as the Czech coup of 1948 and the Berlin blockade of 1948-49, also produced that effect. Still, when the Communists successfully fomented the coup in democratic Czechoslovakia, there were great fears that this would soon be followed by further Communist takeovers in Europe, especially in Italy and France. But it was not. No coups took place. Instead, the appeal of Communism in Western Europe continued to decline. The threat of internal subversion and of revolution in the developed world proved to be minor.

Communist aggression in Korea in 1950 was deeply alarming. President Harry Truman immediately concluded that "The attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war" (Shulman 1963, 150). As Bernard Brodie recalls, the Joint Chiefs "were utterly convinced that the Russians were using Korea as a feint to cause us to deploy our forces there while they prepared to a launch a 'general' (total) war against the United States through a major attack on Europe" (1973, 63). They weren't. In fact, the invasion seems to have been a limited probe at a point of perceived vulnerability. It is possible a Communist success there might have been encouraged further such ventures (Mueller 1989, 130-31). However, the episode does seem to have been something of an outlier, and there have been no Koreas since Korea.

Or there was the almost hysterical reaction to the Soviet Union's dramatic launch in 1957 of Sputnik, the first artificial space satellite. Deeply alarmed by that development and by the Soviet Union's

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[18] New York Times, 9 December 1988, A18.

[19] Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush, 1989 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1990), 602, see also 541.

[20] On this issue, see in particular Johnson 1994.

apparent economic progress, the hastily-assembled, if august and authoritative, President's Commission on National Goals declared the democratic world to be in "grave danger" from Communism's "great capacity for political organization and propaganda" and from the "specious appeal of Communist doctrine to peoples eager for rapid escape from poverty" (1960, 1-2). And the CIA helpfully extrapolated in 1960 that the Soviet Union's Gross National Product might be triple that of the United States by the year 2000 (Reeves 1993, 54).[21] In time, such fears, to say the least, proved absurd.

It was feared that Castro's 1959 victory in Cuba and his subsequent embrace of Soviet Communism would be repeated all over Latin America. It wasn't. The disastrously overreactive U.S.-sponsored invasion at Cuba's Bay of Pigs in 1961 did boost Castro's star for a while. But, over time, Communism and Castroism in Latin America lost their appeal.

When the United States massively escalated its efforts in Vietnam in 1965, there was widespread agreement with the spooky views of David Halberstam, a future war critic, who argued that Vietnam was a "strategic country in a key area...perhaps one of only five or six nations in the world that is truly vital to U.S. interests," and that if America failed there "the pressure of Communism on the rest of Southeast Asia will intensify" and "throughout the world the enemies of the West will be encouraged to try insurgencies like the one in Vietnam."[22] Or as reporter Neil Sheehan, another future critic of American policy in Vietnam, put it in 1964, "The fall of Southeast Asia to China or its denial to the West over the next decade because of the repercussions from an American defeat in Vietnam would amount to a strategic disaster of the first magnitude." Only the United States, he argued, could meet "the Chinese Communist challenge for hegemony in Asia." These fears, so deadly in their consequences, proved to be exaggerated.

When the Soviet Union invaded neighboring Afghanistan in 1979, many saw it as an aggressive ploy relevant to the entire Middle East and South Asia. Alarmed that the Soviet probe might merely be a prologue to further adventures in the oil-rich Persian Gulf area, President Jimmy Carter sternly threatened to use "any means necessary" to counter a further Soviet military move in the area, a threat basically reiterated by his replacement, Ronald Reagan, the next year (Halperin 1987, 45). It was the first time Soviet forces had been sent directly into a country outside their empire since 1945; it was also the last and proved to be a disaster for the international Communist movement.

Under Carter, and even more so under his successor, Ronald Reagan, the defense budget was escalated under the popular assumption, pushed, among others, by a group of august doomsayers who ominously called themselves the Committee on the Present Danger, that somehow the Soviet Union's military capacity had vastly and threateningly increased. There were also extravagant claims that the Soviet Union was willing to accept massive casualties to acquire world domination (Johnson 1994, ch. 6). Events were to prove this budgetarily costly fear, based on what Brodie at the time labeled "worst case fantasies" (1978, 68), to be much exaggerated.

Evaluating the success of containment. In the 1980s under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviets did mellow their foreign policy decisively, and shortly after that the whole country imploded. It is natural to conclude from this experience that the wisdom of the containment strategy and of the defense buildup has been affirmed. But while those policies *intended* a certain desirable effect, it does not follow that they *caused* it.

In fact, the policy of containment is logically flawed. If the Soviet system really was as rotten as Kennan and others more or less accurately surmised, then the best policy would not have been to contain

[21] On the Soviet Union's apparent economic strength at the time, see Yergin and Stanislaw 1998, 22, 272.

[22] Halberstam 1965, 315, 319. Oddly, these passages are not included in the 1988 reprint edition of the book.

it, but to give it enough rope--to let it expand until it reached the point of terminal overstretch. Indeed, one of Kennan's favorite quotes comes from Gibbon: "there is nothing more contrary to nature than the attempt to hold in obedience distant provinces" (Gaddis 1982, 47; Gellman 1984, 53). If that is true, an expansive country will discover this lesson faster if it is allowed to gather in new distant provinces than if it is contained. That is, if the goal was to speed the Soviet Union's inevitable rendezvous with its decadent destiny, it might have been wiser--logically, at least--to let it expand to the rotting point.

In fact, what ultimately helped to bring about the mellowing of Soviet expansionism was not containment's success, but its failure. Wherever they expanded, the Soviets sought, often brutally, to suppress religions, nationalisms, and freedoms. In 1947, Kennan found it "unlikely" that the 100 million Soviets could permanently hold down not only their own minorities, but "some 90 millions of Europeans with a higher cultural level and with long experience in resistance to foreign rule" (Gaddis 1982, 43; Taubman 1982, 170). By the 1980s, the Soviets' empire in Eastern Europe had indeed became a severe economic drain and a psychic problem (Bunce 1985). However, this desirable development cannot be credited to Western policy which strenuously opposed the occupation from the beginning.

Then in 1975 three countries--Cambodia, South Vietnam, and Laos--toppled into the Communist camp. Partly out of fear of repeating the Vietnam experience, the United States went into a sort of containment funk and watched from the sidelines as the Soviet Union, in what seems in retrospect to have been remarkably like a fit of absent mindedness, opportunistically gathered a set of third world countries into its imperial embrace: Angola in 1976, Mozambique and Ethiopia in 1977, South Yemen and Afghanistan in 1978, Grenada and Nicaragua in 1979. The Soviets at first were quite gleeful about these acquisitions--the "correlation of forces," they concluded, had magically and decisively shifted in their direction (Breslauer 1987, 436-37).

However, far from whetting their appetite for more, these gains ultimately not only satiated their appetite for expansion but, given the special properties of the morsels they happened to consume, the process served to give the ravenous expanders a troubling case of indigestion. For almost all the new acquisitions soon became economic and political basket cases, fraught with dissension, financial mismanagement, and civil warfare. In 1979 the situation in neighboring Afghanistan had so deteriorated that the Soviets found it necessary to send in troops, and they then descended into a long period of enervating warfare there. As each member of their newly expanded empire turned toward the Soviet Union for maternal warmth and sustenance, many Soviets began to wonder about the wisdom of the venture. Perhaps, it began to seem, they would have been better off contained.[23]

The "internal contradictions" the Soviets came to confront, then, were a direct result of misguided domestic and foreign policies, and these contradictions would have come about no matter what policy the West chose to pursue. Soviet domestic problems derived from decades of mismanagement, mindless brutality, and fundamental misconceptions about basic economic and social realities. Their defense dilemmas came from a conspiratorial worldview that created external enemies and then exaggerated the degree to which the enemies would use war to destroy them. And their foreign policy failures stemmed from a fundamentally flawed, and often highly romantic, conception of the imperatives of history and of the degree to which foreign peoples would find appeal in Communism. It took forty years but, plagued by

[23] Charles Wolf and his colleagues at the RAND Corporation estimated in 1983 that the cost of the Soviet empire (excluding the costs of maintaining troops in East Europe, but including the costs of the war in Afghanistan) rose enormously between 1971 and 1980 from about one percent of its Gross National Product to nearly three percent when measured in dollars, or from under two percent to about seven percent when measured in rubles. (By comparison, insofar as the United States could be said to have had a comparable empire, the costs were less than one half of one percent of its GNP.)

economic and social disasters and changes, the Soviets finally were able to rise above ideology, embrace grim reality, and adopt serious reform.[24]

The Western policy of containment may have helped to keep some countries free from Communism, and it may have further reduced the already low danger of major war. But insofar as it was devised to force the Soviets to confront their inherent contradictions, the history of the Cold War suggests a curious paradox. Kennan and the other early containment theorists were correct to conclude that Soviet Communism is a singularly undesirable and fundamentally flawed form of government, and they were right to anticipate that it would inevitably have to mellow when it could no longer avoid confronting its inherent contradictions.[25] But Soviet Communism might have reached this point somewhat earlier if its natural propensity to expand had been tolerated rather than contained.

The enemy within: domestic Communists and imported terrorists. The best-remembered threat presented by Soviet Communism concerned its war-fighting abilities and, in particular, its apparent capacity to annihilate, or very nearly annihilate, the United States and its allies with its huge nuclear arsenal. This threat could be deterred, if an adequate degree of rationality held, by the West's own nuclear capacity to visit unacceptable devastation upon the USSR in retaliation.

However, the principal threat international Communism presented derived not from its military capacity, but rather from its judicious and determined encouragement of what was often called "indirect aggression" to include agitation, sabotage, conspiracy, internal subversion, espionage, and focused revolutionary violence, all with the goal of undermining and ultimately destroying both democracy and capitalism in other countries.

The Communists were secretive neither about their favored methods nor about their ultimate goals: indeed, as suggested earlier, they were central to their ideological worldview. Moreover, in some places--quite strikingly in Russia in 1917, Czechoslovakia in 1948 and in Cuba after 1959--they were, in various ways, successful in working from within to topple unfriendly regimes.

Of concern was that these techniques could be successful even in the United States, and the quest for "the enemy within" was a prominent preoccupation, particularly during what has come to be called the "McCarthy era," a period that accompanied and followed a set of spectacular public scandals in which some Americans were accused, correctly it seems, of having spied for the Soviet Union and of supplying it with secret documents including materials helpful in its building of its atomic bomb.

In principle, at least, this threat was far more nearly "existential" than anything presented later by international terrorists--or by earlier ones either, such at the anarchists who caused such tumult and destructive overreaction in the United States early in the twentieth century (see Jessen 2002). But while Communism possessed the will and some of the skills to overthrow Western democracy and capitalism, it is clear in retrospect that concerns about its capacity to do so were vastly exaggerated. A tiny fringe

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[24] However, it does not follow that economic and social travail necessarily lead to a mellowing of ideology. Leaders, in this case Gorbachev, had to *choose* that policy route. Faced with the same dilemmas, a conservative leader might have stuck to the faith while suffering gradual decline (like the Ottoman empire) or one might have adopted more modest reforms to maintain the essential quality of the system and the privileges of its well-entrenched elite (Rush 1993; see also Checkel 1997; English 2000; Mueller 2004-05).

[25] However, Kennan should not be given credit for predicting how long this would take or the precise mechanism by which it would come about. He seems to have expected the contest to last some 10 or 15 years, an estimate that probably stemmed from his belief that a key problem for the Soviet Union lay in "the uncertainty involved in the transfer of power" and was thus unlikely to survive a succession crisis after the death of its leader, Josif Stalin, then nearing 70 years of age (1947, 576-79).

group, it never garnered more than microscopic support within the United States, and its successes proved to be few, fleeting, inconsequential, and ultimately self-destructive.[26]

There are resonances to the post-9/11 response to terrorism in the United States (and also to the country's earlier overreaction to anarchism and to Communism in the "Red Scare" period after World War I). As with the quest for domestic Communists, law enforcement agencies are preoccupied with the hunt for infiltrated terrorists. Yet, despite continuous dire warnings and despite the fact that there have been thousands of arrests, no terrorist "sleeper" cells been uncovered. It is almost enough to tempt one to apply the experience with domestic Communism and to suggest that, perhaps, there is little or nothing to find and that the quest is a substantial waste of money and effort. This perspective is considered more fully in sections 6 and 7 below.

4. Nuclear and other anxieties during the Cold War

Although the central focus remained on Communism, there were other anxieties during and toward the end of the Cold War which proved to be based on exaggerated fears.

Nuclear anxieties. Throughout most of the time, there was great concern that somehow a new world war was all but inevitable due to the existence of nuclear weapons and to the depth of the hostility between nuclear East and nuclear West. As the doomsday clock on the cover of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists kept suggesting, many thought calamity was imminent and/or nearly certain. The common images were of the sword of Damocles and of two scorpions in a bottle.

Thus historian Arnold Toynbee confidently proclaimed, "In our recent Western history war has been following war in an ascending order of intensity; and today it is already apparent that the War of 1939-45 was not the climax of this crescendo movement" (1950, 4). In 1945, Ambassador Joseph Grew, one of America's most perceptive diplomats, concluded that "a future war with the Soviet Union is as certain as anything in this world" (quoted, Gaddis 1987, 218n). Public opinion polls conducted in the United States in the mid-1940s characteristically found very substantial percentages opining that the next world war would occur within twenty-five years (Mueller 1979, 303-7), and Albert Einstein was certain that "Unless we are able, in the near future, to abolish the mutual fear of military aggression, we are doomed" (1960, 417). Edward Teller, a physicist who was later to be instrumental in the development of the hydrogen bomb, felt that world government "alone can give us freedom and peace," and philosopher Bertrand Russell was equally certain: "It is entirely clear," he declared, "that there is only one way in which great wars can be permanently prevented and that is the establishment of an international government with a monopoly of serious armed force" (Grodzins and Rabinowitch 1963, 101, 124).

In 1960, strategist and futurist Herman Kahn wrote, "I have a firm belief that unless we have more serious and sober thought on various aspects of the strategic problem...we are not going to reach the year 2000--and maybe not even the year 1965--without a cataclysm" (1960, x). In 1979, realist Hans J. Morgenthau concluded that "the world is moving ineluctably towards a third world war--a strategic nuclear war. I do not believe that anything can be done to prevent it. The international system is simply too unstable to survive for long" (Boyle 1985, 73). Three years later historian William McNeill advocated that a "global sovereign power willing and able to enforce a monopoly of atomic weaponry" be fabricated because the "alternative appears to be sudden and total annihilation of the human species" (1982, 383-84), and Jonathan Schell proclaimed, "One day--and it is hard to believe that it will not be soon--we will make our choice. Either we will sink into the final coma and end it all or, as I trust and believe, we will awaken to the truth of our peril...and rise up to cleanse the earth of nuclear weapons" (1982, 231). As late as the

[26] Estimates for membership in the American Communist party are 80,000 in 1945, 54,000 in early 1950, 25,000 in 1953, 20,000 in 1955, and 3,000 in 1958 (Shannon 1959, 3, 218, 360).

mid-1980s, polls found that 20 to 37 percent of the American population considered the fear of war to be the most important problem facing the country (Mueller 1994, 211; see also Mueller 2002a, 151-52).

World War III never happened, and, it seems, never even got close.[27] Huge numbers of nuclear weapons continue to exist in the arsenals of East and West, but fears they will be massively slung at each other have vanished. We have neither cleansed the earth of nuclear weapons nor descended into Schell's "final coma."

The Iran hostage crisis. When 52 American diplomatic personnel were taken hostage by an unstable and ill-directed regime in Iran in 1979, the United States went through over a year--444 days by the exacting count used at the time--of official and popular angst until the hostages were returned safely after months of circuitous negotiation. The slogan popularly applied to the episode by the media, "America Held Hostage," suggests the degree to which a relatively minor incident was exaggerated.

In his autobiography, President Jimmy Carter still remains preoccupied with the crisis and refers to it dramatically as "one of the most intricate financial and political problems ever faced by any nation." At stake, he points out, were "the lives of 52 precious human beings" as well as "almost 12 billion dollars of Iranian assets" (1982, 3).

Looked at broadly, the crisis seems hardly to have been worth the obsession. At the time the country was losing 52 lives every 11 hours on its highways, and the federal government was spending $12 billion about every week. Without being too cavalier about the understandable concern for the lives of the hostages, it seems reasonable to point out that the chief foreign policy importance of the hostage-taking was that the terrorization of diplomats was being sanctioned by a *government*. Foreign relations have depended for centuries on the notion that diplomats--even in wartime--will be immune from such persecution. Had the Iranian government's policy become commonplace, the whole of international relations might have broken down. But, of course, it quickly became apparent that nothing like this was going to happen. The Iranian situation was essentially unique--it was a bizarre, pointless, self-destructive act by a fanatical government that had only a very tentative grasp on reality, on its supporters, or on its own destiny.

Nonetheless, the issue became all-consumingly important to the leaders and the media of the most powerful nation in history, even though giving it so much attention had the perverse effect of increasing the Iranian regime's prestige among its supporters and probably helped harden the issue into a macho test of wills that became much more intractable.

An alternative approach to the problem was available, but it apparently was never seriously considered. Instead of overreacting by imitating Iran's pettiness and hysteria, the United States could have adopted an approach that has sometimes been dubbed "creative inattention." Responding to Iran with the contempt it so richly deserved, the president could have assigned some dignified citizen to head a well-staffed commission to deal patiently with the issue, ordering the commission to report regularly. The president could then have distanced himself and his top advisers from the issue, arguing with great validity that he could not allow the daily workings of his great country to be disrupted by an act of mindless, indeed infantile, fanaticism in a distant country. In retrospect, in fact, Carter's secretary of state, Cyrus Vance, has suggested such an approach would probably have been wise (1983, 380).

There are probably several reasons why this somewhat circumspect approach was never considered at the time. For one thing, no one knew, of course, that the crisis would last so long. It seemed reasonable to expect that it would be resolved within a few days, or at most weeks (Carter 1982, 458;

[27] For the argument that the world was not at all on the "brink" during the Cuban Missile Crisis, see Mueller 1989, 152-55. See also Taubman 2003, 563, 566-67, 573.

Brzezinski 1983, 478). Thus to focus the full attention of the government on it for a while may have seemed a justifiable use of resources. To a degree, then, the policymakers became trapped by their own initiatives. And, as Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, reports in his memoirs, out of frustration military approaches became ever more attractive--though there was no guarantee such ventures would not cost more "precious human beings" than they would save (1983, 485).

Presumably domestic politics were not entirely irrelevant to Carter's considerations. Before the crisis his approval ratings were at a very low ebb and there was a strong possibility his party would nominate someone else--specifically Senator Ted Kennedy--in the forthcoming presidential election. The rally-round-the-flag aspects of the hostage crisis caused Carter's popularity to soar some 29 percentage points and this, together with some politically inept statements by the senator, soon assured Carter of his party's nomination. Ultimately, of course, the hostage crisis--still unresolved at the time of the election in 1980--probably contributed to Carter's defeat. But had he been able to negotiate the hostages' release during the campaign, or had his April 1980 rescue attempt of the hostages been successful, he would have been much more likely to win.

But it would be unfair to suggest Carter manipulated the hostage crisis purely for his own domestic political benefit. While it is difficult to imagine he was unaware of such potential benefits, memoirs of members of his staff confirm that he soon became emotionally committed on the issue, and it seems likely he is sincere in his autobiography when he expresses how "overwhelming" his "private feelings" were on the issue, and how he sometimes felt the hostages were "like part of my own family." Such all-consuming compassion, however, while admirable in its way, may not always be entirely desirable in a chief of state. If the "holding of the American hostages...cast a pall over my own life," as Carter recalls, that was because Carter let it do so, not because that reaction was somehow required by objective circumstance (Carter 1982, 4).

The hostage episode was also a colossal media event. Cause and effect are a bit muddled in this case: perhaps the Carter people gave the event crisis priority in part because the press built it up so, perhaps the media became so obsessed with the issue in part because the administration insisted it was a crisis. But to a considerable extent both administration and press were reflecting and responding to a public sense of outrage.

The American public's deep concern about Americans held hostage resonates with earlier historical instances. For example, the only acceptable solution to the Vietnam war was one in which American prisoners of war in Hanoi were returned (in a 1971 poll 68 percent favored a withdrawal from the war, but only 11 percent favored withdrawal if it "would threaten the lives or safety" of American POWs), and to a considerable degree Japanese mistreatment of American prisoners during World War II made something like Hiroshima all but inevitable (Mueller 2002a, 156-57).

But while this public reaction may be a strong one, it does not follow that leaders and press must constantly pander to it. Yet, as the hostage episode dragged on exhaustingly, the president felt he had to let himself be seen devoting his full attention to the issue, and the media, increasingly desperate for something to report in the stalemated crisis, kept themselves busy by systematically interviewing nearly every relative, friend, acquaintance, and grade-school teacher of each hostage.

Just because an event is dramatic doesn't mean all opportunities for clear thinking and leadership evaporate, however. While the public's resentment and outrage were understandable, a dignified response to the provocation might well have been politically possible. In general, the people show a good deal of common sense and can be expected to understand a difficult situation when it is sensibly explained to them. Thus they might be convinced to favor a mature approach, rather than one stressing sanctimonious posturing and empty bravado.

Hostages and terrorism under Reagan. The presidency of Ronald Reagan was also severely damaged in efforts to deal with terrorists holding hostages. In the 1980s the administration, and the media, became fixated on a handful of American hostages held by some terrorists in the midst of a chaotic civil war in Lebanon.

Hostage-taking, of course, was a direct challenge to the government of the United States which likes to think it should (and can) protect Americans wherever they wander on the globe: "I happen to believe," President Reagan declared in a press conference at the time, "that when an American citizen, any place in the world, is unjustly denied their constitutional rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, it is the responsibility of this government to restore those rights." There is nothing wrong with this position in principle. But it simply does not follow that it is the responsibility of the president and other top officials to become personally involved whenever an American is taken hostage in some distant corner of the world--any more than they become involved when one is taken hostage in New Jersey. Both crimes are the acts of minor players and, however contemptible, these activities can and should be dealt with by the authorities at the appropriate level: low-ranking diplomatic officials in the one case, local police in the other.

There is no reason to doubt the genuineness of the presidential outrage at the criminal, or of the presidential compassion for the victim, when an American is taken hostage overseas. And, as in with Carter in 1979, no politician can be expected to be completely oblivious to the political potential that attends a hostage crisis either. In the process Reagan pre-echoed post-9/11 posturing by committing a set of anti-wimpisms in which he vowed he would "put an end to terrorism." But this, of course, was an essentially impossible goal. One cannot "put an end" to terrorism any more than one can completely stop arson or drunk driving or shoplifting. Gains can be statistical at best.

Most damagingly, Reagan continued the policy of tying the prestige of the presidency to the hostage issue. In effect, therefore if any two-bit terrorist in any foreign land were to take any American hostage, he could be fairly well assured that he would draw the impassioned attention of the leader of the wealthiest and most powerful nation in history. The attention itself, in fact, constituted a substantial reward for terrorism.

For example, when one of the hostages, Reverend Benjamin Weir, was released in September 1985, Reagan insisted on announcing the release himself. In effect he was demonstrating that the actions of a few scruffy hostage-takers were of such monumental significance that he, the leader of the world's greatest power, should interrupt his schedule and take it upon himself to announce to the world what they had done for us lately. Hardly a way to discourage terrorism. Rather it's likely to make it even more fashionable, giving the perpetrators prestige and recognition far beyond their objective strength.

This conclusion holds even when dealing with states that sponsor terrorism. The devils du jour running countries like Iran and Libya at the time showed that their grasp on reality was less than firm, and that their only sure talent was for addled self-destruction. To feed their egos and to play to their already inflated self-importance was unwise and undignified. Tinhorn tyrants do not become arch-fiends capable of acts of cosmic importance just because a few of their followers or agents occasionally leave a bomb someplace or kidnap a hostage. It is possible to apply pressure to these countries without lowering the United States to their level by directly and constantly involving the president. Nevertheless two presidencies of the time were severely shaken by misguided efforts to influence Iran (or even to find coherent Iranians to talk to) on hostage issues.

It could be argued, of course, that press and public pressure on this issue is so great that the president really has no realistic choice. But there seems to have been a fair amount of public

sophistication on these matters. Even though Iran entered the public mind as a pariah state, the discovery that the administration had been secretly trying to improve Iranian relations as insurance against the future was met with broad approval and understanding. On the other hand, the discovery that Reagan had essentially reversed his own sensible policy of refusing to trade goods and arms for hostages (which, it turned out, was why Weir was released) was met with widespread disapproval--for the elemental, common-sense reason that such rewards will encourage further hostage-taking and terrorism.

The public's sophistication on these issues suggests that it is also likely to understand that, while the government does have a responsibility to aid distressed Americans abroad, the prestige and magnificence of the United States are not at stake whenever an American is kidnapped by a faceless little band of foreign fanatics. The public might also be perfectly able to understand that the problem is best left to underlings while the president attends to other concerns, like running the country.

For top officials, then, dealing with terrorists can often be an issue that is at once too hot and too unimportant to handle.

At the time, Reagan's normally judicious Secretary of State, George Shultz, was proclaiming that we needed desperately to blast somebody somewhere "on a moment's notice" even without adequate evidence in order to avoid looking like the indecisive "Hamlet of nations" (Gwertzman 1984). He apparently preferred the King Lear approach. Normally, however, only lunatics and children rail at storms; sensible people invest in umbrellas and lightning rods (see also Simon 2001, 180-86).

Eager to "do something" about terrorism, Ronald Reagan finally bombed Libya in 1986 after terrorists linked to that country had blown up a Berlin discotheque killing two people. This raid apparently led to the blowing up of an airliner by Libya-associated terrorists two years later. In the crash, 270 were killed and the airline company was toppled into bankruptcy.[28]

Fear of Japan. As the Cold War was dissipating, there emerged a dangerous new enemy on the economic front: insidiously peaceful Japan. In a major best seller, historian Paul Kennedy confidently listed a set of reasons why Japan was likely to expand faster than other major powers, stressed the country's "immensely strong" industrial bedrock and its docile and diligent work force, and predicted that, unless there were a large-scale war, an ecological disaster, or a world-wide slump like the 1930s, Japan would become "*much* more powerful" economically (1987, 461-67). Those of the then-fashionable America-in-decline and FLASH! JAPAN BUYS PEARL HARBOR! schools were quickly arguing that a need had suddenly arisen to fear not "missile vulnerability" but "semiconductor vulnerability." And "economics," they apparently seriously warned us, "is the continuation of war by other means" (Huntington 1991, 8, 10).[29] For example, there were danger signals, Samuel Huntington assured us, in the fact that Japan had become the largest provider of foreign aid and because it shockingly endowed professorships at Harvard and MIT (Huntington 1993a, 77, 80). One book of the time was even entitled, The Coming War with Japan (Friedman and LeBard, 1991).

Such concerns soon evaporated as Japan's "threatening" economy stagnated. Huntington quickly decided that, as it turned out, the real problem was actually a "clash of civilizations" which didn't have much to do with economics at all (1996), and Kennedy deftly moved on to warn of the dangers from global warming, job-stealing robots, and population explosions (1993).

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[28] Simon 2001, 197-200.

[29] The concept of economic war comes close to being oxymoronic. There are times when it may make some sense (as when the world coordinated to embargo Iraq in 1990), but war is substantially zero (or negative) sum while economic exchange, although not always fully fair or equal, is generally positive sum--both parties gain. See Jervis 1993, 57-58.

Alarmism about the prospects for democracy. There was also a recurring, and, as it turned out, thoroughly unjustified pessimism during the Cold War holding that democracy was doomed or at least stagnated. In 1975, the usually ebullient Daniel Patrick Moynihan proclaimed that democracy "increasingly tends to the condition of monarchy in the 19th century: a holdover form of government, one which persists in isolated or peculiar places here and there" but "which has simply no relevance to the future" (1975, 6). In a similar mood, Germany's Willy Brandt was reported to believe at the time that "Western Europe has only 20 or 30 more years of democracy left in it; after that it will slide, engineless and rudderless, under the surrounding sea of dictatorship" (quoted, Crozier et al. 1975, 2). In 1984, in the midst of what he was later to label the "third wave" of democratization, Huntington looked to the future and essentially concluded that democracy could only emerge though economic development or through force: "with a few exceptions, the prospects for the extension of democracy to other societies are not great. These prospects would improve significantly *only* if there were major discontinuities in current trends--such as if, for instance, the economic development of the Third World were to proceed at a much faster rate and to have a far more positive impact on democratic development than it has had so far, or if the United States reestablished a hegemonic position in the world comparable to that which it had in the 1940s and 1950s. In the absence of developments such as these, a significant increase in the number of democratic regimes in the world is unlikely" (1984, 218, emphasis added). Similarly, Robert Dahl concluded in 1971 that, "In the future as in the past," democracy is "more likely to result from rather slow evolutionary processes" and "the transformation of hegemonic regimes" into democracies "is likely to remain a slow process, measured in generations" (1971, 45, 47). In early 1989, on the brink of a major expansion of democracy as the Soviet empire collapsed, he concluded that "it would be surprising" if the proportion of the countries in the world that are democratic "were to change greatly over the next twenty years" (1989, 264).

After the Cold War, such pessimism remained fashionable. In late 1993, for example, economist Robert Barro crisply applied an economic model of democratic development to South Africa and came to a decisive conclusion: "Considering the country's level and distribution of income, the ethnic divisions, and the political and economic experiences of most of the countries of Sub-Sahara Africa, this event would perhaps be the greatest political accomplishment in human history. To put it another way, it's not going to happen." When that country unobligingly became a democracy a few months later, an unbent Barro predicted that "The political changes in South Africa in 1994 have probably already overshot the mark, and a substantial decline of political freedom is likely after this year."

5. After the Cold War

In his farewell address upon leaving the Presidency in January 1953, Harry Truman looked to the future with confidence. He considered the "menace of communism" and "our fight against it" to be the "overriding issue of our time." But he had no doubt that "as the free world grows stronger, more united, more attractive to men on both sides of the Iron Curtain--and as the Soviet hopes for easy expansion are blocked--then there will have to come a time of change in the Soviet world."

He also looked forward, and with great pleasure, to the "world we hope to have when the Communist threat is overcome." It would be a "new era," he suggested, "a wonderful golden age--an age when we can use the peaceful tools that science has forged for us to do away with poverty and human misery everywhere on the earth. Think what can be done, once our capital, our skills, our science--most of all atomic energy--can be released from the tasks of defense and turned wholly to peaceful purposes all around the world. There is no end to what can be done." With "peace and safety in the world under the United Nations, the developments will come so fast we will not recognize the world in which we live" (1966, 378).

In 1989, the United States and its allies entered that "new era." It took a while, but the Soviet

Union underwent the fundamental change Truman predicted, and the Communist threat was not merely overcome, but all but extinguished. Although Americans were free as never before to use capital, skill, and science to do away with poverty and human misery, however, it somehow didn't really feel too much like "a wonderful golden age."

Truman's phrase is extreme, of course--it even dangerously borders on the poetic. And if it is taken to suggest a trouble-free utopia, it could casually be dismissed as an unattainable dream. But, while Truman may sometimes have been a bit of a dreamer, he was too realistic to expect utter perfection. Some of the difficulty in surrendering to such a characterization may be that, because of the way we tend to look at the world, we wouldn't know we were in a wonderful golden age if it came up and kissed us on the left earlobe.

Thus, when the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union and China ceased to appear threatening (or in the former case vanished altogether), the focus of alarm was fully freed to shift to other perceived threats. That is, as big problems--"overriding issues," in Truman's terms--became resolved, there was a tendency to elevate smaller ones, sometimes by redefinition or by raising standards, to take their place. Golden ages, accordingly, never happen.

For example, the notion quickly took hold that international affairs had somehow become especially tumultuous, unstable, and complex, an idea repeated so often it soon began to sound like a mantra. Thus, Bill Clinton proclaimed in his 1993 Presidential inaugural address that "the new world is more free but less stable." And a few days later his nominee to become the head of the Central Intelligence Agency, James Woolsey, testified darkly that "we have slain a large dragon, but we live now in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes." His predecessor at the CIA, Robert Gates, fully agreed: "The events of the last two years have led to a far more unstable, turbulent, unpredictable and violent world" (1993), or as Stanley Hoffmann put it, "the problem of order has become even more complex than before" (1992, 37).[30]

Ethnic warfare. One of Woolsey's primary snakes was ethnic war which alarmingly broke out in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. He and many others feared it would metastasize all over Eastern Europe, perhaps even leading to a nuclear war between Russia and Ukraine.

Some analysts were soon given to arguing that "conflicts among nations and ethnic groups are escalating" (Huntington 1993a, 71), that such conflicts are "now engulfing the world" (Kober 1993, 82), that "there is a virtual epidemic of armed civil or intranational conflict" (Hamburg 1993), and that the "breakdown of restraints" seen in Yugoslavia is part of "a global trend" (Job 1993, 71; see also Kaplan 1991, 1993a, 1993b; Mearsheimer 1990; Moynihan 1993; Brzezinski 1993; Van Evera 1994, 36). Huntington took what he thought to be the experience of the Yugoslav wars and creatively extrapolated it into a cosmic worldview in which he proclaimed that a "clash of civilizations" was taking place (1993b, 1993c, 1996).

However, most such wars, particularly those in Europe, eventually fizzled away, and did not spread (see Mueller 1996, 113-14; 1999). Moreover, the murderous dynamic of these wars was perpetrated more by bands of thugs than by ideologues or by neighbors out to get neighbors in some sort of frenzied Hobbesian state of nature or clashings of civilizations (see Mueller 2000a, 2000b, 2004b, ch. 6; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Collier 2000). In fact, by 2002 the number of wars in the world had dwindled considerably (Eriksson et al. 2003), and that trend may be continuing: the number of armed conflicts

[30] To arrive at such conclusions, the past was simplified, a Eurocentric bias was relied upon, definitions were changed, standards were raised, and problems previously considered to be comparatively minor were elevated in perceived importance. See Mueller 1995, 14-24.

inflicting over 1000 battle or battle-related deaths per year (a standard requirement for a conflict to be designated a "war") is now very small.

Rogue states. In the post-Cold War era, special status was given to a newly-identified category of "rogue states" as if this were a new problem in international affairs. Yet there were plenty of such states--devils du jour, one might call them--during the Cold War, and some of these were variously in devious complicity with the big, threatening rogues: the Soviet Union and China. Sukarno's Indonesia, for example, was a problem for years as it engaged in a policy of military "confrontation" with some neighboring states, and it often obtained support and encouragement from one major Communist country or another (see Hilsman 1967, part 8). Something similar was true of Nasser's Egypt, Castro's Cuba, Qaddafi's Libya, and Iran's Khomeini to say nothing of the trouble and potential danger stirred by egomaniacal and sometimes deranged leaders in far more potent states like Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao's China.

The post-Cold war problems posed by such enfeebled, impoverished, and friendless states as Iraq and North Korea pale in comparison (indeed, North Korea is far less significant a threat than during the Cold War when it was variously backed by China and the USSR). Moreover, the "rogue state" label implies that they are too irrational to be deterred by policies designed to deal with "normal" countries, and it therefore leads to an extreme version of the security dilemma as weaponry that might be obtained by such states to deter an attack is almost automatically assumed to be designed for offensive purposes even though such use would be patently suicidal for the rogues and their regimes.

Thus, despite considerable evidence to the contrary (see Sigal 1998, Harrison 2002, Kang 2003; also Fallows 1994/95), the United States has consistently viewed North Korea as a continuing threat even though its neighbors, especially South Korea, do not. Indeed, it often seems that the chief tension-causing entity in the Korean area is the United States. Utterly obsessed by the notion that the North Koreans might obtain a nuclear arsenal, it often embraces extreme, even hysterical, worst-cast-fantasies about what the North Koreans might do with such weapons--particularly that they might be given or sold to terrorists or (other) rogue states to use on the United States, or, more likely, Israel. The United States has accordingly adopted an intensely hostile and threatening posture that only increases the North's frightened desire to build such weapons.

Some Americans even think that a war on the Korean peninsula--which, of course, would mostly kill Koreans--is preferable to letting the North pursue a nuclear weapons program. This came to a head in 1994 when a US National Intelligence Estimate concluded that there was "a better than even" chance that North Korea had the makings of a small nuclear bomb. This conclusion was hotly contested by other American analysts and was later "reassessed" by intelligence agencies and found possibly to have been overstated. In addition, even if North Korea had the "makings," skeptics pointed out, it still had several key hurdles to overcome in order to develop a deliverable weapon (Oberdorfer 2001, 307; Harrison 2002, 213). Nonetheless, the Clinton administration was apparently prepared to go to war with the miserable North Korean regime to prevent or to halt its nuclear development (Oberdorfer 2001, 308, 316). Accordingly, it moved to impose deep economic sanctions to make the isolated country even poorer (insofar as that was possible), a measure which garnered no support even from neighboring Russia, China, and Japan (Oberdorfer 2001, 318). It also moved to engage in a major military buildup in the area. So apocalyptic (or simply paranoid) was the North Korean regime about these two developments that some important figures think it might have gone to war on a preemptive basis if the measures had been carried out (Oberdorfer 2001, 329). A full-scale war on the peninsula, estimated the Pentagon, not perhaps without its own sense of apocalypse, 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 a trillion dollars.[31] A considerable price, one might think, to prevent a pathetic regime from developing weapons with the potential for killing a few tens of thousands--if they were actually exploded, an act that would surely be suicidal for the regime.

In effect and perhaps by design, however, the North Korean leaders seem mainly to have been practicing extortion (Oberdorfer 2001, 305, 336). No one ever paid much attention to their regime except when it seemed to be developing nuclear weapons, and they appear to have been exceedingly pleased when the 1994 crisis inspired a pilgrimage to Pyongyang by ex-President Jimmy Carter, the most prominent American ever to set foot in the country (Oberdorfer 2001, 327). Carter quickly worked out a deal whereby North Korea would accept international inspections to guarantee that it wasn't building nuclear weapons for which it would graciously accept a bribe from the West: aid, including some high tech reactors which were capable of producing plenty of energy, but no weapons-grade plutonium, as well as various promises about normalizing relations--promises that went substantially unfulfilled in the hope and expectation that the North Korean regime would soon collapse.[32]

The same threat-exaggerating, overreactive perspective toward the North Korea rogue continues to be embraced. Richard Perle, the prominent neoconservative and Defense Department adviser for the George W. Bush administration, has bluntly asserted that "the interests of the South Koreans are not at all identical to ours. They have an interest in doing everything possible to avoid military conflict, and it's understandable. Seoul is within artillery range of thousands of North Korean artillery tubes. They would much prefer to take a risk that North Korea will become not only a nuclear power, but the nuclear bread basket of the world, building and selling nuclear weapons, as they are now building and selling missile technology, and anything else they can lay their hands on. From the South Korean point of view, that is a lesser immediate threat than artillery landing on Seoul. So it's hardly surprising that the South Koreans are going to see this differently from the way we see it. But our president has, first and foremost, a commitment to the security of the United States."[33] Meanwhile, Graham Allison, an advisor to the opposition Democrats, has maintained the same essential view, as is discussed below.

Having worked themselves up to a lather during the 1990s, the Americans and the British even went to war against Saddam Hussein's pathetic regime in Iraq in 2003 because, unlike all of Iraq's neighbors except Israel, their leaders imagined a "grave and gathering" threat to lurk there. Prominent fearmongers, many of whom had previously been active in exaggerating the Soviet threat,[34] asserted Saddam was planning to dominate the Middle East. When war broke out, his military--with which that domination was presumably to be carried out--crumbled pathetically, incoherently, and predictably.[35]

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[31] Oberdorfer 2001, 324; see also Harrison 2002, 117-18.

[32] Sigal 1998, chs. 6-7; Harrison 2002, ch. 18. Expect collapse: Harrison 2002.

[33] Interview for Frontline, PBS, conducted March 27, 2003, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/interviews/perle.html.

[34] On this issue, see Halper and Clarke 2004. See also Johnson 1994, ch. 6.

[35] Saddam was so afraid of his own army that he would not allow it to bring heavy weapons anywhere near Baghdad out of fear that regular troops might turn and use it against his government (O'Kane 1998). On the monumental inadequacy and incompetence of the Iraq military and its leadership during the 2003 war, see Wilson 2003; Zucchino 2003; Shanker 2004. For the pre-war argument that Iraq presented little threat, see Mearsheimer and Walt 2003; Mueller (with Lindsey) 2003. For a detailed analysis of threat exaggeration in the runup to the Iraq War, see Kaufmann

Departing from the advice of John Quincy Adams in an 1821 Fourth of July speech in the House of Representatives, the United States has of late actively gone abroad "in search of monsters to destroy."

Various devils du jour
Tito (Yugoslavia)
Gottwald (Czechoslovakia)
Kim Il-Sung (North Korea)
Toure (Guinea)
Nkrumah (Ghana)
Sukarno (Indonesia)
Nasser (Egypt)
Ben Bella (Algeria)
Castro (Cuba)
DeGaulle (France)
Qaddafi (Libya)
Pol Pot (Cambodia)
Amin (Uganda)
Khomeini (Iran)
Ortega (Nicaragua)
Noreiga (Panama)
Asad (Syria)
Saddam Hussein (Iraq)
Kim Jong-Il (North Korea)
Osama bin Laden (mobile terrorist)

2004. Although Haiti was never elevated to "rogue state" status, President George H. W. Bush did assert that an anti-democratic coup there in 1991 (but not the near-simultaneous one in a much more important country, Algeria) somehow managed to pose "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of the United States," a phrase his successor, Bill Clinton chose to repeat when sending troops to set things right there in 1994 (Washington Post, 16 September 1994, A31). When what passed for democracy crumbled again in Haiti a decade later, however, the administration of Bush's son scarcely noticed.

Weapons of mass destruction. During the Cold War, the phrase, "weapons of mass destruction," was used only infrequently and then almost always to apply to nuclear weapons. After the Cold War, the phrase has been systematically and extensively embellished to embrace chemical and biological weapons as well. This escalation of language is highly questionable.[36]

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.[37] 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.[38]

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 kilometer square. Even for nerve gas this would take the concentrated delivery into a rather small area of about 300 heavy artillery shells or seven 500-pound bombs (1991, 13). And, this would usually require a considerable amount of time, allowing many people to evacuate the targeted area (McNaugher 1990, 31). 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 3000 and 8000 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 (1993, 54). Or as the Gilmore Commission, a special advisory panel to the President and Congress, put it later, it would take a full ton of Sarin gas released under favorable weather conditions for the effects to become "distinctly greater than that attainable by such traditional terrorist means as conventional explosives" (1999, 28). Nuclear weapons are considered weapons of mass destruction because a single bomb can generate great devastation. For chemical weapons to cause extensive damage, by contrast, many of them must be used, just like conventional ones.

Discussions of chemical weapons often stress their ability to cause casualties--both dead and wounded (for example, Roberts 1992, 75-84). This glosses over the fact that historically most of those incapacitated by chemical weapons have not actually died. But clearly, to be classified as "weapons of mass destruction" they must destroy, not simply incapacitate. In the First World War only some 2 or 3 percent of those gassed on the Western front died while, by contrast, wounds caused by traditional weapons were some 10 or 12 times more likely to prove fatal.[39] Chemical weapons were used against

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[36] For an excellent overview of these issues, see Easterbrook 2002. See also Panofsky 1998; Mueller and Mueller 1999, 45-47; Mueller and Mueller 2000, 166-68; Gilmore 1999, 29; Warrick 2004.

[37] On the rise of the sentiment that killing by gas is peculiarly wicked and immoral (as opposed to killing by bullets and shrapnel), see Brown 1968; Price 1997.

[38] For a recognition of this point, see OTA 1993, 9; also 46. See also Betts 1998, 30-31; Panofsky 1998; Gilmore 1999, 29.

[39] McNaugher 1990, 19n. For the United States 2 percent of gas casualties died while 24 percent of those wounded by other weapons died. The rates for Germany were 2.9 percent and 43 percent, and for the British they were 3.3 percent and 36.6 percent. Overall, the estimates are that there were 1,009,038 gas casualties in the war, of whom 78,390 (7.7 percent) died. Gas fatalities were suffered very disproportionately by the Russians who were ill-protected against gas. However, even taking that into consideration, their ratio of gas deaths to total gas casualties, 11.7 percent, is so out of line with those found on the Western front that it seems likely that the number of gas fatalities is exaggerated. Gilchrist 1928, 7-8, 48.

substantially unprotected Iranians by Iraq in their 1980-88 war, but of the 27,000 gassed through March 1987, Iran reported that only 262 died (McNaugher 1990, 19n). Moreover, troops wounded by gas tend to return to combat more quickly than those wounded by bullets or shrapnel (McNaugher 1990, 20n) and to suffer less (Gilchrist 1928, 47). Against well-protected troops, gas is almost wholly ineffective except as an inconvenience (OTA 1993, 8, 58; Meselson 1991, 13; Roberts 1992, 81).

Although gas was used extensively in World War I, it accounted for less than one percent of the battle deaths (Gilchrist 1928, 7). In fact, on average it took over a ton of gas to produce a single fatality (Fetter 1991, 15). In the conclusion to the official British history of the war chemical weapons are accordingly relegated to a footnote which asserts that gas "made war uncomfortable...to no purpose" (Edmonds and Maxwell-Hyslop 1947, 606). Defense analyst Thomas McNaugher considers this conclusion to be "overly glib," but goes on to suggest that "it is closer to the truth than the contention that chemical weapons are nearly magical devices that invariably cause large casualties and inspire panic" (1990, 21). Since that war, gas was apparently used in rather limited amounts in the 1930s by Italy in Ethiopia and by Japan in China, as well as by Egypt in the civil war in Yemen the mid-1960s and during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988 (Brown 1968, 185n; Price 1997, chs. 5, 6; McNaugher 1990; Fetter 1991, 15).[40]

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, notes Russell Seitz, "bioterrorism is easy on paper, but the learning curve is lethally steep in practice" (2004). the record thus far is unlikely to be very encouraging to them. For example, Japan reportedly infected wells in Manchuria and bombed several Chinese cities with plague-infested fleas before and during the Second World War. These ventures may have killed thousands of Chinese, but they apparently also caused thousands of unintended casualties among Japanese troops and seem to have had little military impact.[41]

For the most destructive results biological weapons need to be dispersed in very low-altitude

[40] In 1988, during the Iran-Iraq War, there was a chemical attack, apparently by Iraqi forces, on Halabja, an Iraqi town that had been the site of considerable battles between Iranians, Kurds working on their side, and Iraqis. It is said that 5000 people were killed by chemical munitions dropped from a single airplane during a single pass in daylight (see, for example, Mackey 2002, 262). There are a number of problems with this assessment. To begin with, attacks on the city took place over several days and involved explosive munitions as well, and there is a possible confusion over deaths caused by chemical weapons and those caused by other means. Additionally, all the reports from journalists who were taken to the town by the Iranians shortly after the attack indicate that they saw at most "hundreds" of bodies, and, although some of them report the 5000 figure, this number is consistently identified as coming from Iranian authorities who obviously had a great incentive to exaggerate. Moreover, the Iranians apparently said that an additional 5000 were wounded by the chemical weapons when one would expect that an attack killing 5000 would have injured far more than that. A Human Rights Watch report on the events has an appendix in which other Iraqi chemical attacks in Kurdish areas are evaluated; in two of these attacks it is suggested that 300 or 400 might have been killed, while all the other estimates are under 100, most under 20 (1995, 262-64).

[41] OTA 1993, 60; Williams and Wallace 1989, ch. 6; Christopher et al. 1997, 413; Blumenthal and Miller 1999, A10; Mintz 2004. In 1979 there was an accidental release of biological agents in the Soviet Union that killed under 100 people, and also an anthrax outbreak in Rhodesia that killed 79 and may have been deliberately caused: "Plague War," Frontline (PBS television), 13 October 1998. See also Ropeik and Gray 2002, ch. 22

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 (Meselson 1995; Terry 1998; Panofsky 1998). Moreover, 90 percent of the microorganisms are likely to die during the process of aerosolization, while their effectiveness could be reduced still further by sunlight, smog, humidity, and temperature changes (Gilmore 1999, 25). Explosive methods of dispersion may destroy the organisms, and, 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. Moreover, 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.[42]

TERROR: THREAT EXAGGERATION AND OVERREACTION AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

6. The limited destructiveness of terrorism

Like international Communism, international terrorism is explicitly threatening. Some groups of terrorists focus on Israel (and therefore on US policy in the middle east), while others, as seen in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, feel they must target the United States itself. As with the Communist threat during the Cold War, concern is certainly justified, but alarm, hysteria, and panic are not.

That is, it may make sense to heighten security and policing measures, and perhaps to ask people to maintain awareness--as with crime, to report suspicious behavior to authorities. But it is important that this be done without inducing hysteria. In the extreme foreign policy events noted above, the creation of panic and hysteria was only a byproduct of the concern; in the case of terrorism, it is a central objective. Thus alarmism and overreaction can be harmful, particularly economically, and it can help create the damaging consequences the terrorists seek but are unable to perpetrate on their own. In this respect, it is important to consider and evaluate the amount of destruction terrorists are likely to be able to perpetrate.

Terrorism's damage. "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 incongruity deserves investigating, as do 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,"[43] or more generally from the fact that many people have developed what Leif Wenar of the University of Shefield has aptly labeled "a false sense of insecurity" about terrorism in the United States.

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. Those adept at hyperbole like to proclaim that we live in "the age of terror" (Hoagland 2004). However, 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 2001, virtually none of these terrorist deaths occurred within the United States itself. Indeed, outside of 2001, fewer people have

[42] OTA 1993, 48-49, 62; Easterbrook 2002.

[43] Remarks on Tucker Carlson Unfiltered, PBS, 19 November 2004.

died in America from international terrorism than have drowned in toilets.[44]

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 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 reaction 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.

Some of this is definitional. When terrorism becomes really extensive we generally no longer call it terrorism, but war or insurgency. But Americans and others in the developed world 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.

Terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. 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.[45] The weapons most feared in the hands of terrorists are so-called "weapons of mass destruction," a phrase, as noted above, that has been systematically and extensively embellished after the Cold War to embrace chemical and biological weapons as well as nuclear ones.

The basic knowledge about the destructive potential of chemical and biological weapons goes back decades, even centuries in some respects--the English, for example, made some efforts to spread smallpox among American Indians in the French and Indian War (Christopher et al. 1997, 412; Mintz 2004). Not only has the science about these weapons been known with considerable sophistication for more than a century, but 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.[46]

Perhaps dedicated terrorists will, in time, figure it out. However, the experience in the 1990s of the Japanese cult, Aum Shinrikyo, can't be very encouraging. The group had some 300 scientists in its employ and an estimated budget of $1 billion, and it 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.[47] The group then abandoned its biological efforts in frustration and instead released Sarin nerve gas into a Japanese subway in 1995, the attack caused thousands of

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[44] Toilet figures: Stossel 2004, 77.

[45] See, for example, Laqueur 2003, 226-28; Ignatieff 2004b, ch. 6.

[46] Michael Ignatieff lives in dire fear that terrorists will in the future be able to acquire and use chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons, and he cheers himself up very slightly by issuing a preposterous comparison: "at least the terrorism we face uses conventional weaponry, available for over a hundred years" (2004b, 62-36). But, of course, the same could be said for chemical and biological weaponry.

[47] Gilmore 1999, 25. Rapoport 1999, 57. Broad 1998. Mintz 2004.

casualties, but only 12 deaths (though a more skillful attack conceivably might have killed more) (Broad 1998).

In the meantime, the science with respect to detecting and ably responding to such attacks is likely to grow. Although acknowledging that things could change in the future, the Gilmore Commission concluded, "as easy as some argue that it may be for terrorists to culture anthrax spores or brew of up a concoction of deadly nerve gas, the effective dissemination or dispersal of these viruses and poisons still presents serious technological hurdles that greatly inhibit their effective use" (1999, 38). Interestingly, if chemical and biological attacks are so easy and attractive to terrorists, it is impressive that none have so far been used in Israel. Although there have been plenty of terrorist attacks there, all have used conventional explosives.

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 is also essential to note that making such a bomb is an extraordinarily difficult task. As the Gilmore Commission stresses, "Building a nuclear device capable of producing mass destruction presents Herculean challenges...A successful program hinges on obtaining enough fissile material;...arriving at a weapon design that will bring that mass together in a tiny fraction of a second, before the heat from early fission blows the material apart; and designing a working device small and light enough to be carried by a given delivery vehicle." It emphasizes that these are "the *minimum* requirements. If each one is not met...one ends up not with a less powerful weapon, but with a device that cannot produce any significant nuclear yield at all or cannot be delivered" (1999, 31, emphasis in the original; see also Linzer 2004a).

Warnings about the possibility that small groups, terrorists, and errant states could fabricate nuclear weapons have been repeatedly uttered at least since 1947,[48] 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" (1975, 33). 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 bombings 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.

Embracing the worst case. Two careful reports from the late 1990s--one from the Gilmore Commission, 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."[49] The Gilmore Commission specifically argues that the approach "may be the least efficacious means of setting budgetary priorities and allocating resources and indeed assuring the security of the country" in part because it assumes that "any less serious incident can be addressed equally well by planning for the

[48] See Allison 2004, 104.

[49] Norman J. Rabkin, "Combating Terrorism," United States General Accounting Office GAO/T-NSIAD-00-145, 6 April 2000, pp. 4, 12.

most catastrophic threat--ignoring the fact that higher-probability/lower-consequence attacks might present unique challenges of their own" (1999, 35). The 9/11 attackers did not use weapons more sophisticated than box cutters, and the subsequent anthrax terrorism killed only a very 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 non-existent because they require continual maintenance (2002, 4, 12). And in 2004 testimony, CIA adviser and arms inspector Charles Duelfer stresses that "nuclear weapons development requires thousands of knowledgeable scientists as well as a large physical plant."[50] 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--even a close ally--much less a terrorist group, a nuclear weapon that the recipient could use independently.[51] There is always the danger the weapon would be used in a manner the donor would not approve--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 itself, but it would be one that, by Allison's own admission, would be "large, cumbersome, unsafe, unreliable, unpredictable, and inefficient" (2004, 97).

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."[52] Allison's declaration is far more likely to be remembered if it proves true than if, more probably, it goes the way of C.P. Snow's once-heralded 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 (1961, 259, emphasis in the original).

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[50] Testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 6 October 2004. See also Seitz 2004.

[51] Moreover, proliferation of these weapons has been remarkably slow. During the Cold War there were many dire predictions about nuclear proliferation that proved to be greatly exaggerated. Among these are the nearly unanimous expectation in the 1950s and 1960s that dozens of countries would have nuclear weapons by now. For example, in 1958 the National Planning Association predicted "a rapid rise in the number of atomic powers...by the mid-1960s" (1958, 42). A couple of years later, John Kennedy observed that there might be "ten, fifteen, twenty" countries with a nuclear capacity by 1964 (Kraus 1962, 394). This position continued after the Cold War. Over a decade ago, Christopher Layne confidently insisted that Japan by natural impulse would soon come to yearn for nuclear weapons (1993, 37) while John Mearsheimer equally confidently argued that "Germany will feel insecure without nuclear weapons" (1990, 38). The Japanese and the Germans themselves continue uncooperatively to seem viscerally uninterested, though problems with North Korea could alter that perspective for Japan. On the slowness of the proliferation process more generally, see Mueller 1967, 1998; Meyer 1984; Graham 1991; Reiss 1995; Paul 2000.

[52] Goldstein 2004, 128, 132. Allison 2004, 15; on Korea: 168-71.

George Will, working from the musings of Gregg Easterbrook, has come up with "Easterbrook's Doomsaying Law": "Predict catastrophe no later that 10 years hence but no sooner than five years away--soon enough to terrify, but far enough off that people will forget if you are wrong" (2004). Allison and Snow seem to have gotten the point.

Al-Qaeda's capacities. In 1996 Osama bin Laden issued a religiously-oriented proclamation which is usually taken to be a personal declaration of war on America--though actually the document seems to restrict bin Laden's wrath to the Americans stationed in Saudi Arabia and is entitled, "Declaration of War against the American Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places." Writing in The Skeptical Inquirer a year after 9/11, astronomers Clark Chapman and Alan Harris quite reasonably expressed incredulity that, however the document is interpreted, anyone would take seriously a declaration of war promulgated by a single individual. Under the emotional impetus of the 9/11 attacks, a considerable portion of the readership even of that magazine apparently did so (2003).

Fears of and anxieties about the twenty-foot tall terrorist seem reminiscent of those inspired by images of the twenty-foot tall Communist in the 1950s. By contrast, Gilles Kepel's extensive assessment of the radical Islamic movement finds this reaction to be singularly unjustified. Although a fringe element, radical Islamists did expand in influence particularly in Iran, Sudan, and Afghanistan in the 1980s and early 1990s, and they fought viciously to do so in Algeria. But the pattern since has been mostly one of retreat or utter collapse in all those places (in Iran, they have in effect been overwhelmingly voted out of office twice). Moreover, their acts of spectacular terrorist violence, he concludes, far from spurring "the masses into a general upheaval" as they hoped, have proved "to be a death trap for Islamists as a whole, precluding any capacity to hold and mobilize the range of constituencies they need to seize political power." In this view, "the attack on the United States was a desperate symbol of the isolation, fragmentation and decline of the Islamist movement, not a sign of its strength and irrepressible might" (2002, 19-20, 375-76). B. R. Myers' image of Osama bin Laden "sharing a tent with a mountain goat and a well-thumbed Koran" may be a bit too glib, but it does vividly bring the menace, such as it is, back down to earth (2004, 142).

The extreme reaction by the United States government to 9/11 has made bin Laden into the most famous man on earth: Seitz puts it, "the rhetoric of extinction...serves to inflate into satanic stature a merely evil man" (2004). Moreover, the consequent heedless, violent, and unnecessary venture into Iraq inspired recruits from around the world into embracing his movement. But any benefit to the radical Islamic movement may be temporary at best. As it continues to alienate the moderates (in part by attacking targets in mainstream Islamic countries), it is likely that Kepel's verdict will continue to hold: "their political project," he writes, "now has a track record showing that it banks on the future, but is mired in the past" (2002, 371; see also Seitz 2004).

September 11: harbinger or aberration? It should also be kept in mind that 9/11 was an extreme event: until then no more than 329 had ever been killed in a single terrorist attack--in a 1985 Air India explosion. Moreover, during the entire twentieth century fewer than 15 terrorist attacks resulted in the deaths of more than 100 people at one time (Hoffman 2002, 304). The economic destruction on September 11 was also unprecedented, of course.

In 2004 Charles Krauthammer characterized the post-9/11 period as "three years in which, contrary to every expectation and prediction, the second shoe never dropped" (2004a), and Allison 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" (2004, 6). Perhaps such popular, if knee-jerk, expectations, predictions, and beliefs will continue to be confounded: extreme events often remain exactly

that--aberrations, rather than harbingers.[53]

Thus, 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.[54] 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. Some sort of terrorist inoculated Tylenol capsules with cyanide in 1982 killing seven people; however, this frightening and much publicized event (which generated 125,000 stories in the print media alone and cost the manufacturer more than $1 billion) failed to inspire much in the way of imitation (Mitchell 2002). The alarming release of poison gas in the Tokyo subway in 1995 by Aum Shinrikyo was once dubbed "a turning point in the history of terrorism."[55] Yet, the apocalyptic group appears to have since 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.[56]

This should not be taken to suggest, of course, 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. Like the Communists during the Cold War, they appear to be in it for the long haul: September 11, after all, marked their second attempt to destroy the World Trade Center. Much of the current alarm is generated from the knowledge that many of today's terrorists simply want to kill, and kill more or less randomly, for revenge or as an act of what they take to be war. At one time, it was probably safe to conclude that terrorism was committed principally for specific political demands or as a form of political expression, and therefore in the oft-repeated observation of terrorism expert Brian Jenkins, that "terrorists want a lot of people watching and a lot of people listening, and not a lot of people dead" (1975, 15). 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 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

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[53] See Mueller 2002b, 2002c, 2003a; Seitz 2004.

[54] 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.

[55] Gilmore 1999, 40, but see also 37.

[56] On the preference of terrorists for weapons that they know and understand, see Rapoport 1999, 51; Gilmore 1999, 37.

omniscient or infallible" (2004). 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 9/11 and that terrorism's destructiveness, despite the creative visions of worst-case scenarists, may well fail to escalate dramatically. As Seitz suggests, "9/11 could join the Trojan Horse and Pearl Harbor among stratagems so uniquely surprising that their very success precludes their repetition," and "al-Qaeda's best shot may have been exactly that" (2004).[57] Moreover, the extreme destruction of September 11 has raised the bar, possibly reducing the impact of less damaging attacks.

7. Overreacting to terrorism

The costs of terrorism very often arise mostly from the fear and consequent reaction (or overreaction) it characteristically inspires. That is, they commonly come much more from hasty, ill-considered, and over-wrought responses to it than from anything the terrorists have done.

The costly results of overreaction by Reagan to terrorist attacks were discussed in section 4 above. More recently, 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 (Daum 2001, 19). 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.[58] In the following year, responding to several vicious acts of terrorism apparently perpetrated by Chechens, the Russian government reinstituted 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.

Reacting to September 11: the costs. The costs of reaction outstripped those inflicted by the terrorists even in the case of the 9/11 attacks which were by far the most destructive in history. The direct economic costs of 9/11 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 Office of Homeland Security, for example, is approaching $50 billion per year while state and local governments spend additional billions.[59] The costs to the tourism and airline industry have also been monumental: indeed, three years after September 2001, domestic airline flights in the United States were still 7 percent below their pre-9/11 levels,[60] and one estimate suggests that the economy lost 1.6 million jobs in 2001 alone,

[57] Willmott observes of the Japanese army in World War II that "not a single operation planned after the start of the war met with success" (1982, 91).

[58] Burke 2003, 167-68; Cullison and Higgins, 2002; Coll 2004, 400-2, 414-15; Kepel 2002, 420n50. On this process more generally, see Lake 2002. Reactions to terrorism have also often led to massive persecution. The Jewish pogroms in Russia at the end of the 19th century, for instance, were impelled in major part because Jews were notable in terrorist movements at the time: Rapoport 2004, 68; see also Ignatieff 2004b, 63. On the often deadly and indiscriminant overreaction to anarchist terrorism in the United States and elsewhere, see Jensen 2002.

[59] Friedman 2004, 35; Gorman 2004a. And, not surprisingly, much of this hasty spending has been inefficient by any standards as porkbarrel and politics-as-usual formulas have been liberally applied: Peterson 2004, 116-17.

[60] Financial Times, 14 September 2004, 8.

mostly in the tourism industry (Calbreath 2002).[61] Moreover, safety measures carry additional consequences: the United States now spends $4 billion a year on airline passenger screenings (Fallows 2005, 82-83), and economist Roger Congleton calculates that strictures effectively requiring people to spend an additional half-hour in airports cost the economy $15 billion per year. For comparison, total airline profits in the 1990s never exceeded $5.5 billion per year (2002, 62). The reaction to the anthrax attacks will cost the United States Post Office alone some five billion dollars--that is, one billion for every fatality inflicted by the terrorist.[62] Various 9/11-induced restrictions on visas have constricted visits and residencies of scientists, engineers, and businesspeople so vital to the economy, restrictions that, some predict, will dampen economic American growth in a few years (Rogoff 2004).

The reaction to 9/11 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 1000 people died in automobile accidents in 2001 alone between September 11 and December 31 because of this (Sivak and Flannagan 2004). If a small percentage of the 100,000-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 9/11 in road accidents alone could well surpass the number who were killed by the terrorists on that terrible day. Moreover, the reaction to 9/11 included two wars that are yet ongoing--one in Afghanistan, the other in Iraq--neither of which would have been politically possible without 9/11. 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 100,000 Iraqis during its first 18 months alone.[63] 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 the 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 Chapman and Harris put it, "our nation's priorities remain radically torqued toward homeland defense and fighting terrorism at the expense of objectively greater societal needs" (2002, 30). 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" (2002, 10). Accordingly, three key issues set out by risk analyst Howard Kunreuther require, but rarely get, careful discussion (2002, 662-63):

> How much should we be willing to pay for a small reduction in probabilities that are already extremely low?
>
> How much should we be willing to pay for actions that are primarily reassuring, but do little to

[61] One study investigates Italian cities and towns, most of them small, that experienced a single terrorist event. Although most of these were minor and few caused any deaths, they appear to have had a measurable short term impact on employment, chiefly because marginal firms went out of business earlier and because successful ones temporarily cut back on plans to expand. Greenbaum et al. 2004.

[62] Rosen 2004, 68. On the $9 billion Los Angeles airport plan to (marginally) improve security from terrorist bombs, see Goo 2004.

[63] See Economist, 6-12 November 2004, 81-82. The wars have also, of course, been quite costly economically.

change the actual risk?

How can certain measures, such as strengthening the public health system, which provide much broader protection than terrorism, get the attention they deserve?

The terrorism industry. Thus far at least, terrorism is a rather rare and, in appropriate context, not a very destructive phenomenon as argued above. Nonetheless, 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. Thus, a problem with getting coherent thinking on the issue is that reporters, bureaucrats, politicians, and terrorism experts mostly find extreme and alarmist possibilities so much more appealing than discussions of broader context, much less of statistical reality.

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, surpassing even that achieved by Jimmy Carter when U.S. hostages were taken in Iran in 1979.[64] It would be politically unnatural for him not to notice. His chief political adviser, Karl Rove, in fact was already declaring in 2003 that the "war" against terrorism would be central to Bush's reelection campaign the next year.[65] 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 Office 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."[66] 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" (2004, 33-34, 36). 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 (2004, 79).

Since 9/11 the American public has been treated to endless yammering about terrorism on 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

[64] To accomplish this rise, it was statistically necessary for the two presidents' pre-crisis approval ratings to be comparatively low. Franklin Roosevelt's ratings could not receive the same numerical boost by Pearl Harbor because they already stood at over 70 percent before the attack took place. See Mueller 2003b.

[65] Clines 2003, A28. Gorman 2003b, 2781.

[66] Office of Homeland Security, "The National Strategy for Homeland Security," July 2002.

averages and about how many home runs he normally hits. I may have missed it, but I have never heard anyone on 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.[67]

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 9/11 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" (2004, 222).

It is tricky to try to refute doomsayers in part because there is more reputational danger in underplaying risks than in exaggerating them. People routinely ridicule futurist H. G. Wells' prediction that the conflict beginning in 1914 would be "the war that will end war," but not his equally confident declaration at the end of the Second World War that "the end of everything we call life is close at hand."[68] 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.[69]

Not only are failed predicters 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 convention in New York, d) the election campaign, and/or e) the presidential vote in November. For example, the widely-published pundit Michael Ignatieff assured us in May 2004 that "we can confidently expect that terrorists will attempt to tamper with our election in November" (2004a, 48). When nothing happened (a terrorist wearing kilts did show up to disrupt the marathon in Athens briefly, but this, I should think, does 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 (Gorman 2004b, 3534). A notable terrorist attack during that interval would generate hundreds of thousands of news items not to mention a

[67] Similarly, media coverage of accidental gun deaths of children rarely seem to supply information about the total number so killed. The U.S. total for children under 10 is around 31 per year, of whom less than half are killed by themselves or by other children. Lott 2003, 83, 142.

[68] Wells 1914. Wells 1968, 67.

[69] See also Gorman 2003a, 1464.

veritable paroxysm of breast-beating by the terrorism industry. The absence of an attack during the same time would likely scarcely be noticed.

Cosmic alarmism. Members of the terrorism industry are truly virtuosic at pouring out, and poring over, worst case scenarios--or "worst case fantasies," as Brodie, as noted, once labelled them in different context (1978, 68). "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" (2002, 311-12).[70] That is, if terrorism is so easy and terrorists so omni-competent, 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, cause massive traffic jams?[71]

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 all-out 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 another against Iran) to reduce the likelihood that his worst case fantasy will materialize. (He graciously proposes evacuating Seoul before attacking the North, however.)[72]

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 Bush could decide to bomb Hollywood, an underwater volcano could erupt to cause a civilization-ending tidal wave, bin Laden would convert to Judaism, declare himself to the Messiah, and hire a group of Roman mafiosi to have himself publicly crucified.

That is, what we mostly get is fear-mongering, and much of it borders on hysteria. In their insightful discussion seeking to put the terrorist threat into context in Skeptical Inquirer, Chapman and Harris suggested that terrorism deserves exceptional attention only "if we truly think that future attacks might destroy our society." But, they over-confidently continued, "who believes that?" (2002, 32). The article triggered enormous response, and much of it, to their amazement, came from readers who believed exactly that (2003). 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,

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[70] For news fit enough to print in the London Times suggesting that bin Laden had already collected tactical nuclear weapons by 1998, see Binyon 1998.

[71] For a discussion, see Mueller forthcoming.

[72] Goldstein 2004, 128, 132. Allison 2004, 1, 171.

or even, in columnist Charles Krauthammer's view, to "civilization itself."[73] 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."[74] Not to be outdone, Ignatieff warns that "a group of only a few individuals equipped with lethal technologies" threaten "the ascendancy of the modern state" (2004b, 147). 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" (Benjamin and Simon 2002, 398-99, 418). A recent best-selling book by a once-anonymous CIA official repeatedly assures us that our "survival" is at stake and that we are engaged in a "war to the death."[75] New Republic editor Peter Beinart is convinced that if any sort of "weapon of mass destruction" were be set off in the United States, "the consequences for individual rights will be terrifying."[76] Even the thoughtful (and rare) Homeland Security skeptic, Benjamin Friedman, may have joined the chorus: a tactical nuclear weapon set off in Washington, he thinks, would transform the country "by fear and death into a police state." And Rosen not only suggests that a dirty bomb set off in downtown Washington, DC, would "create panic entirely disproportionate to the radioactive threat," but that "constitutional strictures...might be tested beyond the breaking point."[77]

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

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[73] Gergen 2002. Lugar: Fox News Sunday, June 15, 2003. Krauthammer 2004. The threat to Israel from terrorism and from its reaction (or overreaction) to the internal terrorist challenge, however, could conceivably be existential, and this is perhaps what Krauthammer means by "civilization." For a suggestion along this line, see Fukuyama 2004, 65. Krauthammer replies, however, by parsing "existential," arguing that what Israel faces is more nearly "Carthaginian extinction" (2004b, 18).

[74] Allison 2004, 191. Goldstein 2004, 145, 179.

[75] Anonymous 2004, 160, 177, 226, 241, 242, 250, 252, 263. One of the book's many hysterical passages runs: "To secure as much of our way of life as possible, we will have to use military force in the way Americans used it on the fields of Virginia and Georgia, in France and on the Pacific islands, and from skies over Tokyo and Dresden. Progress will be measured by the pace of killing and, yes, by body counts. Not the fatuous body counts of Vietnam, but precise counts that will run to extremely large numbers. The piles of dead will include as many or more civilians as combatants because our enemies wear no uniforms. Killing in large number is not enough to defeat our Muslim foes. With killing must come a Sherman-like razing of infrastructure. Roads and irrigation systems; bridges, power plants, and crops in the field; fertilizer plants and grain mills--all these and more will need to be destroyed to deny the enemy its support base. Land mines, moreover, will be massively reintroduced to seal borders and mountain passes too long, high, or numerous to close with U.S. soldiers. As noted, such actions will yield large civilian casualties, displaced populations, and refugee flows." In the acknowledgements, the author thanks Ms. Christina Davidson, his editor, "who labored mightily to delete from the text excess vitriol" (Anonymous 2004, xiii, 241-42). Perhaps Ms. Davidson should have labored just a bit more mightily.

[76] Beinart 2004. This is the journal that published Easterbrook's impressive, if almost completely ignored, essay noting that chemical and biological weapons are incapable of inflicting mass destruction. Apparently, even Easterbrook's editor didn't notice.

[77] Friedman 2004, 39. Rosen 2004, 64. For a contrast with such views, see Byman 2003, 160, 163; Seitz 2004.

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 10,000 people, they would successfully "do away with our way of life" (Kerr 2003).

The sudden deaths of that many Americans--although representing less than four thousandths of one 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.

Alarmist Ignatieff, who predicted terrorist events in connection with the 2004 elections with such assurance, is at least equally certain that "inexorably, terrorism, like war itself, is moving beyond the conventional to the apocalyptic" (2004b, 146). And he patiently explains in some detail how we will destroy ourselves in response. Although Americans did graciously allow their leaders one fatal mistake in September 2001, they simply "will not forgive another one." If there are several large-scale attacks, he confidently predicts, the trust that binds the people to its leadership and to each other will crumble, and the "cowed populace" will demand that tyranny be imposed upon it, and quite possibly break itself into a collection of rampaging lynch mobs devoted to killing "former neighbors" and "onetime friends." The solution, he thinks, is to crimp civil liberties now in a desperate effort to prevent the attacks he is so confident will necessarily impel us to commit societal, cultural, economic, and political self-immolation (2004a, 46-48).

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 40,000 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 35,000 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 far the most common reaction to disaster is not self-destructive panic, but "resourcefulness, civility, and mutual aid" (Glass and Schoch-Spana 2002, 214-15). 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.

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 40,000 deaths each year from automobile accidents.

In 1999, two years before 9/11, 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" (1999, 37).

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.

8. Terrorism policy

If the main cost of terrorism arises from the anguish and overreaction of the terrorized, it makes sense primarily to focus on this problem. Accordingly, policies should seek to reduce fear and anxiety as inexpensively as possible and to avoid or control overreaction at least as much as they attempt objectively to reduce 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.

In general, it seems to me that the efforts against terrorism should be considered more like a campaign against crime than like a war, however much the war imagery may get the juices flowing (see also Howard, 2002). Wars end, but since they are carried out by isolated individuals or by tiny groups at times of their own choosing, terrorism and crime never do. One cannot, therefore, "conquer" terrorism or "bring it to an end." Like crime, one can at best seek to reduce its frequency and destructiveness so that people feel reasonably--but never perfectly--safe from it. Of course, military measures may sometimes be useful in the campaign, as they may have been in Afghanistan. But to frame the campaign against terror as a "war" risks the danger of raising unreasonable expectations.

The war imagery also 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 (Mueller 1989, 83). 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.

Fear and anxiety as a goal of terrorists. In fact, the reduction of fear, anxiety, and overreaction 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 it 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 triumphally points to the fact that the 9/11 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.[78]

Since the creation of insecurity, fear, anxiety, hysteria, and overreaction 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" (2004, 32). The 2001 anthrax attacks, Hoffman argues, suggest that "five persons dying in mysterious circumstances is quite effective at unnerving an entire nation" (2002, 313). To the degree that is true, policies for limiting terrorist damage should focus on such unwarranted reactions.

[78] "Full transcript of bin Laden's speech," algazeera.net, 30 October 2004.

Putting risks in context. The shock and tragedy of 9/11 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" (2004, 29). That is, instead of inducing hysteria, which seems to be one of the terrorism industry's central goals, officials and the media should responsibly assess probabilities and put them in some sort of context rather than simply stressing extreme possibilities so much and so exclusively. What is needed, 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" (Gorman 2003a, 1461-62).

One element of 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."[79] 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.[80]

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?"[81] But admonitions like that are exceedingly rare, almost non-existent. Instead, we get plenty of alarmism from the terrorism industry and almost nothing--*nothing*--about realistic risks and probabilities. The result, as Bart Kosko points out, is a situation in which "government plays safe by overestimating the terrorist threat, while the terrorists oblige by overestimating their power" (2004).

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

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[79] Kunreuther 2002, 663. For a rare instance in which this is attempted, see Dyer 2004.

[80] On the almanac menace, see Eggen 2003.

[81] McCain 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 email inquiring about this curiosity was sent to Senator McCain's office in August 2004, but it has yet to generate a reply.

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 9/11 crashes a month for the risks to balance out. More generally, they calculate that an American's chance of being killed in one non-stop airline flight is about one in 13 million (even putting the September 11 crashes into the mix), 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 (Sivak and Flannagan 2003, 6-9).

Or there ought to be at least some discussion of the almost completely unaddressed, but seemingly obvious, observation that, in the words of another risk analyst, David Banks, "it seems impossible that the United States will ever again experience takeovers 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" (2002, 10).

The difficulties of risk communication. 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. Rosen quotes Tocqueville on the phenomenon: "the author and the public corrupt one another at the same time." And he updates the lesson with regard to exaggerated fears of mad cow disease in Britain: "Unwilling to defer to any expert who refused to confirm its unsupported prejudices, the crowd rewarded the scientists who were willing to flatter its obsessions by cheering it on to self-justifying waves of alarm" (2004, 77, 87). As it happens, then, hysteria and alarmism often sell.

The record with respect to fear about crime, for example, suggests that efforts to deal responsibly with the risks of terrorism will prove difficult. Fear of crime rose notably in the mid-1990s even as statistics were showing it to be in pronounced decline. When David Dinkins, running for re-election as Mayor of New York, pointed to such numbers, he was accused by A.M. Rosenthal of the New York Times of hiding behind "trivializing statistics" that "are supposed to convince us that crime is going down" (1993).[82]

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 State the 3000 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.

[82] For data showing that crime peaked in New York in 1990 and declined steadily thereafter, see New York Times, 19 February 1998, A16. For a discussion of the fear of crime, see Warr 2000.

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 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--far less likely, for example, to choose radiation therapy if told the chances of death are 32% rather than that the chances of survival are 68%.[83] 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" (Viscusi 1997, 1669).

Risk tends to be more nearly socially constructed than objectively calculated.[84] 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.

As it happens, the public does not seem to be constantly on edge about the threat of terrorism (Gorman 2003b) any more than it was during the McCarthy era about the threat of Communism (Stouffer 1955, ch. 3). Fear of terrorism may keep people off airplanes and have other economically damaging effects, but it may not shift more ordinary behavior all that much. One survey conducted two years after 9/11 found that 76 percent of Americans and 81 percent of New Yorkers expressed themselves as being concerned about additional terror attacks, but that only 23 percent of Americans and 14 percent of New Yorkers said they had made even minimal efforts (stocking up a couple of days worth of food and water, buying a flashlight and a battery-powered radio, arranging for a meeting place for family members) to prepare for the deed they said they were so concerned about (National Center for Disaster Preparedness 2003).

Nonetheless, the constant unnuanced stoking of fear by politicians, bureaucrats, experts, and the media, however well received (or ignored) by the public, is on balance costly, enervating, potentially counterproductive, and unjustified by the facts.

An alternative policy approach. 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

[83] Slovic 1986, 403-15. It has also been found that even health professionals are considerably less likely to recommend discharging a mental patient when the odds the patient will commit violence are expressed as 20 out of 100 than when they are expressed as 20 percent or 2 chances in 10 (Slovic et al. 2000, 288).

[84] For a discussion, see Rohrmann and Renn 2000, 40-41.

concern, not a secondary one.

Experience with crime fears may hold useful lessons. New Yorkers did eventually come to feel safer from crime, but this was probably less because crime rates actually declined than because of atmospherics as graffiti, panhandlers, aggressive windshield washers, and the homeless were banished or hidden from view. So it may have made sense in the months after the September 11 attacks to have armed reservists parading menacingly around in airports. It is doubtful that they prevented any terrorist attacks, and pulling them from productive jobs hardly helped the economy. But if they provided people with a sense of security, their presence may have been worth it.

Similarly, 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 at the instigation of convincing and authoritative imprecations from the all-knowing Office of Homeland Security, that office has done a service--not because it has reduced danger but because it has 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.

Policymakers 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 forbad the feeding of sharks (Rosen 2004, 79). 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 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 (Goo 2004). 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 Office of Homeland Security and by the terrorism industry, and routinely and repeatedly to publicize them. 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, beneficially to reduce fears. There are, in this regard, a number of studies indicating

that trust in the source of the information can be important (Rohrmann and Renn 2000, 31). The Office of Homeland Security and President Bush tend to enjoy considerable trust on this issue, and they have been, as noted, 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 9/11 attacks also tended to be less fearful (Lerner et al. 2003). 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. Maybe we could even get rid of those ritualistic announcements about oxygen masks poised to plunge into our laps from above. 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. The potential use of "dirty" bombs apparently formed the main concern during the Orange Alert at the end of 2003 ('Dirty Bombs' 2004; Allison, 2004, 56-57). However, while a "dirty" bomb might raise radiation 25 percent over background levels in an area and therefore into a range the Environmental Protection Agency 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. In fact, since "dirty" bombs simply raise radiation levels somewhat above normal backgrounds 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 was 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."[85] By contrast, 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.

The political feasibilty of restraint. Doing nothing (or at least refraining from overreacting) after a terrorist attack is not necessarily politically 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 U.S.S. 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 approach proved to be acceptable politically.

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,

[85] Rockwell 2003. See also Glanz and Revkin 2002; Allison 2004, 8, 59, 220; Linzer 2004b.

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.

Extreme cases like Pearl Harbor and 9/11 would put this proposition to the greatest test, but it seems likely that even here a communicative leader could have pursued more patient and more gradual policies. In both cases, the requirement to "do something" would need to be fulfilled. But a decision to deal with the challenge in the Pacific by relying mostly on patient containment, military buildup, and harassment rather than on direct military confrontation could probably have been sold in time. There was no overwhelming demand to get it over quickly, particularly if American casualties could be consequently minimized by a more patient approach. Similarly, after 9/11, a policy in agile coordination with other countries--almost all of them very eager to cooperate after the shock--stressing pressure on the Afghan regime and the application of policing and intelligence methods to shore up defenses and to go after al-Qaeda and its leadership could probably have been sold to the public.

The course of the campaign against terrorism. Despite U.S. overreaction, the campaign against terror appears generally to be going rather well. That is, 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.[86] 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. Moreover, the insurgency in Iraq seems to have developed as something of a terrorist breeding and training experience (Priest 2005).

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 a large number of attacks, however. The number of international terrorist incidents in the United States in the three years after 9/11 was zero, but that was the same number registered in the three years before the

[86] For discussion on this point, see Mueller 2004a, MacFarquhar 2003. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was "orderly" in the sense that it left behind a government that managed to continue to hang on for another three years.

attacks at a time when anti-terrorist policing exertions were much lower.[87]

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." He also admits that he often has to "fight back a sense of dispair" and of "dread," and suggests that officials "must assume that our enemies will soon launch far more deadly and disruptive attacks" than those of 9/11 for which "the potential scenarios are almost unlimited." However, in mid-course he cheers up enough to supply 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" (2004a, 20, 33, 27; 2004b, 15, 164, 169). 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 to terrorism are hardly required, and they can be costly and counterproductive. There are uncertainties and risks out there, and plenty of dangers and threats. But these are unlikely to prove to be existential. The sky, as it happens, is not falling, nor is apocalypse creeping over the horizon. Perhaps we can relax a little.

[87] See also Seitz 2004.

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