Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies

Leonie Huddy Stony Brook University
Stanley Feldman Stony Brook University
Charles Taber Stony Brook University
Gallya Lahav Stony Brook University

The perception of threat and the experience of anxiety are distinct but related public reactions to terrorism. Anxiety increases risk aversion, potentially undercutting support for dangerous military action, consistent with terrorists' typical aims. Conversely, perceived threat increases a desire for retaliation and promotes animosity toward a threatening enemy, in line with the usual goals of affected governments. Findings from a national telephone survey confirm the differing political effects of anxiety and perceived threat. The minority of Americans who experienced high levels of anxiety in response to the September 11 attacks were less supportive of aggressive military action against terrorists, less approving of President Bush, and favored increased American isolationism. In contrast, the majority of Americans who perceived a high threat of future terrorism in the United States (but were not overly anxious) supported the Bush administration's antiterrorism policies domestically and internationally.

Psychological reactions to terrorism play a pivotal role in understanding public support for government antiterrorist policies. As Crenshaw argues: "The political effectiveness of terrorism is importantly determined by the psychological effects of violence on audiences" (1986, 400). In an area of research characterized by disagreement over the definition and objectives of terrorism, there is pervasive agreement that the effects of terrorism extend well beyond its immediate victims and physical destruction to include a much broader target population (Crenshaw 1986; Long 1990; Wardlaw 1982).

There are differing psychological reactions to external threat, however, and these reactions shape support of government policies designed to combat terrorism. Based on a review of the literature below, we draw a critical distinction between perceived threat and the anxiety it can elicit. The political importance of this distinction between perceived threat and anxiety rests on their typical psychological effects: anxiety leads to an overestimation of risk and risk-averse behavior (Lerner and Keltner 2000, 2001; Raghunathan and Pham 1999) whereas external and perceived threat increase support for outwardly focused retaliatory action (Herrmann, Tetlock, and Visser 1999; Jentleson 1992; Jentleson and Britton 1998).

The distinction between perceived threat and anxiety is intimately tied to the major objectives of terrorists and governments in countries targeted by terrorism. A major function of terrorist violence is to instill anxiety in a target population; this anxiety then places pressure on political elites to negotiate and make concessions with terrorists in order to mollify their frightened citizens (Friedland and Merari 1985; Long 1990). Long argues that terrorists often "use the unreasonable fear and the resulting political disaffection it has generated among the public to intimidate governments into making political concessions in line with its political goals" (1990, 5). In this sense, terrorists may have a good grasp of psychological reality. The intended effects of terrorism are consistent with the psychological link between anxiety and risk aversion.

These motives contrast starkly, however, with the need of governments in vulnerable countries to take forceful action against terrorists. As Berry puts it: "A target that is incapable of responding to terrorism will lose public support and lessen its capabilities and confidence to

Leonie Huddy is associate professor of political science, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY 11794-4392 (Leonie.Huddy@stonybrook.edu). Stanley Feldman is professor of political science, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY 11794-4392 (Stanley.Feldman@stonybrook.edu). Charles Taber, associate professor of political science, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY 11794-4392 (Charles.Taber@stonybrook.edu). Gallya Lahav is assistant professor of political science, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY 11794-4392 (Gallya.Lahav@stonybrook.edu).

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thwart terrorism in the future" (1987, 296). Moreover, tough antiterrorist policies require firm public resolve because they can be long lasting, expensive, and intrusive (Long 1990; White 2002; Wilkinson 1987). A serious threat to national security typically promotes support for military action, in line with the objectives of targeted governments (Jentleson 1992; Jentleson and Britton 1998). But this response may be undercut by heightened anxiety and an associated increase in risk aversion among affected individuals.

Threat, Ethnocentrism, and Retaliation

Threat has had remarkably consistent effects in past social science research. One of the most pervasive and powerful effects of threat is to increase intolerance, prejudice, ethnocentrism, and xenophobia, regardless of whether threat is defined as a widely acknowledged external force or a subjective, perceived state. Groups that are disliked, violent, or disruptive elicit intolerance and face heightened restrictions on their civil rights and liberties (Gibson 1998; Marcus et al. 1995; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982). A real or perceived threat to a group's resources or status leads to increased prejudice against the threatening out-group (Bettencourt et al. 2001; Levine and Campbell 1972; Struch and Schwartz 1989). Psychological sources of threat, such as being disliked by an out-group, have a similar effect by heightening in-group solidarity and increasing bias against out-group members (Giles and Evans 1985; Grant and Brown 1995; see Huddy 2003). And among elites, decision making becomes more rigid and dogmatic under conditions of threat, producing increasingly negative views of an enemy (Cottam 1994; Herrmann 1988).

External threat also increases prejudice indirectly through its impact on authoritarianism. Psychological research has uncovered a strong link between periods of societal threat—economic hard times or work stoppages, for example—and authoritarian responses. Sales (1973) found that periods of societal threat lead to heightened aggregate measures of authoritarianism, a finding replicated by Doty, Peterson, and Winter (1991). External societal threat increases aggregate support for political candidates seen as powerful, forceful, strong, and active (McCann 1997, 1998). It also increases xenophobia and rejection of out-groups, such as immigrants and ethnic minorities (Lahav 2004). When combined with the well-established link between authoritarianism and prejudice (Duckitt 1994), these studies provide further evidence that both external and perceived threat promote intolerance and prejudice (Feldman and Stenner 1997).

Threat not only promotes intolerance but also leads to support for punitive action against threatening groups. In past research on foreign policy attitudes, Americans have supported overseas military action in direct proportion to the threat posed by a foreign aggressor to U.S. interests (Herrmann, Tetlock, and Visser 1999; Jentleson 1992; Jentleson and Britton 1998). Terrorist threat is also associated with support for aggressive military action among Israelis (Friedland and Merari 1985). Arian (1989), for example, found a direct link between the perceived likelihood of war and a preference for an increase in military power over peace negotiations among Israelis in the 1980s. The degree of external threat posed by various outgroups also predicts how negatively Israelis feel towards group members, confirming the general link between terrorist threat and heightened prejudice (Bar-Tal and Labin 2001).

These findings point to the surprisingly consistent effects of external and perceived threat across a broad range of studies. Both types of threat lead to the vilification of the source of threat, limit support for government actions that might assist members of the threatening group, promote support for belligerent solutions directed at threatening individuals or groups, and heighten in-group solidarity. The effects of threat are especially impressive given its varied definition and measurement. Even more impressive, when threat is manipulated experimentally we find it to be not just a correlate but a clear *cause* of ethnocentrism, intolerance, and a desire for retaliation (Grant and Brown 1995; Herrmann, Tetlock, and Visser 1999; Marcus et al. 1995).

Before concluding that external and perceived threat always promotes support for belligerent action against an aggressor, however, we should examine the concept of threat more closely. Most research, with the exception of some in Israel, has not examined powerful physical threats, such as terrorism, that are likely to arouse high levels of anxiety. We now review some specific psychological effects of anxiety, including heightened risk perception and risk aversion (Lerner et al. 2003; Lerner and Keltner 2000, 2001; Raghunathan and Pham 1999), which may help to explain why an external threat sometimes fosters support for belligerent and risky policies (Gordon and Arian 2001; Kahneman and Tversky 1979) and at other times leads to conciliatory or risk-averse behavior (Arian 1989; Niemi, Mueller, and Smith 1989).

The Distinctive Effects of Anxiety

Recent research in psychology points to three specific effects of anxiety that differ from the general response to perceived threat (Lerner and Keltner 2000, 2001;

Mathews and Macleod 1986).[1] First, anxiety worsens cognitive functioning because it diverts attention to threatening stimuli and increases cognitive preoccupation with threatening sources, shifting attention and resources away from nonthreatening stimuli (Eysenck 1992; MacLeod and Mathews 1988; Mathews and MacLeod 1986; Mogg et al. 1990; Yiend and Mathews 2001). Anxiety has especially detrimental effects on tasks that involve working memory such as reading comprehension and specific word recall (Eysenck 1992). Anxiety can improve some limited cognitive functions—anxious individuals may more readily detect additional environmental threat, for example (Byrne and Eysenck 1995)—but, overall, cognitive functioning is impaired by high anxiety.

Second, anxious individuals tend to perceive higher levels of risk than those who are not anxious (Butler and Mathews 1983; Eysenck 1992; Lerner and Keltner 2000, 2001). Anxiety is especially likely to increase the perceived risks associated with personally relevant negative events (Butler and Mathews 1983, 1987). According to Lerner and Keltner (2000, 2001) anxiety produces a sense of uncertainty and lack of control that elevates future judgments of risk. Anxiety may also increase perceived risk because it heightens the salience of self-relevant negative thoughts (MacLeod, Williams, and Bekerian 1991). In general, anxiety increases the perceived risk of negative self-relevant events, but not necessarily events that lack personal relevance.

Third, anxiety increases risk aversion because anxious individuals are motivated to reduce their anxiety, leading to a preference for less risky options (Lerner and Keltner 2001; Raghunathan and Pham 1999).

The differing psychological effects of anxiety and perceived threat shed light on reactions to government antiterrorism policies. Perceived threat is likely to increase the desire for government retaliation against an enemy, whereas anxiety will undercut this support to the extent that the proposed retaliatory action is seen as personally dangerous and risky. The divergent political consequences of anxiety and perceived threat should be most pronounced on government military action that could be seen to incite future terrorist retaliation. There should be no such conflict between anxiety and perceived threat, however, when it comes to support for domestic actions such as heightened internal surveillance which Americans view as aimed at guilty others, not at them (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002). Anxious individuals are thus unlikely to feel personally threatened by domestic antiterrorism policies and may actually be more supportive of them than the nonanxious.

[1]We regard anxiety as an umbrella term for fear, anxiety, worry, and related states in keeping with the broad definition of anxiety in neuroscience, clinical, cognitive, and other branches of psychology (Costa and McRae 1985; LeDoux 1996; Öhman 2000; Panskepp 1998).

Factors Linked to Heightened Threat Perceptions

Perceived threat and anxiety have distinct psychological and political effects. They also have somewhat different antecedents. Direct personal experience with terrorism has an especially powerful effect on the development of anxiety and related psychological symptoms (Gordon and Arian 2001; Galea et al. 2002; Piotrkowski and Brannen 2002; Schuster et al. 2001; Silver et al. 2002). The link between personal experience and anxiety may arise because individuals who are physically closest to a terrorist incident experience the event as more vivid, leading to heightened emotional arousal (Lowenstein et al. 2001). Such experiences may also arouse a sense of personal vulnerability, leading to the development of anxious thoughts about one's physical well-being. Personal experience can elevate threat perceptions as observed by Fischhoff and colleagues (2003), but we expect the link between personal experience and anxiety to be greater than that between personal experience and perceived threat.

Perceived threat and anxiety are distinct reactions, but they are also related for obvious reasons. Someone who disputes the existence of any future terrorist threat is unlikely to feel anxious about terrorism. Of course, not everyone who perceives a threat will necessarily feel anxious. There are several factors that influence the development of both reactions. Gender is the most powerful of these. Women express higher levels of anxiety and perceive greater risks associated with war and terrorism (Arian and Gordon 1993; Fischhoff et al. 2003; Lerner et al. 2003; Skitka, Bauman, and Mullen 2004). Lower levels of education have also been found to increase anxiety and the perceived risk of terrorism (Friedland and Merari 1985; Skitka, Bauman, and Mullen 2004). There are two differing explanations for this link: highly educated individuals have greater facility with probabilistic information and can better reason about the future likelihood of a terrorist attack and personal victimization (Edwards 1983), and lower levels of education are associated with greater life stressors which reduce a sense of control and heighten responses to threatening events (Fischhoff et al. 2003; Perilla, Norris, and Lavizzo 2002; Vaughan 1993).

Hypotheses

We study Americans' reactions to the threat of terrorism to better understand the political effects of perceived

threat and anxiety on support for government antiterrorist policies. Data are drawn from the Threat and National Security Survey (TNSS), a national telephone survey that assessed reactions to the events of September 11. We test the following hypotheses: (1) Perceived threat is distinct from anxiety and has differing determinants, although the two are related. (2) Anxiety is linked to other psychological symptoms of distress but perceived threat is not. (3) Anxiety lowers knowledge about the event and its aftermath because of its tendency to impair cognitive functioning. (4) Anxiety and perceived threat lead to differences in support for antiterrorism policies: Perceived threat increases negative views of Arabs and leads to support for policies that strike out at the enemy. In contrast, anxiety reduces support for any retaliatory policies that could jeopardize American security. (5) Perceived threat increases support for homeland security policies designed to minimize future risk, even when such policies violate support for civil liberties; anxiety may also foster support for homeland security policies because such policies are designed to minimize the future risk of terrorism.

Results

Sample

The survey was conducted via telephone with 1,549 adults aged 18 or older between early October 2001 and early March 2002. The sample was drawn as a random-digit-dial (RDD) weekly rolling cross-section with roughly 100 individuals interviewed each week throughout the time period. The first month of data was collected by Shulman, Ronca, and Bukuvalis and the remainder by the Stony Brook University Center for Survey Research. The cooperation rate for the survey was 52%.[2]

Distinct Reactions to External Threat

Americans exhibited a range of responses to September 11, as seen in Table 1. The survey included two questions that tapped the perceived threat of future terrorism to the nation: "How concerned are you that there will be another terrorist attack on the United States in the near future?" and "How concerned are you that terrorists will attack the United States with biological or chemical weapons?" Levels of perceived national threat were quite high: 86% reported that they were very or somewhat concerned about another attack, and 84% were very or somewhat concerned about the threat of biological or chemical attacks. Perceived personal threat was assessed with one question: "How concerned are you personally about you yourself, a friend, or a relative being the victim of a future terrorist attack in the United States?" A surprisingly high 68% of respondents reported being very or somewhat concerned about being personally affected by a terrorist attack; 31% were very concerned.

Americans perceived a high level of terrorist threat to themselves and the nation, but varied in the degree to which they felt anxious. Respondents were asked "How much, if any, have the terrorist attacks shaken your own sense of personal safety and security?" A small minority (almost 18%) of the sample said that the attacks had shaken their sense of personal safety and security a great deal, although an additional 34% said that it had shaken them some. That left 47% who said the attacks had little or no effect on their sense of safety and security. Respondents were also asked how often they had felt four anxiety-related emotions: anxious, scared, frightened, or worried. Almost half reported feeling anxious or worried at least sometimes, and a small minority reported feeling these emotions very often. In addition, just under a third reported feeling scared or frightened sometimes or very often. But that left a majority who did not feel frightened or scared, or felt that way only occasionally. On average, the perceived threat of terrorism was more widespread than feelings of anxiety in the aftermath of 9/11.

To verify empirically the distinction between anxiety and perceived threat, several confirmatory factor analyses (and all subsequent analyses) were estimated using Mplus which has more robust estimators for categorical and ordinal variables (such as 4-point measures of anxiety and perceived threat) than other covariance structure model programs (Muthen and Muthen 2001). Mplus estimates the link between discrete observed indicators and an underlying continuous latent variable as probit or ordered probit functions, using estimated latent thresholds instead of interval scores for the discrete indicators. This method is used to arrive at factor loadings for all anxiety and threat variables. All models were estimated via weighted least squares, which is more appropriate than maximum likelihood for models with discrete variables (see Muthen and Muthen 2001). We also report robust standard error estimates.

The four anxiety items and feeling shaken by the 9/11 attacks were expected to load on one *anxiety* factor and the three *perceived threat* items to load on another, to yield two distinct but related dimensions. An initial factor

[2]Respondents were of similar income level to the national population but were slightly more middle-aged, somewhat better educated, slightly less black, and somewhat more female, in line with other national telephone surveys (Brehm 1993). Post-stratification weights based on 2002 CPS figures for education, gender, and geographic region did not alter frequencies for key variables by more than 1 percentage point. The data remain unweighted in all reported analyses.

Table 1 Levels of Perceived Threat and Anxiety

	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not Very Concerned	Not at All Concerned	DK/NA
How concerned are you that there will be another terrorist attack on U.S. soil in the near future?	49.8%	36.5	9.7	3.5	0.4
How concerned are you that terrorists will attack the United States with biological or chemical weapons?	47.3%	37.4	10.2	3.8	1.3
How concerned are you personally about you yourself, a friend, or a relative being the victim of a future terrorist attack in the United States?	30.8%	37.1	19.8	11.2	1.2
	A Great Deal	**Some**	**A Little**	**Not at All**	**DK/NA**
How much, if any, have the terrorist attacks shaken your own sense of personal safety and security?	17.8%	34.2	23.4	23.8	0.9
	Very Often	**Sometimes**	**Not Very Often**	**Never**	**DK/NA**
As you think about the terrorist attacks and the U.S. response, how often have you felt . . .					
Anxious?	11.4%	35.7	27.9	23.6	1.4
Scared?	7.9%	23.3	28.7	38.3	0.8
Worried?	13.0%	36.9	25.9	22.9	1.2
Frightened?	5.6%	24.5	27.4	41.3	1.2

Note: All entries are percentages.

analysis confirmed that the four emotion items tap a single anxiety dimension. We then tested the null hypothesis that anxiety is indistinguishable from perceived threat. In this model, a single latent factor was assumed to account for the covariance among all eight of the reactions to 9/11 listed in Table 1. This one-factor model was a very poor fit to the data. The ratio of the chi-squared value to the degrees of freedom was over 69, a very large value. The RMSEA was .215, well above the acceptable .10 value, and the residuals were substantial.[3]

A two-factor model in which anxiety and perceived threat formed distinct factors proved a much better fit to the data. The normed fit indices for this model were close to 1.0, but other indicators of fit were less satisfactory. The chi-squared value to the degrees of freedom ratio was quite large (30), the RMSEA was .14, and there were some large residuals. Model diagnostics suggested that a concern about the personal risk of terrorism may load on the anxiety factor, providing further empirical acknowledgement of the link between anxiety and personal risk. And a shaken sense of personal safety and security appeared to load on the perceived threat factor, suggesting that feeling shaken indicates a mixture of anxiety and perceived threat. Adding these two parameters produced the two-factor model shown in Table 2, which is a slight modification of our original expectations. The chi-squared/degrees of freedom ratio decreased to 5.6, and the RMSEA dropped to .056, indicating a very good fit.[4]

Perceived threat and anxiety form two distinct factors in this revised and improved model. Perceived threat is most clearly defined by the two questions on concerns about future terrorist attacks on the United States. Concerns about the likelihood of personal (family and friends) consequences of terrorism is a somewhat weaker indicator of threat; feeling that the attacks had shaken one's

[3]The RMSEA (root mean squared error of approximation) provides a measure of model discrepancy per degree of freedom and thus adds a penalty for adding parameters. Values of RMSEA less than .10 indicate a good fit of the model to the data and values less than .05 indicate a very good fit (Browne and Cudek 1993).

[4]In addition, the normed fit indices are virtually at their maximum: CFI = .997, TLI = .995.

Table 2 Factor Structure of Threat Items

	Factor 1: Perceived Threat		Factor 2: Anxiety	
	Coefficient	Factor Loading	Coefficient	Factor Loading
How concerned are you that there will be another terrorist attack on U.S. soil in the near future?	1.00	.87		
How concerned are you that terrorists will attack the United States with biological or chemical weapons?	.96 (.03)	.84		
How concerned are you personally about you yourself, a friend, or a relative being the victim of a future terrorist attack in the United States?	.56 (.03)	.49	.50 (.04)	.35
How much, if any, have the terrorist attacks shaken your own sense of personal safety and security?	.37 (.03)	.33	.74 (.04)	.51
As you think about the terrorist attacks and the U.S. response, how often have you felt . . .				
Anxious?			1.00	.69
Scared?			1.30 (.03)	.89
Worried?			1.20 (.03)	.82
Frightened?			1.29 (.03)	.89

Note: Coefficients are weighted least squares estimates for a two-factor latent variable model with categorical observed variables. Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

sense of personal safety and security is an even weaker indicator, although still statistically significant. Anxiety is most strongly defined by the four emotion items, with somewhat stronger factor loadings for scared and frightened than worried and anxious. A sense of shaken personal safety and security loads on the anxiety factor, but not as strongly. Finally, personal threat is a significant but relatively weak indicator of anxiety. Although two of the eight questions have significant coefficients on both factors, the two factors are quite distinct with an estimated correlation of .57. The correlation between the perceived threat and anxiety factors is not a function of their two shared indicators. When the model is reestimated with neither of the shared indicators included, the estimated correlation between the factors is .58.

To ensure the robustness of the factor model shown in Table 2, it was estimated separately for the period up to the end of December 2001 and from January 1 till mid-March and then again for respondents who had up to a high school degree and those with at least some college. The estimated parameters were virtually identical in these subsamples and the two-factor solution was a much better fit than a one-factor model in each case. The two latent factors of anxiety and perceived threat are used in all subsequent analyses.

Determinants of Perceived Threat and Anxiety

Confirmatory factor analyses verify that anxiety and perceived threat are distinct reactions to the threat of terrorism. We now turn to their determinants to assess whether anxiety and perceived threat can also be distinguished on the basis of their differing origins. The estimates shown in Table 3 are based on regression equations in which latent factors measuring perceived threat and anxiety are regressed onto the other factors in the table. The R^2 value is estimated in this and all subsequent analyses because

TABLE 3 Determinants of Perceived Threat and Anxiety

	Perceived Threat		Anxiety	
	β	s.e.	β	s.e.
Age (10 years)	.029	.019	**−.065**	.017
Education	**−.039**	.013	**−.048**	.012
Gender (female)	**.29**	.06	**.72**	.06
Income <$25,000	**.27**	.08	**.25**	.07
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	**.36**	.11	−.00	.10
Hispanic	.23	.12	.20	.11
Other	.24	.15	−.01	.13
Authoritarianism	**.48**	.10	**.19**	.09
Party ID (Republican)	−.10	.09	**−.23**	.09
Ideology (Conservative)	.13	.10	.11	.09
Attend religious services	.002	.012	.005	.010
Know missing	**.16**	.07	**.29**	.06
Northeast	**.27**	.12	.16	.09
NY Metro area	.10	.17	**.33**	.15
Weeks after 9/11	**−.093**	.032	**−.071**	.028
Weeks^2	**.003**	.001	**.002**	.001
Estimated R^2	.13		.24	

Note: Coefficients are weighted least squares estimates for the latent dependent variables defined by the factors shown in Table 2. The latent dependent variables have units of one standard deviation. Coefficients in bold have z-scores greater than 2. The equations also contained a dummy variable for those who would not report their income. The coefficient for this variable was small in both equations.

the dependent variables are categorical or latent factors. Latent factors for perceived threat and anxiety have no intrinsic scales and are standardized so that a unit on each represents a change of one standard deviation. The regression coefficients in Table 3 thus indicate the change in a standard deviation unit of each latent variable as the predictor increases by one unit (all analytic variables are coded 0 to 1 except for age, education, religious attendance, and weeks after 9/11.).

Physical and emotional proximity to the attacks was expected to arouse anxiety but have less impact on perceived threat. There is some support for this prediction. Knowing someone who was killed or hurt in the attacks increased both anxiety and perceived threat, but had greater impact on anxiety as expected. Living near the terrorist attacks had significant effects on both anxiety and perceived threat (see also Skitka, Bauman, and Mullen 2004), although close physical proximity had greatest impact on anxiety. Perceptions of threat were higher in the northeast than in the rest of the nation with no additional impact of living in the New York area. Anxiety, on the other hand, was significantly higher among those living in the New York metropolitan area but not in the Northeast more generally. This latter finding is consistent with other studies that find heightened psychological reactions to 9/11 among those who lived closest to the attacks.

Several other factors differentially influenced the development of anxiety and threat, helping to confirm their distinctiveness. Younger people felt more anxious than older people, although there were no significant age-related differences in perceived threat. Republicans experienced somewhat less anxiety than Democrats, feeling reassured perhaps by the presence of George W. Bush as president. Women perceived somewhat higher levels of threat but felt much more anxious than men. In addition, several factors influenced threat but not anxiety. Blacks were somewhat more likely than whites to assess a higher risk of terrorism, although they did not experience higher levels of anxiety. And authoritarianism lead to higher levels of perceived threat but only slightly higher levels of anxiety, consistent with evidence that authoritarianism is linked to greater sensitivity to threat (Lavine et al. 2002).[5]

Finally, there was a slight decline in perceived threat and anxiety over time, but the effect is nonlinear. Perceived threat and anxiety declined more rapidly after 9/11 but showed little further decline after the New Year, consistent with the findings of other national studies (see Davis and Silver 2003). Moreover, there is no change over time in support for government national security policy or the dynamics of policy support. Anxiety and threat have the same impact on national security policy throughout the study period (as indicated by nonsignificant interactions between anxiety and time and perceived threat and time in all policy analyses). As a consequence, we omit time as a variable from subsequent analyses.

Anxiety and Depression

To further validate the distinction between perceived threat and anxiety, we consider its link to depression, which shares common negative affect with anxiety but should not be especially related to perceived threat (Clark and Watson 1991). The survey included three indicators of depression: feeling depressed, having trouble concentrating, and having trouble sleeping. Table 4 contains the results of an equation predicting depression—a latent variable with a unit fixed at one standard deviation.

Anxiety strongly predicts symptoms of depression, but depression is unrelated to perceived threat as expected. Holding all else constant, an increase of one standard

[5] Authoritarianism was measured as a preference for obedience, respect, and good manners among children over more expressive and creative values (Feldman and Stenner 1997).

Table 4 Determinants of Depression and Knowledge

	Depression	Knowledge	
	Coefficient	Coefficient	Change in Probability
Perceived Threat	.03 (.03)	−.05 (.05)	−.05
Anxiety	**.69** (.03)	**−.18** (.06)	−.17
Age (10 years)	.009 (.018)	**.084** (.018)	.20
Education	**−.082** (.014)	**.162** (.013)	.49
Gender (female)	**.33** (.06)	**−.60** (.06)	−.23
Race/Ethnicity			
Black	**.30** (.11)	−.22 (.12)	−.08
Hispanic	**.50** (.12)	−.20 (.12)	−.08
Other	**.27** (.13)	−.11 (.13)	−.04
Authoritarianism	**.24** (.08)	**−.62** (.08)	−.24
Party ID (Republican)	**−.24** (.09)	**.28** (.09)	.11
Ideology (Conservative)	.19 (.10)	−.20 (.10)	−.07
Religious services	.007 (.011)	.002 (.012)	.01
Know missing	**.30** (.07)		
City, 1,000,000+	−.14 (.12)		
City 400,000+	.06 (.08)		
Northeast	**.28** (.09)		
Weeks after 9/11	**−.036** (.006)		
Estimated R^2	.69	.30	

Note: Coefficients for depression symptoms are weighted least-squares estimates for the latent variable described in the text. The latent variable has a unit of one standard deviation. Coefficients for knowledge are weighted least-squares probit estimates. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Coefficients in bold have z-scores greater than 2. Changes in probability for knowledge are differences in the probability of correctly answering at least three out of four questions as each predictor variable ranges from low to high as described in footnote 6.

deviation in anxiety leads to a .69 standard deviation increase in depression symptoms. Levels of depression are higher among women, the less affluent, and nonwhites, especially Hispanics, and lower among the better educated (see also Schlenger et al. 2002). Proximity to the attacks—living in the New York metro area and knowing someone hurt or killed in the attacks—also leads to higher reported levels of depression. Authoritarians report higher levels of depression than nonauthoritarians, and Republicans are significantly less likely to report symptoms of depression than are Democrats.

Anxiety and Knowledge

Anxiety typically worsens cognitive functioning and may impair learning about the attacks and subsequent events because it clogs working memory with anxious thoughts that limit the comprehension and retention of new information (Eysenck 1992). This hypothesis is tested with responses to four items concerning knowledge of Afghanistan, Islam, and Osama Bin Laden, which were combined to yield a 5-point knowledge measure. The knowledge equation is estimated as an ordered probit with a five-level categorical dependent variable (see Table 4). Since probit coefficients have no straightforward interpretation, we also present the expected change in the probability of correctly answering at least three of the four knowledge questions as each predictor varies across its range.[6] Estimated thresholds were calculated for all probit analyses reported and can be obtained from the authors. As predicted, anxiety is linked to less accurate knowledge, but perceived threat is not. This cannot be explained by lower levels of news attention among anxious

[6]The specific range for each variable is: age, 20 years to 80 years old; education, 11 years to 20 (postgraduate degree) years; gender, male to female; race/ethnicity, white to black/Hispanic/other; authoritarianism, lowest to highest score; party identification, strong Democrat to strong Republican; ideological identification, very liberal to very conservative; attendance at religious services, zero to eight times per month. Perceived threat and anxiety varied from the 5^{th} to 95^{th} percentile. Changes in probability were computed holding all other variables constant at their mean for an independent and ideologically moderate white male.

individuals, since anxious individuals actually watched somewhat more TV news than those who were not anxious ($r = .10$, $p < .05$). This finding is consistent with evidence from Marcus, Neuman, and Mackuen (2000) that anxiety increases information-seeking behavior. The remaining predictors of knowledge are consistent with the usual determinants of political knowledge: increasing education, age, gender (male), and lower levels of authoritarianism (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

Taken together, evidence on the measurement, determinants and correlates of anxiety and perceived threat demonstrate that they constitute distinct reactions to the external threat of terrorism. We turn next to consider their political effects.

Support for Military Intervention and Presidential Approval

Perceived threat and anxiety were expected to have opposing effects on support for military initiatives and overseas engagement in line with evidence that threat increases the desire for retaliation whereas anxiety leads to heightened estimates of risk, especially self-relevant risks such as retaliatory attacks against Americans on U.S. soil. We also expected perceived threat to enhance, and anxiety to diminish, support for President Bush's handling of the terrorist crisis, because of his ready endorsement of a strong military response to the 9/11 attacks. Consistent with other national polls taken at this time, 90% of respondents approved of the way Bush was handling his job, 72% supported increasing military action even if it meant significant U.S. casualties, 84% believed it would be best if the United States took an active part in world affairs, and 63% felt the United States should take *the* leading role in solving international problems (Gaines 2002; Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002).

Table 5 displays probit estimates that confirm the differing policy implications of perceived threat and anxiety. Higher levels of perceived threat are associated with greater support for U.S. military intervention, U.S. overseas involvement, and approval of Bush, in line with evidence that threat promotes retaliation. In contrast, anxiety has the opposite effect, decreasing approval of President Bush's handling of the situation and increasing opposition to military action and overseas involvement,

TABLE 5 Determinants of Bush Approval, Military Intervention, and World Involvement

	Bush Approval		Military Action, Afghanistan		Active in World Affairs		Take Leading Role	
	Coefficient	Change in Probability	Coefficient	Change in Probability	Coefficient	Change in Probability	Coefficient	Change in Probability
Perceived Threat	**.30** (.09)	.10	**.28** (.05)	.21	**.16** (.07)	.11	**.23** (.06)	.24
Anxiety	**−.27** (.11)	−.08	**−.25** (.06)	−.14	**−.18** (.08)	−.10	**−.17** (.08)	−.14
Age (10 years)	.044 (.035)	.03	**.049** (.020)	.07	**.074** (.025)	.10	.014 (.023)	.03
Education	.027 (.025)	.03	−.009 (.014)	−.02	**.042** (.020)	.08	−.003 (.016)	−.01
Gender (female)	−.07 (.11)	−.01	**−.38** (.06)	−.11	.02 (.09)	.01	−.10 (.07)	−.03
Race/Ethnicity								
Black	**−.59** (.16)	−.09	**−.41** (.11)	−.12	**−.37** (.15)	−.10	**−.34** (.14)	−.13
Hispanic	−.20 (.19)	−.03	**−.40** (.14)	−.12	−.12 (.17)	−.02	−.05 (.15)	−.01
Other	−.35 (.21)	−.05	−.27 (.15)	−.08	.01 (.21)	.00	.30 (.18)	.10
Authoritarianism	**.38** (.15)	.05	**.26** (.09)	.06	**−.38** (.12)	−.09	−.05 (.10)	−.02
Party ID (Republican)	**.96** (.21)	.12	**.66** (.11)	.17	.37 (.15)	.08	.06 (.12)	.02
Ideology (Conservative)	.34 (.19)	.04	**.24** (.11)	.06	.13 (.14)	.03	**.50** (.13)	.18
Estimated R^2	.27		.20		.11		.07	

Note: Coefficients are weighted least-squares probit estimates. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Coefficients in bold have z-scores greater than 2. Changes in probability are differences in the probability of approving of Bush's performance or supporting interventionist policies as each predictor variable ranges from low to high as described in footnote 6.

consistent with psychological evidence that it promotes risk aversion.[7]

The effects of perceived threat and anxiety are substantial, as can be seen from the estimated changes in probability in Table 5, and are especially striking given the relatively high overall levels of support for Bush and overseas military action. For the three policy variables, the estimated effect of perceived threat (as reflected by the change in probability) is larger than any other predictor; the effects of anxiety are also comparatively large. It is important to note that marginal changes in probability are always small when predicted probabilities approach 1 (or 0) due to the functional form of the probit model. This helps to explain the limited effects of partisanship, perceived threat, and anxiety on Bush approval. For white males who are at the mean on all other independent variables apart from partisanship, the predicted difference in approval between strong Republicans and strong Democrats is only .12; among such respondents 86% of Democrats approve of Bush compared to 98% of Republicans. The predicted change in Bush approval is only slightly smaller for threat and anxiety: there is an increased probability of .10 as perceived threat goes from low to high, and a decrease in probability of .08 for a comparable change in anxiety (for a white, male independent when all other variables are held at their mean value).

At somewhat lower levels of Bush approval the marginal effects of perceived threat are considerably larger. For example, a white, strong Democrat male who perceives no threat is .19 less supportive of Bush than a similar individual who perceives high threat, when all other variables are held at their mean. For the same type of individual, Bush support drops by −.14 as anxiety moves from its lowest to highest value. The corresponding changes for a black male who is a strong Democrat are .30 (threat) and −.22 (anxiety). For this black male Democrat (with mean values on all other variables) the predicted support for Bush is .79 when anxiety is low and .57 when it is high.

In addition to the effects of threat and anxiety, there are several other factors that influence Bush approval and increase support for overseas military involvement. Republicans were significantly more likely than Democrats to support military action; conservatives were stronger supporters than liberals of military action and were more supportive of the United States taking a leading role in world affairs. Black respondents were consistently more opposed to U.S. military and overseas involvement than were whites.

[7]The political effects of anxiety which are based on feelings toward the "terrorist attacks and the U.S. response" are not simply caused by individuals who report negative feelings because they opposed U.S. policy. When the same respondents were asked to report their feelings almost a year later (in October 2002) in reference to "anti-U.S. terrorists" but not the U.S. response, there was a strong link between anxiety measured at both time points ($r = .54$). Moreover, anxiety about terrorists, assessed in October 2002, was significantly linked to opposition to the Iraq war assessed at the same time in regression analyses with appropriate controls.

Threat and Reactions to Arabs

Americans who perceived a high future threat of terrorism not only supported aggressive action against the enemy, they were also more likely to negatively stereotype Arabs and support restrictive immigration and intensified surveillance policies directed at Arabs and Arab-Americans, in line with the expected effect of threat on out-group vilification. There was overwhelming support (85%) for toughening restrictions on visas for foreign students and other visitors to the United States. Just under half of all respondents (48%) believed that Arabs who apply for entry to the U.S. should undergo more intensive security checks than people from other countries. And 29% felt the government should put Arabs and Arab-Americans in the United States under special surveillance. In addition to these three policy questions, respondents were asked how well the following characteristics describe most Arabs: trustworthy, violent, honest, and extremist. Table 6 contains the results of probit estimates examining the origins of support for the three policy variables and regression estimates of the determinants of stereotyping. The dependent variable in the stereotyping equation is a latent variable inferred from the four indicators with units equal to one standard deviation.

The effects of perceived threat are consistent across the four equations. Perceived threat heightened support for policies that would restrict the number of foreign visitors to the United States and single out Arabs for special attention after entry and when applying for visas. Moving from low to high levels of perceived threat produces the largest increase in the probability of support for all three policies of any of the independent variables in Table 6, with only one exception (the positive effects of age on support for visa restrictions). Threat also intensifies negative stereotypes of Arabs.

In contrast, anxiety has no substantial impact on policies directed at Arabs or the endorsement of Arab stereotypes. Two coefficients for anxiety approach conventional levels of statistical significance—greater security checks and stereotyping—but in neither case does anxiety have a sizeable impact on policy views. Anxiety was not expected to decrease support for policies such as increased Arab surveillance because such policies do not pose a personal risk to the majority of Americans. We had suggested

Table 6 Determinants of Anti-Arab Policy Preferences and Attitudes

	Surveillance of Arab/Americans		More Security Checks for Arab Visitors		Greater Restrictions on Visas		Stereotyping
	Coefficient	Change in Probability	Coefficient	Change in Probability	Coefficient	Change in Probability	Coefficient
Perceived Threat	**.23** (.07)	.23	**.17** (.06)	.19	**.32** (.07)	.19	**.15** (.05)
Anxiety	.02 (.08)	.01	.12 (.07)	.11	−.11 (.08)	−.05	.07 (.04)
Age (10 years)	**.060** (.025)	.13	**.053** (.023)	.13	**.179** (.026)	.21	.025 (.021)
Education	−.022 (.017)	−.07	−.028 (.015)	−.10	.009 (.019)	.02	**−.062** (.016)
Gender (female)	−.12 (.08)	−.04	**−.15** (.07)	−.06	.02 (.09)	.00	**.23** (.07)
Race/Ethnicity							
Black	−.26 (.16)	−.09	.08 (.14)	.03	**−.38** (.15)	−.10	.13 (.11)
Hispanic	−.29 (.17)	−.10	.16 (.15)	.06	**−.36** (.17)	−.09	**.47** (.13)
Other	−.30 (.22)	−.10	.05 (.17)	.02	.04 (.21)	.01	−.00 (.14)
Authoritarianism	**.41** (.11)	.15	**.29** (.10)	.11	**.39** (.13)	.08	**.56** (.10)
Party ID (Republican)	.22 (.12)	.08	−.04 (.11)	−.01	.13 (.16)	.03	.16 (.11)
Ideology (Conservative)	**.40** (.13)	.14	**.38** (.12)	.15	**.48** (.16)	.10	**.25** (.11)
Estimated R^2	.14		.10		.21		.13

Note: Coefficients for stereotyping are weighted least-squares estimates for the latent variable described in the text. The latent variable has a unit of one standard deviation. Coefficients for the policy variables are weighted least-squares probit estimates. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Coefficients in bold have z-scores greater than 2. Changes in probability for the policy variables are differences in the probability of supporting restrictions on Arabs and Arab-Americans as each predictor variable ranges from low to high as described in footnote 6.

that anxiety might increase support for greater restrictions on those most closely linked to the 9/11 attacks, but we find no evidence for that prospect. Overall, these findings suggest that anxiety leads to an avoidance of risky action but does not promote support for retaliation or proactive policies to reduce risk.

Several other consistent effects in Table 6 deserve mention. Across all three policy variables, younger people are less supportive of restrictions on foreign visitors' access to the United States and on Arab access in particular; they are also less willing than older people to support special surveillance of Arabs and Arab-Americans in the United States. Authoritarians and conservatives are consistently supportive of restrictive immigration policies and hold more negative stereotypes of Arabs than nonauthoritarians and liberals, respectively.

Threat and Civil Liberties

Perhaps the most controversial policy discussions immediately after 9/11 centered on the government's desire to increase domestic surveillance and limit certain freedoms in order to deal with the possibility of domestic terrorism. Survey respondents were asked their views on two policies that were widely discussed after 9/11. A slight majority (56%) supported a government-mandated national identification card. Substantially fewer people (31%), however, were in favor of allowing the government to monitor the personal telephone calls and emails of ordinary Americans. Both trends are consistent with findings from national polls conducted after 9/11 (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002). We also asked respondents whether they were more concerned that the government would fail to enact strong antiterrorism laws or that new laws would excessively restrict civil liberties. The public was split on this trade-off with 45% concerned that new antiterrorism laws would not be strong enough and 55% worried about restrictions on civil liberties. The impact of threat and anxiety on support for these policies is presented in Table 7.

Perceived threat consistently increased support for domestic antiterrorism policies. Support for a national identification card and government monitoring of telephones and email rose significantly as the perceived threat of future terrorism increased. Similarly, threat was linked to a greater concern about the failure to enact strong antiterrorism measures than such laws would place undue restrictions on civil liberties. In all three equations, an increase in the threat of future terrorism produced the largest shift in the probability that someone would support civil liberties restrictions of any of the independent variables in Table 7.

TABLE 7 Determinants of Policy Preferences on Civil Liberties

	National ID Card		Phones and Email		Security vs. Civil Liberties	
	Coefficient	Change in Probability	Coefficient	Change in Probability	Coefficient	Change in Probability
Perceived Threat	**.21** (.05)	.24	**.16** (.05)	.16	**.18** (.06)	.20
Anxiety	.10 (.06)	.09	.10 (.06)	.07	.05 (.08)	.04
Age (10 years)	.022 (.019)	.05	**.061** (.020)	.12	.033 (.025)	.08
Education	**−.052** (.013)	−.19	**−.037** (.014)	−.11	−.007 (.017)	−.02
Gender (female)	**.18** (.06)	.07	.04 (.06)	.01	.11 (.08)	.04
Race/Ethnicity						
Black	−.05 (.11)	−.01	−.01 (.11)	.00	−.15 (.15)	−.06
Hispanic	.10 (.13)	.04	.27 (.13)	.10	−.23 (.16)	−.09
Other	.01 (.15)	.01	.11 (.15)	.04	.08 (.18)	.03
Authoritarianism	**.26** (.08)	.10	**.30** (.08)	.10	**.28** (.11)	.11
Party ID (Republican)	−.05 (.10)	−.02	.19 (.10)	.06	**.45** (.13)	.17
Ideology (Conservative)	.19 (.10)	.18	**.43** (.10)	.14	.26 (.13)	.10
Estimated R^2	.10		.11		.11	

Note: Coefficients are weighted least-squares probit estimates. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Coefficients in bold have z-scores greater than 2. Changes in probability are differences in the probability of supporting restrictions on civil liberties as each predictor variable ranges from low to high as described in footnote 6.

Unlike military policies, anxiety was not expected to decrease support for policies that restricted civil liberties. There is a clear link between anxiety and opposition to military action. But civil liberties policies are unlikely to result in retaliatory terrorist action and should not arouse personal concerns among most Americans. We had, in fact, suggested that anxiety could increase support for such policies because they might reduce the risk of terrorism. But as we found for policies concerning immigrants, anxiety was not associated with increased support for domestic antiterrorism policies. The coefficients for anxiety are all positive in Table 7, but none are statistically significant at conventional levels, and none of the effects are substantively large. Perceived threat increases support for heightened surveillance policies but anxiety does not. This provides further confirmation that anxious individuals are risk averse but do not actively support precautionary policies, a point to which we return in the discussion.

Discussion and Conclusions

The effects of terrorism depend heavily on how a targeted public responds, and, as demonstrated in this study, not everyone responds to the threat of external terrorism in the same way. Most Americans perceived a high level of future terrorist threat to the nation (Smith and Rasinski 2002), but only a minority expressed considerable anxiety in response to the 9/11 attacks. And these related but differing psychological reactions to the external threat of terrorism—perceived threat versus anxiety—had very different effects on public support for antiterrorism policies. As perceived threat increased, there was heightened support for a wide range of domestic and international government actions to combat the threat of terrorism, including overseas military action, a curtailment of civil liberties, and increased surveillance and tighter immigration restrictions for Arabs. In contrast, those who experienced high levels of anxiety were less supportive of aggressive military action against terrorists, generally favored increased American isolationism, and disapproved more of President Bush's performance.

These findings raise important questions about the basis of public support for government antiterrorism measures. Our analysis suggests that a perception of high terrorist threat will likely promote public support for aggressive national security policy. The Bush administration seemed aware of this link and issued terrorist alerts into the early months of 2002, perhaps helping to explain why the perceived risk of terrorism remained relatively high throughout the study period. At the same time, this strategy holds clear risks for government officials who wish to take aggressive action against terrorists. To the

extent that terrorist warnings elevate Americans' levels of anxiety, they could also undercut support for overseas military action. In order to garner public support for military action, the government must make people aware of the risk of terrorism without unduly scaring them.

Government officials involved in antiterrorism policy face an easier challenge in gaining support for domestic policies, however. Anxiety and threat do not act as countervailing forces on support for civil liberties policies as they do for aggressive international policies. As perceptions of threat increase, people become significantly more supportive of measures that restrict the rights of groups broadly associated with terrorism, and policies that limit civil liberties for all citizens more generally (for similar findings see Davis and Silver 2003, 2004). Over the long term, perceived threat provides the government with greater leeway to increase domestic surveillance and restrict civil freedoms in its fight against terrorism.

That anxiety did not heighten support for domestic antiterrorism policies is at odds with our initial expectations that it would both undermine support for risky action *and* actively foster support for domestic security policies. Anxiety leads to an avoidance of dangerous and risky situations in this research, consistent with the role of avoidance as a defining characteristic of many anxiety disorders such as phobias (LeDoux 1996; Öhman 2000). But it does not increase support for precautionary surveillance policies. This highlights an asymmetry between anxiety and avoidance and anxiety and protective actions that is observed in the literature on risk assessment more generally (Lowenstein et al. 2001). Anxiety can promote protective action in some situations in which the risks are clear and known (Lowenstein et al. 2001). But in other situations, anxiety can undermine action (Janis and Feshbach 1953; Knight and Effenbeim 1996), especially when such precautions elicit further anxious thoughts.

It should be noted that even the minority of Americans who thought there was very little future risk of terrorism supported U.S. overseas military action and tighter restrictions on student visas, helping to explain high levels of support for many antiterrorist policies. This probably reflects an immediate response to the attacks of September 11 in the absence of any concern about future terrorist incidents. But Americans who do not perceive a significant threat of future terrorism may be less inclined to support continued military action and restrictions on civil liberties over the long term. We could not detect any such decline in policy support over the time span of this study (which ended in early March, 2002) but a reduction of perceived threat remains a potential source of opposition to sustained government action within the United States and overseas.

The findings from this study lend further insight into the future trajectory of support for antiterrorism measures in the United States when we consider the potential effects of anxiety. Security threats in this and other studies increase support for military action (Jentleson 1992; Jentleson and Britton 1998; Herrmann, Tetlock, and Visser 1999). But anxious respondents were less supportive of belligerent military action against terrorists, suggesting an important source of opposition to military intervention. In the aftermath of 9/11, several factors were consistently related to heightened levels of anxiety and related psychological reactions, including living close to the attack sites (Galea et al. 2002; Piotrkowski and Brannen 2002; Silver et al. 2002), and knowing someone who was hurt or killed in the attacks (in this study). It is difficult to say what might happen if the United States were attacked again in the near future. Based on our results, it is plausible that a future threat or actual attack directed at a different geographic region would broaden the number of individuals directly affected by terrorism and concomitantly raise levels of anxiety. This could, in turn, lower support for overseas military action. In contrast, in the absence of any additional attacks levels of anxiety are likely to decline slowly over time (we observed a slow decline in this study), weakening opposition to future overseas military action.

Since our conclusions are based on analysis of reactions to a single event in a country that has rarely felt the effects of foreign terrorism, we should consider whether they can be generalized to reactions to other terrorist incidents or to reactions under conditions of sustained terrorist action. Our answer is a tentative yes, although there is no conclusive evidence on this point as yet. Some of our findings corroborate evidence from Israel, a country that has prolonged experience with terrorism. For example, Israeli researchers find that perceived risk leads to increased vilification of a threatening group and support for belligerent action (Arian 1989; Bar-Tal and Labin 2001). There is also evidence that Israelis experienced fear during the Gulf War, especially in Tel Aviv where scud missiles were aimed (Arian and Gordon 1993). What is missing, however, is any evidence that anxiety tends to undercut support for belligerent antiterrorism measures under conditions of sustained threat. For the most part, Israeli research has not examined the distinct political effects of anxiety.

In conclusion, the findings from this study provide significant new evidence on the political effects of terrorism and psychological reactions to external threat more generally. Many terrorism researchers have speculated

that acts of terrorist violence can arouse fear and anxiety in a targeted population, which lead to alienation and social and political dislocation.[8] We have clear evidence that the September 11 attacks did induce anxiety in a sizeable minority of Americans. And these emotions were strongly associated with symptoms of depression, appeared to inhibit learning about world events, and weakened support for overseas military action. This contrasted, however, with Americans' dominant reaction, which was a heightened concern about future terrorist attacks in the United States that galvanized support for government antiterrorist policy. In this sense, the 9/11 terrorists failed to arouse sufficient levels of anxiety to counteract Americans' basic desire to strike back in order to increase future national security, even if such action increased the short-term risk of terrorism at home. Possible future acts of terrorism, or a different enemy, however, could change the fine balance between a public attuned to future risks and one dominated by anxiety.

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[8]We find direct evidence that increasing anxiety after the 9/11 attacks was related to greater pessimism about the economy, less trust in other Americans, and concerns that Arab-Americans support terrorism (Huddy et al. 2003).

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