

POLS 429: International Terrorism

Lecture 23 (03.23.2020): Psychological and Social effects of Terrorism

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Overview

- 1 Quick review
- 2 Introduction
- 3 Psychological Effects
- 4 Extra Material

Review

WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

- Terrorism and voter preferences: using rocket launching.
- More evidence for valence theory.
- Turnout: emotional reaction to terrorism increase turnout.
- Survival of governments: terror attacks pose risk to coalition survival, and the role of alternative government.

Questions??

Terrorism: Psychological and Social effects

- Terrorism incidents and various psychological and social effects.
- **Puzzle 1:** Terror and threat perceptions - different types of threats, factors impacting these perceptions.
- **Puzzle 2:** Terrorism and negative emotions: Anxiety.
- **Puzzle 3:** Terrorism and negative emotions: Anger.

Psychology of Threats

- Psychology and the efficacy of terrorism.
- Psychological effects: a central aspect of terrorism that scholars have agreed upon.
- The target audience is beyond the direct victims, making psychological effects a powerful factor.
- Threat perceptions are a central psychological mechanism studied by social scientists.

Psychology of Threats

- Perceived threats, effects:
 - ① Increase intolerance and xenophobia.
 - ② Prejudice against out-group (threats to resources or status).
 - ③ Elite decision-makers: rigid, dogmatic and view adversaries in a negative way.
- Sources of threat: greater out-group bias and stronger in-group solidarity.
- External threats and risks: negative views of the out-group.

Threat perception and Anxiety

- Threat perception → public views and preferences.
- Anxiety versus perceived threat:
 - ① Harm cognitive capacity.
 - ② Higher degree of risk perception when events are personal and relevant.
 - ③ Increase risk aversion - reduce anxiety.
- Both anxiety and perceived threat are enhanced → personal experience making mortality and vulnerability more pronounced.

Threat perception and Anxiety

Huddy et al. (2005)

- Terrorism and emotional responses.
- Phone interview, 1500 participants (October 2001 - March 2002).
- First task: distinguish between threat perception and anxiety.
▶ Items
- Factor analysis: estimate latent underlying common aspects.
- Results: two distinct factors (anxiety; perceived threat).

Threat perception and Anxiety

DETERMINANTS OF ANXIETY AND PERCEIVED THREAT

- Individual and contextual factors.
- Common factors: Gender, education, and income level.
- Different factors: Age (older is less anxious), Partisanship.
- Proximity:
 - ① Temporal: less anxious and perceived threat.
 - ② Spatial: NE → higher threat perception.
NY area → more anxious.

Threat perception and Anxiety

Huddy et al. (2005)

- Emotions, policy preferences and support for president.
- **Foreign policy:**
High threat perception → support for military retaliation
High anxiety → less supportive (fear of further reprisals).
- **President approval:**
High threat perception → support for president Bush.
- Threat perception and "rally effect".

Threat perception and Anger

Vasilopoulos et al. (2019)

- Right wing support → anxiety.
- An alternative view: **anger** as the driving emotion.
- Elites raise concerns about terror threats: blaming disliked groups that violate societal norms.
- Affective Intelligence Theory (AIT): human reaction to stimuli lead to multiple emotional reactions – anxiety and anger.
- Emotions interact (enhance or reduce) with predispositions as partisanship, ideology or authoritarianism.

Threat perception and Anger

Vasilopoulos et al. (2019)

- Regional elections (France, Dec. 2015).
- 3 weeks after ISIS attacks in Paris (over 130 dead 360 wounded).
- Results: attacks invoked higher degree of **both** emotions.
- Contrasting effects on voting for right wing parties.
 - ▶ EmotionsVoting
 - ▶ IdeologyEmotionsVoting
- Increase polarization when anger 'dominates' reaction.
- Fear (or anxiety) enhances attention to political issues and actors and less partisan in vote choices.

Terrorism and Types of Threat

Huddy et al. (2002)

- What distinguishes between emotional reactions?
- Two levels of terrorism threats: personal and national.
- **Personal**: a threat of physical nature to the individual.
- **National**: a threat to an entire collective (group or nation).
- National threat → "morselize" politics: address the issue with less regard for personal stake.

Terrorism and Types of Threat

Huddy et al. (2002)

- Personal versus national threat.
- Data: national surveys collected after 9.11.
- **Personal threat:** terrorism threat increases individual's degree of insecurity about personal harm.
- Emotional reaction → change behavior to reduce risk.
- Example: local crime and neighborhood behavior (1987).

Terrorism and Types of Threat

Huddy et al. (2002)

- Threats and competing predictions:
 - Personal: Fear → support for defensive actions.
 - National: shape public views of government policies (immigration, economic).
- Distinct threats, but not unrelated - a personal concern is more likely when there is also perceived national threat.
- Survey measures: threat types [▶ Items](#)
- Factor analysis → two different types of threats.
- Personal threat is conditional upon a national threat.

Terrorism and Types of Threat

DETERMINANTS OF THREAT TYPES AND BEHAVIOR

- Common factors: Gender (men are lower in both threat types); Proximity (increase threats perception).
- Different factors: higher education reduces personal threat → base-rates and the low chances of being a victim.
- Behavior:
Personal threat → more powerful in predicting behavior that is intended to reduce potential risk (mail, air travel plans).
- National threat affect on contextual factors such as changing travel plans.

Recommended readings

More studies on the psychological and social effects of terrorism:

- 1 Gadarian, Shana Kushner. "The politics of threat: How terrorism news shapes foreign policy attitudes." *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 72, no. 2 (2010): 469-483.
- 2 Vasilopoulos, Pavlos, George E. Marcus, and Martial Foucault. "Emotional responses to the Charlie Hebdo attacks: Addressing the authoritarianism puzzle." *Political psychology*, Vol. 39, no. 3 (2018): 557-575.

Threat and Anxiety

HUDDY ET AL. (2005)

Survey Items

- "How concerned are you that there will be another terrorist attack on US soil in the near future?"
- "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?"
- "As you think about the terror attacks and US response, how often have you felt...Anxious? Scared? Worried?"

Threat types and Terrorism

HUDDY ET AL. (2002)

Survey Items

- "How concerned are you personally about you yourself or a family member being the victim of a future terrorist attack in the United States?"
- "How concerned are you that there will be another major terrorist attack on U.S. soil in the near future?"

EMOTIONS AND VOTING FOR FAR RIGHT - FRANCE 2015

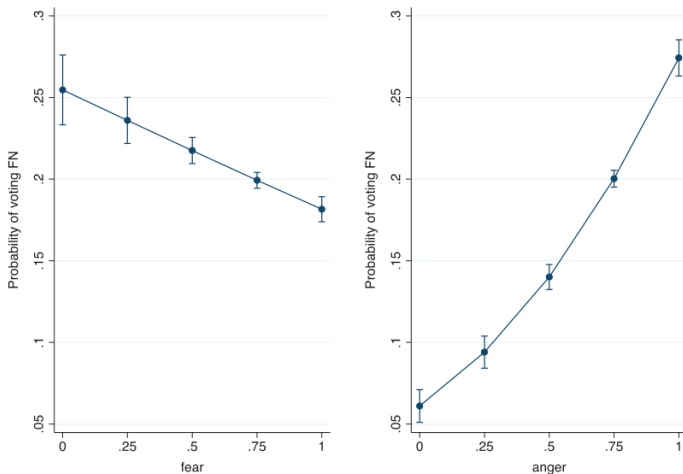


Figure 2. The direct effect of fear and anger on the probability of voting for the FN. *Source:* Enquête électorale française. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

EMOTIONS AND VOTING FOR FAR RIGHT - FRANCE 2015

