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## Counterterrorism and the Deterrence Doctrine

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*University of Tennessee - Knoxville*

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Casey E. Cordy entitled "Counterterrorism and the Deterrence Doctrine." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Sociology.

Jon Shefner, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Asafa Jalata, Lois Presser

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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COUNTERTERRORISM AND THE DETERRENCE DOCTRINE

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the  
Degree  
Masters of Arts in Sociology  
The University of Tennessee at Knoxville

Casey E. Cordy

December 2007

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my Mom Mom, Emilie Elisabeth “Betty” Sanderson who provides a constant source of inspiration and to my parents, Deborah and Leo Desjarlais and Dale and Nancy Cordy for always believing in me and making it possible for me to achieve my goals.

## **Acknowledgments**

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I want to extend special thanks to my family and friends. I will never be able to thank my parents enough for their unyielding support of my efforts and their love, even when I did not make it easy. Thanks to my brother, Dale for his wisdom and humor as well as to Jeremy for his inspiration. Finally, to my dear friends and colleagues here at UT, this experience would not have been nearly as incredible if not for you. I would be lost without my circles and threes.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter I.....	6
Terrorism as a Global Issue .....	6
Introduction.....	6
World Systems Analysis.....	6
Polyarchy .....	14
Terrorism in a Global Context .....	19
Identity Crisis and Terrorism.....	21
Conclusion .....	25
Chapter II .....	26
Deterring Terrorism .....	26
Introduction.....	26
Neoclassical Economics and Rational Choice.....	27
Rational Choice Theory .....	30
Anti-Terrorism Discourse and Efforts .....	34
Deterrence in a Post Cold War World .....	37
Assumptions of Human Motivation.....	41
The Role of Motivation.....	42
Motivation and Terrorism.....	44
Rational Choice, Motivation and Culture .....	47
Alternative Theories.....	50
Conclusion .....	58
Chapter III.....	59
Consequences of Deterrence.....	59
Introduction.....	59
Rational Choice as Hegemonic Thought .....	59
Terrorism as Political Violence .....	61
Political Consequences of Counterterrorism .....	65
Conclusion .....	73
Chapter IV.....	74
Conclusion .....	74
Bibliography .....	78
Vita.....	91

## **Introduction**

The United States presently focuses much of its energy on the prevention of terrorism through particular counterterrorism policies and strategies. Today, deterrence is the primary theoretical basis for counterterrorism policies. If the United States invests so heavily in deterrence as a counterterrorism strategy, is it successful? If not, what are its theoretical flaws? Who is best served by efforts to prevent terrorism through a deterrent project?

The meaning of terrorism is controversial and diverse definitions are offered from a variety of sources from academics to geopolitical agencies. Some definitions avoid conflating terrorism by non-state actors with state “violence” or state sponsored terrorism (Tuman 2003). Therefore, terrorism is relegated to non-state actors and groups. However, other academics argue that terrorism is an arbitrary term used to differentiate the same violence used by “legitimate” states and illegitimate non-state actors. For instance, Olivero (1998:142) suggests that terrorism encompasses its own discourse that undergoes significant changes throughout history in its development and application. “By claiming to be defining a type of violence, i.e., one that threatened the site of legitimate violence (the state), it is clear that this term is reserved for the art of statecraft”. Therefore terrorism is any violent action directed at the state and relegates state violence to another category.

Although the meaning of terrorism is controversial and defining it in a manner that does not recognize state violence is problematic, for the purposes of this thesis, I define terrorism according to the terms of the U.S.A. PATRIOT ACT. The PATRIOT ACT (Sec 802) defines terrorism as and act that is that is a violation of the criminal laws



of a state or the United States, if the act appears to be intended to: (i) intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping”. Similarly, U.S. criminal law now defines terrorism as the “premeditated, politically motivated violence against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents” (Truman 2003:6). The purpose of this thesis is to explore U.S. counterterrorism strategy and its basis within a particular (deterrence) theoretical perspective. Therefore, I am assuming that the U.S. basis its counterterrorism strategy off of its definition of what is and is not terrorism.

Preventing terrorism, as a focus of U.S. domestic and international policy is based on deterrence. What is the nature of deterrence thinking and policy? Deterrence is a prevention strategy informed by economic and criminological theories of rational choice. Rational choice posits that humans make decisions based on cost-benefit analysis. Therefore, deterrence is the practice of increasing the costs or reducing the benefits of an act in order to create disequilibrium (Becker 1968).

Assumptions about the motivation that drives human behavior including crime and terrorism are implicit and explicit within rational choice theories. These theories assume that human behavior is based on cost benefit analysis, or means ends rationality. When human behavior is analyzed through cost benefit analysis, the motivation of human actors is always the desire to increase the benefits at the least cost. Therefore, all human behavior is rational to the extent that individuals choose those behaviors that are the most beneficial and the least risky.

What are the consequences of deterrence approaches to terrorism? When terrorism is theorized as an action that is the result of a rational choice, the motivation of terrorists is reduced to a desire to increase benefits. Therefore, analysis of terrorism focus on individual actors making means ends decisions. However, rational choice theories and their relationship to deterrent measures are problematic. These theories, informed by neoclassical economic theories assume humans, at an individual level, are all rational actors motivated by utilitarian goals. Such an approach to understanding terrorism is unappreciative of the larger social contexts that shape behavior such as terrorism. They rely on the assumption that all human action is the result of rational, cost benefit calculations. Therefore, the possibility that people engage in terrorism as a collective action is eliminated when terrorism is understood within the rational choice paradigm.

Despite the problematic nature of the theories that inform counterterrorism deterrence policies, deterrence remains our political and economic priority as a way to prevent terrorism. However, without understanding the larger social, political, economic and cultural contexts in which terrorism and counterterrorism take place, we risk not only failing to prevent terrorism, but may incite it. Further, there are various domestic and international consequences that are the result of deterrence policies including power in politics, economics and civil rights, and of course fueling terrorism and violence.

This thesis will argue that a more appropriate understanding of terrorism is necessary. In order to achieve a more holistic conception of the terrorism problem, efforts should be made politically and theoretically to incorporate international relationships that include politics, economics and culture. Such an approach to understanding terrorism as a collective action that is related to various social structures is not facilitated within the

present theoretical application of deterrence to counterterrorism. Therefore, this thesis is a political and economic approach to understanding the relationship between theories of terrorism and strategies of counterterrorism. If deterrence is not the most appropriate way of addressing terrorism, then the first step to creating alternative strategies is to analyze the deterrence policies currently in place. Therefore, this thesis is a stepping stone to moving past present conceptions of how to address terrorism; in order to critique U.S. counterterrorism strategy and understand why deterrence is employed as a strategy so that we can create more suitable counterterrorism strategies.

Chapter One will present various international relations theories including world systems analysis, polyarchy and the globalization of culture (Wallerstein 1997, Robinson 1996, Swidler 1986). First, I outline how these concepts and theories are useful for understanding terrorism as well as our responses to terrorism. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an understanding of terrorism within a global context; a context that is neglected by a deterrence approach to terrorism.

In Chapter Two, I provide a detailed critique of rational choice, routine activities and deterrence. In particular, I provide a critique of rational choice for its assumptions of utilitarian motivation and its methodological individualism. Then, I argue for a broader understanding of terrorist motivation that takes into account global structures of politics, economics and culture. Finally, I present the work of various scholars who begin to move beyond a strictly deterrence approach to understanding and addressing terrorism.

Chapter Three is a description of the various consequences of deterrence as a counterterrorism doctrine. I demonstrate that the deterrence policies of the United States have real political and economic consequences, not just for people in the U.S., but for

people around the world. In particular, I link the benefits of deterrence practices to international elites and the costs of deterrence to those caught in the crossfire between terrorism and counterterrorism.

## **Chapter I**

### **Terrorism as a Global Issue**

#### *Introduction*

Terrorism is presently one of the most significant issues facing America. Our responses to terrorism are rooted in the way we understand or theorize terrorist actions. The U.S. currently employs a deterrent approach to counterterrorism, which theorizes terrorism at the individual level. From the deterrent perspective, terrorism is the result of cost benefit calculations made by individual rational actors. In other words, the assumption that people commit terrorism when the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs or risks (rational choice) informs our counterterrorism strategy.

Counterterrorism policies based on deterrence employ methodological individualism and therefore do not consider larger social, political and economic contexts. This chapter begins to describe the global context in which terrorism takes place through a world systems perspective. Additionally, this chapter addresses the political process of democracy promotion, the globalization of culture and the impact of globalization on collective grievances. Once the global context of terrorism is outlined, I will provide a detailed critique of deterrence as counterterrorism strategy that is not appreciative of the globalization processes described here.

#### *World Systems Analysis<sup>1</sup>*

Terrorism, as a political response to cultural and political inequalities requires a framework that incorporates the global context of terrorism. World systems analysis

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<sup>1</sup> I am purposely using world systems “analysis” rather than “theory”. In 1997, Wallerstein, possibly in response to critiques of his theory (or lack thereof) by others such as Stinchome (1982), claims that world systems is a critical perspective of the world as well as a critique of other perspectives. It is to be considered a stepping stone toward a theory.

provides a global framework within which terrorism is understood as an international act of collective political violence that may arise in response to collective grievances. If terrorists operate outside nation state boundaries by employing a concept of sovereignty that is essentially “post-national”, one that shares “the strategies of global corporations” and employs the use of internet communication to facilitate networking and organization, then our understanding of terrorism must be “post-national” as well (Buck-Morss 2007:5). One way to understand terrorism as a ‘post-national’ phenomenon, is through the lens of world systems analysis. Immanuel Wallerstein proposes a sociological analysis of international relations within a capitalist framework. He suggests that we are not isolated nation states, but are in a period in history where all nations are part of a world economy—a world system that lacks a single, unified political system (Wallerstein 1976). Although there is no unifying political system, a world system does have a single division of labor. The world economy is made up of three types of geographical areas: core, periphery and semi-periphery.

The core areas are those that are economically and politically dominant within the system. Core areas, of which the United States is one, produce technologically advanced goods and incur the most benefit from trade with the semi-periphery and periphery. The semi-periphery acts as a buffer between the core and the periphery. It exploits the resources from the periphery, but with less benefit than the core and exploited by the core simultaneously. Intensive economic processes occur in the peripheral areas using coercive labor practices and resource extraction. Economic and labor exchange is made between the three types of areas. However, the core absorbs most of the economic rewards of the trade, while the periphery suffers the most loss economically and

ecologically. The unequal distribution of costs and rewards between the core and periphery occurs within the process of development of the world system as well as its maintenance. As the world economy expands and proliferates, the “disparity of rewards between different sectors...as a whole may be simultaneously widening” (Wallerstein 1976:230).

The role of the nation state within a world system is to protect the capitalist class goal of acquiring capital. Elites maintain influence over the state instrumentally; serving in a political role themselves or using their power to influence state decisions and structurally, because the state has to preserve the capitalist economy and that results in benefiting the elite class. The interstate competition for capital in a world economy requires the state to act in the best interest of the national elite class in order to remain competitive (Shannon 1992).

Nation states have two types of power; despotic and infrastructural. Despotic power is the ability to operate and make decisions without the influence of the members of civil society. Infrastructural power refers to the state’s ability to create and implement policies and exercise control in a manner that affects those in civil society (Mann 1986). The most successful nation states or the most influential within the world economy are those states that operate with a high level of infrastructural power (Shannon 1992). In fact, since the end of WWII, the nation states’ first priority is to implement policies that are meant to preserve social and political order while insuring the conditions necessary for economic accumulation and expansion (Dahms 2005). Therefore, states are the source of domestic and international policies that serve the interests of the capitalist class.

The state system in the world system is sustained through the simultaneous weakening of alternative organizational forms. For instance, the state gains legitimacy through their claims to control the population, and territory. States also control the use and means of violence. In other words, only states can give, sell, buy or trade weapons to other states. Non-state actors are not permitted to obtain or use weapons. Further, alternative organizing strategies such as religious or ethnic groups lose legitimacy as states gain power and come to be viewed as reactionary groups. Terrorist organizations are non-state actors who cannot legitimately obtain and use weapons, control the population or territories (Meyer 1980). Therefore, even though terrorists are non-state actors, they recognize the role of the state has having the infrastructural power to make policy decisions and implement them. Attacking the state is a way of attacking the source of policy.

Recent evidence supports Wallersteins' claim that inequality between nations exists and is increasing. Although evidence suggests that core - periphery relationships result in income growth, most of the growth occurs within core countries. Further, income growth disproportionately benefits those who are already in elite positions within most nations (Shannon 1992). For instance, according to the 2006 Population Reference Bureau, the gross national income (GNI) in purchasing power parity (PPP) for the United States in 2005 was \$41,950.<sup>2</sup> Comparable GNI's to the United States were the United Kingdom's (\$32,690), France (\$30,540) and Canada (\$32,220). Countries such as Syria

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<sup>2</sup> This indicates that each person in the U.S. has the purchasing power to spend \$41,950 over a one year period if every person held an equal amount of wealth.



(\$3,740), Saudi Arabia (\$14,740), Bangladesh (\$2,090) and Iran (\$8,050) have significantly less purchasing power compared to Western nations<sup>3</sup>.

Similarly, wealth disparities exist within countries and regions. The *2004 Iraq Living Conditions Survey* concluded that the level of income inequality in Iraq is relatively low compared to Jordan and Iran. However, the Gini coefficient on income inequality increased from 35.1 in 2003 to 41.5 in 2004. Most households in Iraq rely on food rations in addition to any available household income and household income varies according to geographic locations within Iraq.

The *Human Development Report* also offers evidence that inequalities, not just in wealth, but well-being are not decreasing despite efforts to develop the less developed regions of the world. According to the *Human Development Report*, the wealthiest 500 people in the world have more income (excludes assets) than the other 416 million people<sup>4</sup>. The report concludes that, “Wealth accumulation at the top of the global income distribution has been more impressive than poverty reduction at the bottom” (HDR 2006:269). In addition to the PPP, the report also uses a composite measure of adult literacy and enrollment as well as life expectancy to determine the level of human well being in various states and regions. For instance, life expectancy at birth in Arab States is 67.3 years, Afghanistan is 46 years and Iraq is 58.8 years. Adult literacy rates, measured as the percent of the population over the age of 15 who are literate include 69.9% for Arab States, 28.1% for Afghanistan and 74.1% for Iraq.

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<sup>3</sup> GNI PPP are not currently available for countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Regionally, Western Asia’s GNI is \$7,500 and South Central Asia’s GNI is \$3,330 compared to North America’s GNI of \$40,980.

<sup>4</sup> The number in the 2006 HDR reflect statistics collected in 2004.

The *Arab Human Development Report* (2002) offers information on the developmental “progress” of the Arab region over the last 20 years. The report suggests that literacy rates, education and life expectancy show improvement, but income growth remains extremely low. In fact, as of 2003, the GDP per capita for Arab states was \$5,370. Moghaddam (2006:74) reports similar findings, “of the thirty-four less developed countries that have significant oil and natural gas resources, up to half the population in twelve of these countries live on less than \$1 a day”. Therefore, a majority of people in oil rich nations have not benefited from the generation of oil wealth. In fact, by 1998, the real income for those living in Arab states fell to 13.9% of the real income of Western nations. These figures suggest that strong core states are able to profit from the resource extraction from peripheral areas. These profits are not restricted to core nations however an international alliance of elite classes from various nations benefit from the extraction and distribution of oil and natural gas. Therefore, the benefits of income growth are not restricted to nation state boundaries, nor do they benefit all people equally.

The process of globalization that includes a world economy and produces unequal costs and rewards may indirectly influence terrorism in two ways. First, as Wallerstein points out, globalization weakens the role of individual nation states in the global economy, although some nation states maintain a comparatively strong role within the world economy in relation to peripheral and semi-peripheral states. Strong states are those that are capable of implementing policies even in the face of international and domestic objections. Strong states are able to pursue policies that support elite class

interests regardless of internal or external protest<sup>5</sup> (Hopkins et al 1982). According to Moghadam (2006) the lessening importance of the nation state, particularly in developing areas, may threaten people's identities to the point where people no longer identify themselves along national lines, but identify themselves ethnically and/or religiously. These shifting identities can lead to violence as a response to those who pose a threat to traditional cultures.

Second, some argue that relative deprivation makes it possible for terrorist organizations to recruit those who are not benefiting from the global economy. In particular, terrorist groups such as Hezbollah provide welfare services to those who are in need when the nation state cannot or does not. Therefore, Hezbollah is able to gain support from the poorer populations (Moghadam 2006; Moghaddam 2006).

World systems theorists offer three explanations of the relationship between globalization and anti-U.S. terrorism. The first model argues that anti-U.S. terrorism is related to the hegemonic decline of the United States since the Cold War. They argue that after the Cold War, the world went through a reordering of alliances and enemies within the core as well as political and economic restructuring in semiperipheral areas. As the role of the U.S. as a hegemonic core country changed, terrorism became both a catalyst and a response to the changing roles of the core and semiperipheral nations within the world economy (Bergesen and Lizardo 2005; Lizardo 2006).

Conversely, the "interstate dominance model" of terrorism rejects the idea that terrorism has a relationship to the hegemonic decline of the United States. Instead, Sobeck and Braithwaite (2005) suggest quite the opposite; terrorism increases as

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<sup>5</sup> The strength of the state power held by the U.S was demonstrated when the U.S. invaded Iraq without U.N. approval and with no repercussions.

hegemonic power increases. They argue that as hegemonic power increases, people begin to concentrate on the effects of global hegemonic sources of foreign policy and away from the comparably less powerful actors within the system. Therefore, international actors begin to shift their objections and grievances away from smaller (usually more local) political actors to the more powerful global hegemon. “Dominance from this point of view leads to an increase in the impact of the hegemon’s foreign policy on a wider geographical scale, which may lead to an increase in dissatisfaction with these policies and a more proactive attempt to alter them” (Lizardo 2006:151). Sobeck and Braithwaite (2005) found empirical support for their hypothesis that anti-U.S. terrorism increases along with an increase in American dominance in the world system<sup>6</sup>.

Finally, Lizardo (2006) in an attempt to build upon the hegemonic rise and decline models of anti-U.S. terrorism, which explain the factors that allow terrorism to occur, suggests that economic globalization and cultural globalization can explain the changes in frequency and intensity of terrorist incidents. Lizardo (2006:152) hypothesizes that adding the influence of “world cultural models, recipes and schemas constitutive of actors, goals and actions” to the global economic processes in order to contextualize terrorism “provide(s) a meaningful context for the active expression of anti-hegemonic expressions of grievances on the global stage”. He finds that the spread of cultural values such as individuality, organization and social action mediate the effects of economic and

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<sup>6</sup> Sobeck and Braithwaite (2005) tested their time series model between 1968 and 1996.

political globalization by providing frameworks of meaningful ways to engage in anti-hegemonic violent protest<sup>7</sup>.

Global market exchange also provides the conditions for the exchange of culture. The globalization of Western values such as consumerism and individualism are often seen as threatening to cultures that value community, shared resources and alternative social structures (Moghaddam 2006). Historically, when Europe came to hold a dominant position within the world market, other cultures who employed traditional methods of production (as opposed to industrial methods) and held “traditional” world views were either absorbed or coerced into assimilating into the European model of production and consumption. Although assimilation occurred to varying degrees in different geographic areas, ethnic ties and traditional values weakened and sometimes severed completely. Through the process of assimilation and absorption, the traditional world views that gave meaning to people’s lives were replaced or impeded upon by the “spiritual emptiness of modernism” (Shannon 1992:207).

### *Polyarchy*

Moghaddam (2006) suggests that the global perspective of terrorism also needs to take into account the spread or exportation of democracy. One of the goals of the War in Iraq is the implementation of a secular democratic government. Further, the U.S. assumes that a democratic government will act as a deterrent to future terrorist attacks (Monten

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<sup>7</sup> Wallerstein suggests that the attacks on 9/11 were the result of turning verbal assaults and complaints into physical. Prior to 9/11, Americans could “afford” to ignore global complaints. Therefore, 9/11 became a meaningful way of expressing that which was not being effectively communicated otherwise.

2005). Therefore, a world systems perspective also calls for an examination of the present and historical process of democracy promotion.

Within a world systems perspective, Robinson (1996) refers to the imposition of political forms as democracy promotion or 'polyarchy'. Democracy promotion is related to power, the globalization of politics and economic relations within a global society. Low intensity democracy, or polyarchy is a political system that is not restricted within national borders, but operates within a global economy and is maintained by transnational elites.

According to Robinson (1996:35), the international elite are currently promoting neo-liberal economics and polyarchy throughout the world. The promotion of democracy, or polyarchy, is the political pathway through which the U.S. is attempting to broaden and deepen Iraq, Afghanistan's and the Middle East's involvement in the market economy across the globe. Within the promotion of polyarchy and neo-liberalism, the elite wish to create the conditions for the "complete mobility of capital". Polyarchy is made up of a minority of elites who are responsible for making decisions that affect the entire society. The promotion of polyarchy protects elite interests and investments because it does not allow for a true representative democracy to form (Robinson 1996). The ideology behind polyarchy promotion, including outside support of authoritarian regimes, is one that makes business operation and military accessibility a priority (Herman 1983:44-45). For example, in 2006, Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz announced that the new Iraqi government would not be set up by the United Nations. Rather, the U.S. would set up a interim regime. However, with the U.S. solely in charge on creating a temporary government in Iraq; "by the time the Iraqi people have a say in

choosing a government, the key economic decisions about their country's future will have been made by their occupiers” (Klein 2003:14).

Robinson (1996) suggests that international policy examinations be linked to the social and political economy of states, as well as the “extended policy making community which mediates the link between agency and structure in the development of policy” (Robinson 1996:26-27). Therefore, the background and foreground of policies as well as the extended policymaking community (corporations, think tanks and elected or appointed officials) need to be considered in order to arrive at a more holistic picture of policy development and practice.

The promotion of democracy, particularly within Islamic states, is viewed with suspicion by those living in those areas. Moghaddam (2006) names three reasons why democracy promotion by the U.S. is not viewed as legitimate. First, the terrorists (and arguably others) do not believe that the U.S. wants to implement a form of true democracy to others. Rather, the U.S. wants to promote a form of polyarchy where the international elite, including the United States elites can operate some form of control over the newly democratic nations. The assumption that the U.S. does not really want to implement democracy comes from historical examples of U.S. efforts to stymie democratic movements in other non-Western regions; Iran, Algeria, Venezuela, and Egypt to name a few (Moghaddam 2006; Johnson 2000; Blum 2004).

Second, the U.S. appears to be interested in promoting democracies only when those governments or elections result in pro-American governments. For example, Hugo Chavez of Venezuela was popularly elected and anti-American. The U.S. sees him as a major threat to U.S. political and economic interests, yet is status as a democratically

elected leader remains opposed by the U.S. government. In Iraq too, the U.S. was involved in the manipulation of elections and the media in order to bring to power pro-American Iyad Alawi (Moghaddam 2006)<sup>8</sup>.

Third, Islamic fundamentalists are opposed to U.S. polyarchy because a secular form of government does not fit in with their traditional forms of religious government. Democracy threatens to reshape how people relate to each other and would allow them to create new social and political relationships and structures.

The use of democracy promotion by the U.S. is objected to by nations where the U.S. is trying to manipulate elections. For instance, the “free elections” held in Dubai in August 2007 are controversial because although the citizens voted in a democratic election, they did not vote America’s choice into power. America’s ability to manipulate elections by supporting a particular party appears to be weakening. This scenario is “the paradox of American policy in the Middle East – promoting democracy on the assumption it will bring countries closer to the West – is that almost everywhere there are free elections, the American-backed side tends to lose”<sup>9</sup> (Fattah 2007). The paradox also seems to be that other countries recognize that there is something anti-democratic about U.S. support for one party, rather than U.S. support for all citizens. Further, citizens in other nations believe that America’s involvement in elections emboldens internal conflicts and makes the ruling elites defensive of their power positions, which makes them less willing to make compromises. Therefore, Arab politicians are turning away

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<sup>8</sup> Moghaddam’s (2006) points one and two above are not only voiced by Islamic extremists or Iraqis. Concerns over the promotion of democracy also come from other people globally including those in Western Europe who typically act as American allies.

<sup>9</sup> New York Times, “U.S. Backs Free Elections, Only to See Allies Lose”.



from U.S. support for free elections and are relying on support from ethnic, religious and tribal groups and powers (Fattah 2007).

Democracy also operates as an ideology. As the paradox of democracy described above suggests, democracy promotion offers all people an equal say in how their political decisions are made. In reality, the elite interests, including elites from the U.S. often have more influence on the outcomes of decisions, economic structures and political alliances than the general population. Yet, with at least the semblance of a democracy in place, resistance against authority may be more difficult. The legitimating characteristic of democracy may in fact reduce some articulations of opposition. Therefore, the purpose of democracy promotion is aimed “not only at mitigating the social and political tensions produced by elite-based and undemocratic status quos, but also at suppressing popular and mass aspirations for more thoroughgoing democratization of social life” (Robinson 1996:6). The Iraqis have not only been denied their right to vote for a representative without U.S. interference, but they are left out of the decision making process as far economic decisions and reconstruction efforts.

“Entirely absent from this debate (the privatization of oil by multinationals) are the Iraqi people, who might—who knows?—want to hold on to a few of their assets. Iraq will be owed massive reparations after the bombing stops, but without any real democratic process, what is being planned is not reparations, reconstruction or rehabilitation. It is robbery: mass theft disguised as charity; privatization without representation” (Klein 2003:15).

If terrorism is in fact taking place internationally and within a globalized world, then theories of terrorism need to place terrorism within a global context. The global contextualization of terrorism allows us to explore the larger political, economic and

cultural structures rather than focusing on individual actors. Terrorism needs to be explored through a world-systems lens that illuminates the imposition of political, economic and cultural structures. The following serves as a description of attempts to place terrorism within a global perspective.

### *Terrorism in a Global Context*

Terrorism may, in fact have less to do with individual characteristics and decision-making than a deterrent policy suggests (Arena and Arrigo 2005). Rather, researchers such as Moghaddam (2006) suggest that in order to explain and properly address terrorism, he recommends that we attempt to take the “terrorists’ point of view”<sup>10</sup>. Taking the perspective of terrorists is difficult because our current orientations focus on individuals and small groups, rather than the larger picture that incorporates the social contexts; the contexts that Moghaddam (2006) suggests create social inequalities.

First, the motivation of terrorists is difficult to comprehend because most people cannot imagine taking their own lives, let alone taking the lives of others in the process of a suicidal mission or other terrorist act. Because suicidal terrorism is beyond comprehension to most people, we explain terrorist actions by assuming that they must be insane, irrational or simply immoral. This assumption, however, restricts our capacity to understand the terrorist phenomenon as something that requires a more comprehensive worldview than focusing on rational/irrational, sane/insane individuals.

Taking the view of terrorists, Moghaddam (2006) suggests that terrorists are a) rational and b) believe they act morally. They rationally implement plans to bring

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<sup>10</sup> Criminologists such as Jack Katz also suggest that taking the perspective of offenders rather than victims offers special insight into the criminal event as well as the processes that lead to criminal acts.

attention to their causes or concerns. They believe they are acting morally in response to the immoral actions of others. For instance, the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> were rationally planned attacks aimed at the United States geographically as well as its citizens<sup>11</sup>. Terrorists consider citizens of the U.S responsible, at least in part for the U.S. policies that affect international relations. In particular, the voting public is responsible for electing representatives who create and implement policies that affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq and the Middle East (Moghaddam 2006). Therefore, the citizens become the logical target of terrorist attacks physically and psychologically. Further, terrorists are employing a method that “legitimate” states use as an international policy, overtly or covertly: violence. Terrorists are using violent methods, just as nation states invoke the use of violence when deemed necessary.

If terrorists do indeed take such a perspective, then a limited view of terrorism through a deterrence lens will not illuminate the political context described above. In order to gain a better understanding of the social (political, economic) context of terrorism, we must first expand our perspective beyond the context of rational actors and even beyond groups or nation states. We need to view terrorism from a world system perspective. If the terrorists do not see themselves as limited to geographic territorial boundaries, but rather employ transnational violent tactics to express political and cultural grievances, a world system’s perspective provides an appropriate framework for illuminating the global context. World systems, therefore, provides a theoretical entry into the political violence of non-state actors.

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<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that many people from around the world lost their lives on September 11<sup>th</sup>, and not just Americans.

Moghaddam's (2006) vision of terrorism as rational moral action encourages us to view terrorism as a political action. In particular, terrorism is political action employed by those with fewer resources than an established nation state. Whereas established, sovereign nation states have the military means and sovereign right to employ violence in the name of the collective, terrorist organizations have fewer resources. Further, state violence in the name of a collective is legitimate warfare; terrorism is political action by other means (Buck Morss 2007). Moghadam (2006) refers to use of violence by non-state actors as "asymmetric warfare" waged in the name of a collective against a sovereign nation through whatever means are available. Examples of non-state collectivities that employ or have employed political violence include the Irish Republican Army, Hezbollah and Hamas. However, the discourses involved in deterrence as a counterterrorism strategy dismisses terrorism as a political strategy by claiming that terrorists are illegitimate, non-state actors. Such discourses reduce terrorists to individual actors with radical goals that threaten the legitimacy of 'real states' rather than viewing terrorism as a collective political action.

### *Identity Crisis and Terrorism*

Moghaddam (2006) describes a process in which Islamic terrorists find themselves attracted to terrorism and terrorist organizations as way of engaging in effective social action. He describes this process as a staircase that individuals climb as they attempt to respond to social conditions and crisis. First, people in areas that are experiencing extreme inequality, little political influence and cultural transformations begin to search for a way to improve their living conditions. Expressing dissatisfaction

becomes increasingly difficult and frustrating when there are few resources available, and those resources are monopolized by an elite minority. The democratic processes that are supposed to offer all individuals an equal opportunity to vote and participate in the free market, are not operating in a manner that allows all people to feel included or effective politically. The inability to create change and take control over one's own life increases frustration, anger, shame and hostility. In many Muslim countries, opposition and critique to political, economic and social conditions are not tolerated and are relegated to the mosque. Therefore, religion becomes one way in which to mobilize against perceived injustices.

The direction Muslims would like to take their societies is highly splintered internally, which adds to the already tumultuous conditions economically, politically and culturally. Disagreements on the path society should take to achieve true Islam leads to conflict between Islamic groups. For instance, there are contradictory opinions as to the role and rights of women, some factions would like to see a return to what they call "pure Islam", and others advocate creating societies that are copies of the West. Some individuals and groups therefore, become motivated to seek out effective ways of change through different "religious, nationalist, ethnic and personal causes" (Moghaddam 2006:58).

Next, the grievances of those living in Muslim societies, particularly those lead by dictators and supported by the U.S., are directed toward the U.S. and away from the local leadership. Moghaddam's (2006) suggestion that individuals begin to place the source of their grievance with U.S. policy supports the "interstate dominance model" of terrorism (Sobeck and Braithwaite 2005). However, Moghaddam (2006) goes so far as to suggest

that dictators and powerful elites within Muslim nations play a role in aiming dissatisfaction toward the West and as a distraction from grievances aimed at internal elites.

The recognition of the West as a source of globalization and responses to it are shaped by various ideologies. According to Snow and Byrd (2007) terrorists and terrorist organizations use various discursive methods to frame the globalization problem, offer the means to alleviate the problem and motivate individuals to take action. First, diagnostic framing identifies a social problem that is in need of rectification and assigns blame or responsibility for that grievance. Similarly, Arena and Arrigo (2005:501) find that the identification of a grievance “casts members of a particular ethnic, racial, religious or political affiliation into a perceived threatened position” that requires a response.

The rhetoric involved in the identification and construction of a grievance contributes to a victim identity; one that embodies an extreme sense of persecution. For instance, Islamic fundamentalist believe that the infiltration of Western culture and values is a threat to their way of life. They loathe the materialism, not only of the West, but their own elites. The answer to this problem, according to militant leaders, is to stimulate a cohesive identity and strongly embracing the values of Islam.

Of course, the West is not described as the most important source of grievances within all diagnostic frames. For instance, Palestinian movements, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hezbollah are focused on nationalism (Snow and Byrd 2007). What is important to note, is that the identification of a social problem and the expression of the

necessity to change the problem is “a necessary condition for targeted collective action” (Snow and Byrd 2007).

Prognostic framing is equally as important for the implementation of collective action as the diagnosis. Prognostic framing offers more specific paths of action to alleviate the social problem that has been diagnosed. For example, a 2005 letter from al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden’s advisor, to the self proclaimed leader of al Qaeda in Iraq al-Zarqawi states,

The first stage: Expel the Americans from Iraq. The second stage: Establish an Islamic authority or emirate, then develop it and support it until it achieves a level of caliphate. The third stage: Extend the jihad wave to secular countries neighboring Iraq<sup>12</sup> ....

In order for people to take violent collective action, they must also adhere to motivational framing processes. Motivational processes provide not only the rationale for action, but also the alleviation of fear or risk. Osama bin Laden called on Muslims to take action against American and its allies as part of his 1998 fatwa when he declared that it was the *religious duty* of all Muslims to use violence against the aggressors (Snow and Byrd 2007). Similarly, if individuals and groups accept the diagnosis and prognosis framing and define the situation as one that requires action, inaction becomes immoral and unacceptable (Arena and Arrigo 2005).

Religious ideology as motivational framing is also important in regards to suicide bomber because suicide is sacrilegious to the Muslim faith. However, the promise of martyrdom and the call to fulfill a moral obligation alleviate fear and rationalize the risk involved in carrying out such a task. Further, potential terrorists may draw “upon

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Snow and Byrd (2007:128)

components of the victim-oriented position that defines the person's oppressed status, role taking here means that some sort of violent response is warranted (even necessary and just): one that is intended to reclaim what has been lost or otherwise endangered" (Arena and Arrigo 2005:501). The martial role, or the move towards violent action, is fully embraced when the terrorist act is committed. In other words, when the potential terrorist becomes an actual terrorist, they are living out their martial identities in an attempt to influence society.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter outlined the complex problem of terrorism within a global context. First, globalization requires us to think about terrorism on a global level, rather than strictly an individual level. Second, economic globalization and democracy promotion create global inequities in terms of material resources and political power. Third, cultural globalization threatens traditional ways of life through absorption and assimilation. These global processes have real consequences on the individuals living in these societies. However, as we will see in the next chapter, rational choice theories of terrorism do not encourage the incorporation of these globalization processes into analysis of terrorism and the development of counterterrorism policies.



## **Chapter II**

### **Deterring Terrorism**

#### *Introduction*

The previous chapter addressed the global context in which terrorism takes place. In this chapter, I will introduce and critique U.S. counterterrorism strategy and its basis in rational choice theory. Despite the global context described in the previous chapter, in many ways one can look at counterterrorism strategy as a perspective that fails to take that context into account. Counterterrorism policy is based on deterrence, or the idea that terrorism can be prevented by increasing the costs and reducing the benefits of engaging in terrorist behavior. Deterrence, as a way to influence behavior is based on the idea of rational choice. Historically, rational choice theories of human behavior were based in neoclassical economics. Neoclassical economic theories of rational choice are critiqued based on methodological flaws. Specifically, rational choice is based on methodological individualism and instrumentalism. Human behavior is assumed to be the result of rational cost-benefit analysis that is divorced from the social conditions of the actor. Terrorism is a complex phenomenon that requires a multifaceted understanding. However, the assumption that people engage in terrorism because it appears more rewarding than alternative behaviors does not allow for a more detailed exploration of where motivation comes from, or why some people commit terrorism.

I will begin this chapter by explaining neoclassical economic rational choice theory as it relates to rational choice theory in criminology, deterrence and routine activities theory. Next, I will critique rational choice for its methodological flaws and assumptions of motivation. From this critique of assumed motivation, I demonstrate why

understanding motivation is crucial to understanding terrorism; structural inquiry into motivation provides a link between structure (neglected by deterrence approaches) and action. Finally, I give some examples of social scientists who are proposing alternative approaches to understanding terrorism that begin to move beyond strictly deterrence based, utilitarian rational actor models.

### *Neoclassical Economics and Rational Choice*

Neoclassical economic theories contain three axioms. Neoclassicism is based on a) methodological individualism, b) methodological instrumentalism and c) methodological equilibrium. Neoclassical economic theories assume that people have identifiable rational preferences; they seek to maximize their utility and people act according to available information. Deterrence theories (rational choice) is based on neoclassical economic theories, specifically neo-classical economic theories that are now being used to explain non-economic spheres of social life and shape our perspectives on issues such as crime and terrorism.

Arnsperger and Varoufakis (2006) identify two problems that are components of all of neoclassical theories. First, neoclassicism is problematic because it fails to elucidate economic reality, and therefore, its extension to explaining social reality is problematic as well. Second, despite the methodological flaws of rational choice theory, neoclassicism is successful because of its discursive value, but that value is driven politically within economic research and prevents the possibility of alternative theories becoming dominant<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> See discussion of intellectual hegemony in Gramsci (1971) and Thompson (1997).

Methodological individualism is problematic because it divorces the agent from her structure by theorizing action at the individual level only. When structure is considered, it is analyzed from the relationship of the agent's influence on structure. The "explanatory trajectory remains one that begins with the agent and maps unidirectionally onto structure" despite the recognition that the agent is a "creature" of her social context (Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2006:4).

Equally problematic is neoclassical economists' use of methodological instrumentalism. Methodological instrumentalism is based on the assumption that all human behavior is driven by preferences or an effort to maximize preference satisfaction. Some economic theories, such as game theory, have branched out to include the effect of structure and historical interaction on an agent's preferences. However, these theories continue to adhere to means-ends instrumentalism (Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2006).

Lastly, neoclassical economics is based on methodological equilibration. Equilibration fills a gap between micro explanatory methods (individualism and instrumentalism) and the macro level, which allows prediction at the social or extra-individual level. "Thus, neoclassical theoretical exercises begin by postulating the agents' utility functions, specifying their constraints, and stating their 'information' or belief" (Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2006:4). Methodological equilibration, then, is based on the question of what behavior should be expected given equilibrium. However, the existence of equilibrium is taken as a given i.e. the possibility, probability or how equilibrium "materializes" is not part of the explanatory project (Thompson 1997). Equilibrium is the assumption that "agents' beliefs are systematically and consistently aligned" (Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2006:5). Arnsperger and Varoufakis (2006:4) name

three steps in the process of methodological equilibration: a) someone finds a system of equilibrium, b) the theorist assumes that “agents (or their behavior) will find themselves in equilibrium and c) once at that equilibrium, any changes in the system will still fail to change individuals from pursuing their self interest. Equilibrium is based on timelessness and certainty. The timelessness of equilibrium, the assumption of rational time or a time span in which whatever needs to happen will ultimately occur, allows for the universal applicability of economic theory (Thompson 1997).

Neoclassical economics is also problematic because this theory and methodology are now being applied to understand other, non-economic spheres of social life. In his lecture for the acceptance of the Nobel Prize, Gary S. Becker (1992) summarized the various areas in which he believes the economic approach is a proper method of analysis for understanding social life. In particular, he discusses economic research on discrimination, crime and punishment, human capital and the family. For instance, he claims that in human capital theory, “people rationally evaluate the benefits and costs of activities such as education, training, expenditures on health, migration and formations of habits that radically alter the way they are” (Becker 1992:402). Similar analyses are made about the family. The decisions concerning marriage, divorce, and children are determined by a cost-benefit ratio of the advantages and disadvantages of each action to an alternative action. The application of neoclassical economic theories to various realms of social life reduces human action to market analyses<sup>14</sup>. Rational choice theory in

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<sup>14</sup> Economists such as Hirshleifer (1985) describes the initial success that economics has enjoyed when it is employed to understand various realms of social life , but also admits that within these realms doubts have emerged that still need to be addressed. For instance, economists have still not answered the question of why, when given the same opportunities and constraints, some people engage in crime, while others obey the law.

economics and its subsequent development in criminology is an example of the extension of economic theories to explain other human behaviors.

### *Rational Choice Theory*

Rational choice theory, an analytical tool to explain and understand individual behaviors and decisions, claims individuals engage in behaviors after calculating the perceived costs and benefits of that action. Rational choice theory developed out of utilitarian philosophies of the eighteenth century as well as the “expected utility” principal in economics. Put simply, the expected utility principle suggests that people will engage in those activities that they predict will produce the greatest returns or rewards while simultaneously reducing the costs. According to rational choice applications to criminology, crime occurs when the perceived benefits (thrill, money, respect) of engaging in illegal activities outweigh the perceived costs or risks (capture, punishment) of those activities (Becker 1968). The decision to commit a crime is therefore based on the probability and severity of possible benefits of crime versus the probability and severity of punishment. Likewise, crime may be prevented by altering the probable cost-to-benefit ratio so that it exceeds unity (Bentham 1948). Deterrence is the practice of altering the cost-benefit ratio through the use of formal sanctions in order to prevent crime.

Deterrence is rooted in rational choice thought and states that “swift, certain and severe sanctions for criminal acts reduce crime” (Akers and Sellers 2004:30). The swiftness, certainty and severity of punishment increase the costs or risks of engaging in illegal activity. Although Beccaria (1764) and Bentham (1781) advocated the need for the

swiftness, celerity and severity of punishment, research demonstrates that the certainty of punishment is the most important element for deterrence purposes where certainty is the likelihood of detection, apprehension and punishment. Further, deterrence can be general or specific. Whereas general deterrence refers to the punishment of an offender as an exemplar to deter others, specific deterrence refers to the punishment of an offender to deter that particular individual from repeating the law violation (Zimring and Hawkins 1973).

Since rational choice theories stipulate that crime can be reduced through increasing the risks for criminals, the theory also serves as a theory of punishment that can then inform policy. For example, Becker (1993) claims that the U.S. Sentencing Commission explicitly employs deterrence and rational choice in their development of sentencing rules. The economic approach to crime and crime prevention has become commonplace.

Similar to the popularity of rational choice and deterrence in crime analyses, economists are also employing rational choice models to understand terrorism and inform counterterrorism deterrence policy. Historically, deterrence was employed as part of the Cold War strategy and other international relations policies. Today, a vast amount of research exists on terrorism advocating the use of various forms of deterrence to prevent terrorist attacks (Frey and Luechinger 2002, Davis 2002, Caplan 2005, Enders and Sandler 2006, Das and Lahiri 2006). For instance, Davis (2002), in his study of how to best deter terrorists, concludes that general deterrence against terrorism is not likely to be effective. Further, the severe actions that would be necessary to produce a favorable deterrent effect would violate American values, even the rules of war. Therefore, he

suggests that more specific deterrence should be employed in order to prevent particular terrorist actions in light of the empirical research that suggests terrorists do not like operational risks. Further, terrorist supporters are more easily deterred than the leaders of organizations. As a result, he concludes that deterrence efforts may need to focus on supporters rather than dismantling the entire terrorist network.

Similarly, Davis (2002) states that it may not be possible to deter al Qaeda, but the manner in which the U.S. responds to al Qaeda may serve as a deterrent for other organizations. In the case of terrorism through the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction, Davis recommends that the U.S.

draw a line and credibly announce that anyone crossing that line by possessing or supporting the acquisition of WMD for terrorists purposes will be pursued relentlessly-forever if necessary-with all the means necessary and with the United States willing to lower its standards of evidence, presumed guilt, violate sovereignty, attack preemptively, and so on (Davis 2002:60).

Finally, he recommends that since al Qaeda has already violated the rule against WMD's, deterrence is no longer an option in fighting al Qaeda specifically. Instead, we need to use our response to al Qaeda as a deterrent against other terrorist organizations and plots. In other words, the U.S. response to al Qaeda may not directly deter al Qaeda since they have already attacked various targets. However, the U.S. response to the attacks will serve as a general deterrent to other terrorist organizations.

The United States' doctrine of deterrence in international relations is not a new phenomenon. Historically, deterrence was used during the Cold War to prevent the Soviet Union from engaging in a nuclear attack against the United States and against Saddam Hussein just prior to Desert Storm. It was in response to the nuclear arms race,

that the ideas first began to emerge —intellectually, brick by brick—that in a world of perpetual vulnerability against such potential catastrophe, the best one might be able to hope for is to find ways that could restrain any nation state from ever again contemplating deliberate and major war. Thus, the idea of deterrence of aggression emerged slowly, as a “derived truth” rather than from any thesis, writings, or doctrine (Robinson 2004:2).

Both historical scenarios involved threats by the United States that if weapons of mass destruction were used, the aggressors would be met with a devastating response against both leaders and civilians. The ultimate goal was to instill fear in the adversary that forces them to make calculations according to their self preservation. For instance, in order to be effective, the adversary must fear failing his goals. Further, the adversary must: “fear that his losses and pain will far outweigh any potential gains, fear that he will be punished. It should ultimately create the fear of extinction—extinction of either the adversary’s leaders themselves or their national independence, or both” (Robinson 2004:5).

Similar deterrence measures are applicable today. According to Robinson (2004), deterrence is a “dynamic process” that requires constant reflection, understanding and adjustment according to the threat. Therefore, Robinson reflecting on the use of deterrence during the Cold War suggests that although we cannot prove that deterrence was effective, it does appear to have ‘worked’ in the Soviet case (i.e the U.S. was not the victim of a nuclear attack by the Soviet Union). Although it is not accurately predictable whether or not deterrence will be effective against other international threats such as terrorism, he recommends evaluating past deterrence policies in order to understand what might work in the war on terror.



Today, we see deterrence employed as a counterterrorism strategy. Similar to rational choice theories of crime, rational choice models of terrorism posit that terrorism can be reduced by increasing the costs of participating in terrorist activities thus making terrorist acts less attractive. To increase perceived costs, opportunity costs or material costs, threats are used to produce what economists refer to as a negative sum game (Frey and Luechinger 2002:237-239). In other words, if the potential terrorist sees a potential loss if they participate in terrorist actions, they will choose alternative, non-terrorist behaviors. Deterrence policies claim to “raise the cost of terrorist acts by increasing the risk of apprehension and by punishing the perpetrators more severely...it (deterrence efforts) also seeks to prevent terrorist acts by making them more difficult to undertake”<sup>15</sup> (Frey and Luechinger 2003:239).

#### *Anti-Terrorism Discourse and Efforts*

Terrorism is presently the focus of discussion among politicians, the media, and academics. Much of what politicians argue, the media reports, and academics conclude regarding terrorism deals with deterring further attacks on the United States and its allies. For instance, the 9/11 Commission recommended a three part strategy for addressing the terrorism problem: “attack terrorists and their organizations, prevent the growth of terrorism, protect against and prepare for terrorist attacks” (9/11 Commission:363).

Deterrence against terrorism is important according to the 9/11 Commission. They report that “defenses (also) complicate the plans of attackers, increasing their risk of

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<sup>15</sup> Routine activities theory (RAT) is a criminological theory that is related to deterrence. RAT posits that crime can be reduced through guardianship, the removal of motivated offenders and decreasing the attractiveness of suitable targets of victimization (Cohen and Felson 1979). Therefore, RAT also promotes deterrence measures in order to increase the perceived costs of engaging in illegal activities.

discovery and failure” (364). Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was concerned about use of short term rather than long term defense efforts and asked his advisors,

“Are we capturing, killing or *deterring* and *dissuading* more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us? Does the US need to fashion a broad, integrated plan to stop the next generation of terrorists? The US is putting relatively little effort into a long-range plan, but we are putting a great deal of effort into trying to stop terrorists. The *cost-benefit* ratio is against us” (9/11 Commission Report 2004:374-375 Italics added).

Deterrence and capture are achieved through the commission’s recommendation that attractive terrorist targets be made less attractive and vulnerable to attack through escalating the presence of security in order to increase the likelihood of capture (9/11 Commission Report 2004:383).

President Bush immediately began to concentrate on efforts to deter future attacks on the US after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. That same month, he addressed Congress and the world, describing the first steps in responding to the terrorist attacks. The various steps included overhauling and increasing security at the nation’s airports including increasing the number of air marshals, increasing the tools available to law enforcement and intelligence agencies, mobilizing and deploying US troops to Afghanistan and the Middle East as well as the creation of the Office of Homeland Security (Bush 2001).

The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* also emphasizes deterrence measures to prevent attacks through various avenues. The fight against terrorism “involves the application of all instruments of national power and influence to kill or capture terrorists...prevent them from gaining access to WMD; render potential targets less attractive by strengthening security; and cut off their sources of funding...”(NSCT

2006:12). Target hardening, or decreasing the attractiveness of a potential target has been successful thus far. Terrorists are not aiming to destroy hardened targets such as national buildings. However, terrorists are now targeting potential soft target areas such as schools, churches and areas of public transportation that are not as strongly protected (NSCT 2006). Therefore the effectiveness of protecting attractive targets is not clear.

Scholars also recommend deterrence measures for combating terrorism. Caplan (2005) in response to the assumed irrationality of terrorists suggests that although terrorists may violate the rationality of homo economicus, using a deterrence approach is still a viable option to reduce terrorism. He suggests increasing the likelihood and severity of punishment as a suitable way to address terrorism. Others recommend increasing the costs or risks of committing terrorism along with decreasing the benefits of terrorist acts as a way to decrease the likelihood of an attack through various methods (Das and Lahiri 2006; LaFree 2006; Fisher 2007). For instance, Fisher (2007) claims that in order to effectively deter terrorists, particularly terrorist organizations, the United States would have to use harsh measures that include regime change, nuclear retaliation, and the targeted killings of terrorists and their family members. Other suggestions include decreasing the benefits of terrorism by threatening to intercept monetary benefits such as those paid to families for their sacrifice and increasing the costs of terrorism by threatening imprisonment, execution and dishonor (Davis 2002). Further, the risks of engaging in terrorism are increased through target hardening strategies and increasing the guardianship of both geographic and personal targets of attack. Finally, others suggest that the only way to prevent future terrorist attacks may be to act proactively, to kill or capture terrorists before they actually commit terrorism (Caplan 2005).

These writings make it clear that deterrence is the theoretical basis for addressing the terrorist threat. Deterrence measures-,increasing the risks of engaging in terrorism such as financial interception, security at airports and around our borders; military presence and preemptive strikes- are all informed in some degree by the assumption that terrorists make cost benefit calculations.

### *Deterrence in a Post Cold War World*

Deterrence as an international policy, rather than strictly an economic or criminal justice policy developed historically with various international threats to stability. The conditions of the Cold War, for instance, allowed for the proliferation of deterrence theories. Cold War deterrence was based on fear, retaliation and punishment. Effective deterrence was based on three conditions: a) the adversarial person or state was identifiable, b) that person or state had “highly valued assets” that could be attacked in order to influence their decisions, and c) the possession of the means to deter by threatening what the adversary values (Nurick 2003).

Deterrence theories justified specific policies in order to prevent nuclear attack. For instance, deterrence theories allowed for the development of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) strategies as well as warfighting. Although both of these approaches stem from deterrence, neither is empirically verifiable, “thus completely textual, dependent upon arguing in an inferential fashion from data to claim” (Dauber 1993:4).

Mutual Assured Destruction required the U.S. to limit the use of its arms to deter attack from outsiders and is based on the idea that outsiders will not attack when they know that the U.S. can absorb an attack, and then retaliate with greater force. War-

fighting on the other hand, assumed that nuclear weapons could be used to deter a broader range of Soviet activities. Regardless of the feasibility of engaging in a nuclear war, the U.S. had to convince the Soviets that the U.S. not only believed that war was possible, but that the U.S. would prevail.

Mutual Assured Destruction and warfighting are based on three stated assumptions that are taken as truth and go unquestioned. First, deterrence theorists believe that peace is preferable to war. Second, in order to avoid war, the U.S needed to influence the Soviets without provoking them. “The assumption was ...that American and Soviet interests were so inimical that if the Soviets were to pursue their interests without interference, competition and ultimately provocation, would have been inevitable” (Dauber 1993:7). Third, reasoning with the Soviets would be ineffective. The U.S. had to threaten the Soviets, not talk with them, while retaining freedom to pursue global goals. The threats had to be perceived as real, based on mutual distrust and create persuasion in order to deter nuclear attacks.

Even though the Cold War is over, deterrence approaches remain the primary method for dealing with international threats. The Cold War strategy was a strategy of nuclear deterrence. With the end of the Cold War, deterrence remains because nothing new has been developed to take its place despite critiques of previous deterrence methods. Dauber (1993) claims that after the Cold War, the U.S. was no longer distracted by the Soviet and threat and was able to focus on other domestic and international issues. Dauber (1993) believes this pattern of adhering to deterrence will continue “informing debate and ultimately policy” into the future (Dauber 1993:158).

Ambassador Robinson (2004) suggests that although the world has changed since the Cold War, because deterrence has apparently been effective in the past (Cold War, Hitler and Saddam Hussein in the 1990's) it will remain a useful starting point for developing and implementing nuclear strategies and counterterrorist policies in the future. He states, "we should consider the history of the United States/Soviet nuclear deterrence as a prototype – almost the 'textbook' solution – and proceed to take up the problems of the emerging multilateral world" (Robinson 2004). In particular, the U.S. maintains the Cold War strategy in confronting Islamic terrorism. In light of the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, and the perceived threat of fundamentalist Islam, the U.S. is reproducing "the Cold War paradigm of mutually hostile blocs and ideologies, thus perpetuating familiar modes of U.S. intervention in the Third World that rely on high levels of militarization (Niva 1998).

We are currently experiencing the consequences of our continued adherence to the deterrence doctrine, particularly concerning the Bush Administration and its approach to terrorism. Here, I will give evidence that said theories inform our contemporary counterterrorism efforts.

The enactment of the USA PATRIOT ACT gave unprecedented power to the executive branch of the government as well as the various security agencies including the newly formed Office of Homeland Security. Some of these powers, such as secret wire tapings, threaten basic civil liberties and continue to be hotly debated. The formation and use of prisons such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba are controversial for various reasons; torture practices, the denial of habeas corpus and the secrecy of prison policies to name a few.

Despite the controversial PATRIOT ACT, the government's response to 9/11 was the focus of the 2004 election and was particularly important for incumbents who wanted to maintain political clout. Economically, the costs of implementing deterrence strategies have far outweighed the monetary loss incurred from 9/11. The annual cost of employing airline security screeners, air marshals and the increasingly sophisticated screening technology exceeds 5 billion dollars. Simultaneously, the existence and survival of entire industries and corporations are based on the 'War on Terror'.

Adherence to deterrence in a post Cold War world does not allow for reflexive theory building in regards to terrorism and creates policies that do not actually address that which they claim to address<sup>16</sup>. The perpetuation of structures such as deterrence beyond the end of the Cold War is referred to as Cold War "sedimentation" (Dahms 2006). Sedimentation occurs when "in the absence of a definite break with the political and economic patterns that took hold during the Cold War, the latter...remain(s) as a central feature and organizing principle, continuing to define the perimeter of choices we perceive, the nature of the goals we pursue, and the types of means we both employ and deploy" (Dahms 2006:xiii). If deterrence is one of the residual paradigms from the Cold War era, its applicability to terrorism is questionable at best. Therefore, while the U.S. continues to try and create and refine deterrence policies, we are failing to gain a proper understanding of the social world in which terrorism arises and proliferates. The specific economic and political consequences of the problematic nature of the deterrence paradigm as a counterterrorism strategy will be the focus of the Chapter Three.

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<sup>16</sup> In fact, most critiques of deterrence, even Cold War deterrence, offer alternatives that are based on rational choice, cost-benefit analysis and self interest.

Here, I will demonstrate how methodological issues of individualism and instrumentalism are related to the problematic relationship of structure and agency. Methodological individualism eliminates structural influence from the terrorism equation, making terrorism strictly a decision making process within the individual agent in stasis. In particular, I will address the lack of interest researchers of terrorism have in the motivational aspect of terrorism. The lack of interest in motivation is due to implicit and explicit assumptions about the role of motivation in rational choice and routine activities theories. I focus on deconstructing rational choice theories in light of the lack of interest in the motivational aspect of terrorism despite the fact that motivation is recognized as part of some theoretical models either implicitly or explicitly. I suggest that the relationship between structure and agency is a more appropriate framework for addressing terrorism with motivation acting as a bridge between structure and agency, why terrorism occurs and how to respond to it.

#### *Assumptions of Human Motivation*

As stated previously, deterrence as a counterterrorism strategy is based on rational choice and routine activities theories. Rational choice theory posits that people make cost benefit calculations to make decisions that guide their behavior. Classical criminology also assumes that humans make decisions “based on the extent to which they expect the choice to maximize their profits or benefits and minimize the costs or losses” as the basis of human nature in general (Akers and Sellers 2004:26). According to this theory, the motivation of the actor is implicitly assumed to be self preservation or pleasure maximization. In other words, human behavior is motivated by a desire to maximize



pleasure or avoid pain. In particular, rational choice theory implicitly assumes that human motivation stems from market based cost benefit analysis to maximize utility. For example, Fisher (2007) suggests that one of the motivations for suicide bombers is the monetary reward, an estimated 12,000 – 15,000 dollars, that will be given to the bomber's family once the mission is completed<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, he suggests that an effective deterrent strategy against suicide bombers would be to threaten to punish the family members of the bomber through various avenues including “targeting either the lives or livelihood of these family members” (Fisher 2007:12). Fisher (2007) contends that the threat of punishment for the family of the martyr may sufficiently deter suicide bombings because it reduces the benefit of taking violent action.

The assumptions about the motivations of humans, offenders and terrorists are problematic in their implications for work that follows this paradigm. Researchers fail to incorporate more dynamic explanations of motivation into rational choice theories because they rely on the previously assumptions of individual level cost benefit analyses. This failure to incorporate and explore motivation is detrimental to our understanding of terrorism as well as our responses to terrorists. What follows is a more detailed explanation of how motivation is related to issues of methodological instrumentalism and individualism, and how that is pertinent to the relationship of agency to structure.

### *The Role of Motivation*

Where does motivation come from? It should tell us about *why* people engage in particular behaviors. Taking motivation as a given factor rather than something that

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<sup>17</sup> Fisher (2007:12) estimates that the families of suicide bombers receive between \$12,000 and \$15,000.

should be explored is problematic because understanding motivations allows us to also understand the relationship between larger structural social forces, collective grievances and action. An effort to understand why people engage in terrorism requires investigators to explore the larger political, economic, cultural and global context in which it is situated. Seeking an explanation of terrorism from a motivational point of view requires a movement away from strictly utilitarian interpretations of terrorist actions.

Motivation is an important component of understanding particular actions such as terrorism. Rational choice and routine activities theories operate under the assumption that terrorists are rational actors<sup>18</sup> that engage in cost benefit analyses before engaging in terrorist actions. The rationality of terrorists is debated despite the assumption by deterrence models that terrorists are rational actors (Moghaddam 2006). Psychologists argue that the belief that terrorists are “mentally deranged” people is incorrect. After reviewing the psychological literature on the subject of terrorism, Charles Ruby (2002:15) concludes that “terrorism is basically another form of politically motivated violence that is perpetrated by rational, lucid people who have valid *motives*” (italics added). Deterrence models assume that the actor has a specific goal they wish to achieve through terrorist acts. In particular, the goals of terrorists are assumed to be to create fear for political purposes, or to defend and maintain the status quo. However, theorists such as Giddens (2002) argue that when we are trying to understand an actor’s intent or rationale, we separate the action from its larger social context. Examining terrorism through a deterrence lens does not allow for terrorism to be placed within a larger social framework; it ignores the totality of the relationship between social structure and

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<sup>18</sup> Rationality is also based on utilitarianism or *homo economicus*. However, people can also act altruistically.

individual by focusing strictly on the actor. Therefore, “a theory of motivation is crucial because it supplies the conceptual links between the rationalization of action and the framework of convention as embodied in institutions” (Giddens 2002:235). Theorizing motivation can help us move beyond the assumption that all action is a cost benefit calculation by linking action to structural institutions that shape our choices.

### *Motivation and Terrorism*

Addressing the issue of nuclear proliferation by non-state actors, Bonnie Jenkins (2006) recommends that understanding the motivations of terrorists is crucial to preventing their acquisition of nuclear weapons. She extends her argument that nonproliferation efforts that address state motivations can and should be extended to non-state actors given its success in the realm of the state nonproliferation. Whereas deterrence efforts in the form of sanctions and export controls may be effective against states, these efforts are not as effective against non-state actors<sup>19</sup>. Jenkins (2006) suggests that, in addition to securing nuclear facilities and deterring states from aiding terrorist organizations, a crucial component of preventing the terrorist acquisition of nuclear weapons is to understand and address terrorist motivations. For instance, she claims that most terrorist organizations are not secretive about their motivations or grievances, whether they are political, religious or otherwise. In fact, Osama bin Laden has stated publicly what his grievances are and why he initiated attacks such as the one

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<sup>19</sup> Jenkins (2006) claims that sanctions and other deterrence efforts may still be effective against states that support non-state terrorist actors. Therefore, states will not aide terrorist organizations in their quest to obtain to nuclear weapons, but will help deter the non-state actors for fear of international backlash. This is a kind of indirect deterrence.

on the Twin Towers. In a videotape aired on the Aljazeera network in 2004 bin Laden states:

I say to you, Allah knows that it had never occurred to us to strike the towers. But after it became unbearable and we witnessed the oppression and tyranny of the American/Israeli coalition against our people in Palestine and Lebanon, it came to my mind. The events that affected my soul in a direct way started in 1982 when America permitted the Israelis to invade Lebanon and the American Sixth Fleet helped them in that. This bombardment began and many were killed and injured and others were terrorized and displaced. And that day, it was confirmed to me that oppression and the intentional killing of innocent women and children is a deliberate American policy. Destruction is freedom and democracy, while resistance is terrorism and intolerance<sup>20</sup>.

Jenkins (2006:39) suggests that one of the most important components of a counterterrorism strategy is “devis(ing) innovative measures to reduce the potential number of terrorist organizations that may seek nuclear weapons by addressing the motivations of non-state actor groups”. We must begin to understand and address what leads people to join terrorist organizations and subsequently seek the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Further, she suggests that the United States gain a better understanding of the consequences of their foreign policies on others. In particular, an evaluation of the unintended consequences of such policies is needed. An understanding of the relationship between terrorism, grievances and international relations including an appreciative stance toward the “entire environment and culture in which non-state actors exist in light of the goals they wish to achieve” is more informative than a rational choice approach to terrorism (Jenkins 2006:40). The coupling of these suggestions implies that Jenkins

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<sup>20</sup> The full transcript of Osama bin Laden’s tape is available at:  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/English/archive/archive?ArchiveId=7403>

(2006) recognizes the relationship between structures, international relations, and individual as well as group motivations.

Terrorism emerges from political crises and it is continually reshaped and reinforced by those crises. Achieving an understanding of the processes that leads to various forms of terrorism would require a more open ended type of sociology. Sociology in the era of globalization, if done properly, should move us closer to more reasonable foreign policies. For example, if sociologists were sent to Iraq, they would be able to shed light on the conditions under which Hussein was removed, that Iraq is not ready for a democracy, particularly a democracy promoted from the outside, and that any attempt to do so will ultimately fail.

More appreciative sociological, criminological and economic research would move away from examining terrorism from the perspective of only wanting to prevent it and towards a desire to understand terrorism for the act itself. For instance, Robinson (1996) addresses the importance of understanding motivations within a larger context. He claims that neither terrorists nor the counterterrorist state can be judged simply on their intentions. Instead, “behavioral analysis is structurally contingent” and the “events and outcomes of the social universe cannot be explained by the intentions of the individual actors or decisions based on role perception” (Robinson 1996:5). What is necessary then, is a structurally based analysis of policy and motivation that considers what the actors involved actually do, rather than what they claim to do.

An examination of terrorism that accounts for terrorism as a phenomenon within the totality, rather than within the agent will result in “more precise models of the constitution of society” (Alsted 2001:5). Routine activities theory, of which motivation is

a part, might be more effective in explaining terrorism and counterterrorism if motivation played a more central role within theory and research. A more appreciative examination of motivation, within routine activities theory, suggests that if we were able to reduce the motivation (anger, frustration, despair etc.) of “possible offenders”, terrorism would be reduced. Therefore, instead of relying on deterrence, we can approach terrorism with a more complete understanding of motivation; those conditions that will reduce motivation as well as those that will increase motivation. Such an analysis may also expose more about our modern world than simply the terrorism/counterterrorism dynamic.

Motivation does not necessarily have to be examined within the context of a theory. Examining motivation as a concept in itself can lead to an assessment that will ultimately lead to a larger theory that includes motivation as a concept. Motivational approaches may reveal whether or not terrorists have a specific goal or goals. For instance, Durkheimians find that to assume that all human action has a purposive quality is reductionist thinking. Regardless of whether an identifiable goal is present however, part of conceptualizing motivation requires “recognition of the relevance of internal behavior (perception, beliefs, purpose)” (Gibbs 1989:331).

#### *Rational Choice, Motivation and Culture*

Cultural factors are also left out of rational choice analyses of terrorism. Malesevic (2002) claims that rational choice theories do not incorporate and account for cultural values and the political contexts in which agents act. When culture, including the political environment is neglected, cultural attitudes, beliefs, values and ideologies are all reduced to utilitarian values. Since rational choice assumes that all human action is

motivated by rational self interest, it presupposes the answer to the question it is applied to and therefore becomes difficult to falsify. For instance, when applied to terrorism, rational choice assumes that terrorism is not the result of a collective level of irrationality or mental illness. Instead, since all humans are rational, utility seeking actors, terrorists choose terrorism because it is the least costly choice when compared to other options for attaining their goals. When all actions are reduced to the maximization of profit, we learn little about where people's motivations come from other than a desire to increase benefits. Analysis of larger social contexts such as culture, is shut down, or at least strongly discouraged within rational choice theory.

Rational choice does not incorporate cultural factors into individual decisions because it is assumed that all individuals have similar motives. Under rational choice theory, all humans have utilitarian motives, but actors can have motives, aspirations, or even preferences that are not strictly utilitarian. For example, humans may be motivated by emotions such as fear, anger or anxiety, or other categories such as altruism (Malesevic 2002). Boudon (1989:207-208) proposes two types of human action that are not determined by utilitarian ends: axiological and situated rationality. Axiological actions are social actions that are rooted in values instead of ends, and situated rationality occurs when actors have 'good reasons' for pursuing an action. The reasons for their actions are often driven by strong belief systems as well as the actor's internal motives.

Ann Swidler (1986) proposes a critique of rational choice theory for its lack of cultural incorporation into the explanatory project of human action. Her critique focuses on the assumption that when culture does play a role in the decision making process, it is understood that culture shapes people's ends or goals for taking a specified course of

action. Therefore, cultural values shape individual's goals, which cause their behavior. Instead of placing culture as the source of goals, Swidler (1986:272) suggests that culture actually informs and shapes the means through which people act. Culture, and its relationship to structures, provides a 'tool kit' with which people can form 'strategies of action'. Therefore, action becomes part of these strategies which are ultimately shaped or informed by culture and structures. Culture can also be constraining because it informs and also limits the optional strategies of approaching action available to people. When culture is not incorporated as part of rational choice explanations of behavior, we miss the important relationship between structure, cultural tools, strategies and action.

Similarly, the assumed rationality, intentionality and meaningfulness of actions provide little in the way of analysis. Attempts to explain a phenomenon are supposed to differentiate between factors in degree of importance "in order to highlight the reasons, motives and origins of certain types of actions or events" (Malesevic (2002:204). When rational choice theorists are asked to explain radical actions such as suicidal action (suicide bombers, kamikaze pilots) they admit that the roots of action stemming from social sources are not readily accessible. Since we know little about the relationship between social contexts, values, motivations, emotions and action, we should rule out the social and cultural contexts as explanatory devices, according to rational choice.

Therefore, the reduction of human behavior to economics, where all decisions are treated with the explanation of maximizing utility, means that rational choice theory is "unable not only to account for non-economic and non-materialist sources of individual motivation, but also for the structural determinants" of individual and collective actions (Malesevic 2002:208). The inability of rational choice to account for the variability of



motivation as rooted in structures is particularly problematic in situations where the “structural conditions of choices are very unequal” (Malesevic 2002:208).

In order to move away from rational choice theory’s circularity, Malesevic (2002) recommends examining the structural and situational determinants that influence the context in which the actions under investigation arise. She recommends that researchers focus on variables such as shared values, memories and ideological convictions to name a few, that would begin to illuminate the contexts in which terrorism occurs and may provide more comprehensive explanations of terrorism.

### *Alternative Theories*

Some researchers are making efforts to move beyond strict deterrence models of terrorism (Black 2004; Young 2003). Other criminological theories such as defiance, and crime as structured action, offer expansive or alternative approaches to understanding terrorism that move beyond our conceptions of rational choice by attempting to illuminate the connections between culture, structures, actions and consequences. These theories begin to inquire not just about social structures, but also promote an understanding of motivation that is not reduced to instrumental motivation. Researchers such as Black (2004) and Sherman (1993) expand on rational choice theories in order to address motivational factors as well as some of the drawbacks of traditional deterrence theories. Similarly, cultural criminologist Jock Young (2003) focuses on motivation, the foreground of the terrorist experience, and the existential foreground of terrorism in order to critique traditional utilitarian approaches to understanding and combating terrorism. Katz (1988) offers an approach to understanding crimes based on the criminal

interpretation of the act as one that gives identity and meaning to the transgressor's life. Finally, Goodwin (2006) addresses the role of motivation within a larger theory of categorical terrorism. What follows is a brief summary of these researchers' work in order to demonstrate that alternative theories of terrorism exist despite strict adherence to deterrence policies and practices.

Donald Black (2004) proposes a sociological theory of the geometry of terrorism that stems from routine activities theory and the process of globalization. He considers terrorism and counterterrorism efforts as acts of social control that reciprocate each other in what he terms "the logic of retaliation" (Black 2004:22). Both terrorism and responses to it are explained in terms of social geometry—"its multidimensional location and direction in social space" and physical geometry. His theory states that for a terrorist act to occur, terrorists must have a grievance and be situated in a specific social and geographical geometry. Black (2004) suggests that neither the social/physical location nor the grievance alone will lead to a terrorist incident. Instead, both elements are necessary for terrorism to occur.

Additionally, technological innovations have made physical distance less important and access to civilian targets easier. As opportunities to commit terrorism increase, what motivates the terrorist becomes increasingly important. "As the relevance of physical geometry declines, the fatefulness of social geometry rises. The social geometry of the grievance becomes not merely a necessary but a sufficient condition for terrorism" (Black 2004:22).

However, he does not advocate a need to understand the motivation of terrorist groups or individuals. Black does not suggest analyzing grievances or motivations

because he hypothesizes that the very conditions that have made terrorism easier through the shrinking of physical space are also the very conditions that will lead to terrorism's decline. He proposes that terrorism will also eventually decline because the decrease in physical space also leads to a decrease in social space. When social space decreases, the demarcation of morality or the ability to clearly identify an enemy is reduced in clarity, making targets less readily identifiable. Black (2004) attributes the polarization of people and the collective level of violence occurring throughout the world as a result of large gaps in social space, in which the division between right and wrong is clearly defined and we are capable of distinguishing between 'us' and 'them'. Therefore, as physical space shrinks, the social space that currently allows for the polarization and collectivization of violence also shrinks (Black 2004). Although he recognizes the role of grievances or motivations, he does not seem to suggest that understanding those motives is important to combating terrorism because 1) terrorism will ultimately die out and 2) terrorist motivations are not always clearly stated or defined. What is important is to recognize that grievance exists within a particular geographic and social space, but not to necessarily understand the grievance.

Further, Black's (2004)<sup>21</sup> theory of the geometry of terrorism is a form of what he calls pure sociology. In order for his theory to be pure sociology, it must be free of psychology and not be concerned with means or ends. For Black (2004) violence does not originate in individuals or collectivities, in beliefs or frustrations. Instead, violence is a structure, and it is the structure of violence that kills people. Therefore, terrorism is not

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<sup>21</sup> Because Black (2004) believes that terrorism is a form of social control, and not a crime in a moralistic sense, that criminology is not the right approach to understanding terrorism. Instead, he suggests that the study of terrorism belongs to the same realm of investigation as law and social control

a matter of means ends rationality within an individual agent. Rather, terrorism occurs as part of a larger structure of reciprocal violence.

While Black (2004) uses a modified version of routine activities theory, Sherman (1993) extends the idea of deterrence to suggest that deterrence and punishment that is perceived to be illegitimate or unfair can lead to defiance. Sherman (1993) suggests that legal sanctions can have one of three possible effects on future crimes. Sanctions can increase, decrease or have no effect on the occurrence of future crimes. His theory of defiance is an attempt to explain the situations in which punishment may actually increase the likelihood that a crime will occur or be repeated. While still rooted in deterrence, Sherman (1993) suggests that deterrence is conditioned through shaming, which transpires when punishment is perceived as legitimate and fair. Those punishments that are perceived to be unjust or excessive may lead to defiance and therefore future criminal activity. Although Sherman (1993) does not theorize terrorism directly, the application of his theory of defiance to terrorism suggests that the motivation for future terrorist acts could stem from attempts to deter and punish potential and actual terrorists through defiance. Defiance, as deterrence can be specific (individual) or general (collective). While focused on crime, Sherman (1993) claims that defiance theory may be applied as a general theory that is capable of explaining various offenses (even terrorism) because the effect of sanctions is different depending on the social setting, the offenders and offenses as well as the level of analysis (Sherman 1993).

Various researchers find support for Sherman's (1993) defiance hypothesis including a defiant response to counterterrorism deterrence strategies. For instance, LaFree (2006) finds that some counterterrorism deterrent acts may in fact produce a

defiance effect. In his study of pre-9/11 terrorist acts and deterrent responses, he finds that “three out of five interventions were associated with a significant increase in the likelihood of subsequent attacks” (Newsweek 2006). Similarly, Frey and Luechinger (2002) claim that some deterrence policies may backfire, increasing terrorist acts. Since the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, the number of terrorist incidents has increased internationally (Johnson 2004:xxii). Similar to terrorism, researchers who explored the deterrent effects of nuclear weapons on the Soviet Union found that deterrent policies were just as likely to provoke the Soviet Union into an attack, as they were to deter attacks. Researchers concluded that deterrence and provocation both involve making threats, and therefore intimately related (Black and Pole 1983). In particular, they identify the centralization of polity and economy that occurs in response to a previous terrorist attack as a poor deterrence approach.

Although researchers identify possible defiance effects associated with deterrence, their suggestions for a more appropriate counterterrorism strategy still adhere to rational choice theory. For instance, Frey and Luechinger (2006) suggest that rather than attempting to deter terrorism through increasing the *costs* of engaging in terrorism, counterterrorism policy should focus on decreasing the *benefit* of terrorist acts. Whereas Frey and Luechinger (2006) suggest that policy should focus on decreasing the perceived benefits of engaging in terrorism, Uri Fisher (2007) adds that both increasing the costs and decreasing the benefits are necessary for deterrence to be effective.

Moving away from the psychological background of offenders, such as their rational decision making processes, Jack Katz (1988:3) proposes an understanding of criminality that focuses on the “seductive qualities of crimes: those aspects in the

foreground of criminality that make its various forms sensible, even sensually compelling ways of being". He links the seductive quality of deviance to "moral emotions" including humiliation, vengeance and righteousness. What Katz (1988:9) finds is that people are attracted to the criminal act in order to surmount some "personal challenge to moral - not material - existence". Katz (1988) suggests moving beyond the "dry" materialist theories that reduce criminality to an actor's instrumental choice by moving us toward an understanding of the nature of the act itself. He asks us to, "consider the many sensually explosive, diabolically creative, realities of crime that the materialist sentiment cannot appreciate" (Katz 1988:314) In other words, what is the lived experience of someone who commits crime, or in this case terrorism? How do they go come to the point of committing a terrorist act? Gallagher (2004) in his application of Katz to suicide bombers asks, "How and why is one morally and sensually attracted to carrying out a suicide mission?". According to Katz (2000), a person who commits an act of terrorism may find it self-affirming, or a way to construct meaning for their lives. For instance, do people become willing to commit suicide bombing because that act will provide a meaningful interpretation for their life?<sup>22</sup>

Similar to Katz (1988) cultural criminologists such as Jock Young (2003) disagree with any strictly rational choice, routine activities or deterrence approach to understanding terrorism. Young (2003:391) claims that cultural criminology demands

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<sup>22</sup> Similar to Katz's and Young's phenomenological experience of terrorism is Messerschmidt's (1997) theory of "crime as structured action" where Messerschmidt is connecting structure and identity. He claims that one of the essential components to understanding crime in general is the notion that structure and action are essentially inseparable. As with Giddens (2002), Messerschmidt (1997) illuminates the interaction between structure and agency as cyclical and reciprocal where structures act as both constraining and guiding forces of behavior and behaviors reconstitute structures. In other words, social structures are "realized through social action and social action requires structure as its condition" (Messerschmidt 1997:5).

that the “existential foreground” of criminal acts be explored. The “existential foreground” includes the structures, culture, geography, identity and context in which crime occurs. The inclusion of both the background and the foreground moves beyond the instrumental reasons for engaging in crime by examining the transgressive nature of crime. Therefore, what is important for criminologists is to understand the structures within which human actions such as crime occur and the ways our responses to criminal action are shaped by the same structures.

Similarly, when the foreground of terrorism is examined, it reveals the “intensity” of motivation while linking that foreground to various background factors such as politics, economic deprivation, anger and hostility. This approach demonstrates that terrorist actions are not the premeditated acts of rationally calculating actors, but are also transgressive in nature in the face of increasing relative deprivation and the crises of identity that Young (2003) partially attributes to globalization. What is important for Young (2003) is for those who study violent phenomena such as terrorism avoid narrowly focusing on just the structural or just the instrumental agency of individual and group actors. Instead, those who study terrorism must emphasize the structural conditions under which terrorism occurs while also understanding how those structures influence human agency and the available courses of action (Young 2003). Young’s (2003) advocacy of the incorporation of situating actors within structures suggests that rational choice shuts down the possibility of making those types of connections theoretically.

Goodwin (2006) discusses motivation directly as part of a larger theory of categorical terrorism. His critique of current terrorism research includes the use of grievances by social scientists as a basis for terrorism. Goodwin (2006) claims that

grievance based explanations are not sufficient because such theories assume that once the grievance is removed, terrorism will no longer be chosen as a pathway of protest. The major weakness in grievance based theories is the fact that they do not specify which grievances motivate terrorism, which grievances do not lead to terrorism and which grievances could therefore be addressed in order to prevent terrorism.

Goodwin (2006:2033) states, “Grievances may be a necessary cause of collective action, but it is less clear how they cause people to act in the ways they do. In fact, ends do not explain means any better than they justify them”. In order to better understand the role of motivation, particularly grievance based motivation, Goodwin (2006) suggests we examine how terrorists “socially construct” their grievances. For instance, we should gain a better understanding of how terrorists come to blame certain sectors of the population, other societies, or civilians for their grievances. Therefore, Goodwin (2006) is also advancing a theory of contextualizing terrorism that promotes inquiry into the relationship between structures, motivation and actions.

All of these theories provide a step in the direction of making links between the terrorist actor and the social conditions in which the actor is located. Whether we need to examine social geometry, defiance, the foreground of actions or specific nature of grievances, all of these theorists are attempting to move past the rational actor, means ends oriented understanding of terrorism. In particular, they all appear to stress the importance of locating the actor within social structures.



## *Conclusion*

This chapter offered a critique of rational choice and routine activities theories by giving examples of the problematic nature of methodological individualism and instrumentalism. In particular, the lack of attention paid to the role of motivation within both theories was explicated. I demonstrated that deterrence does not enable us to analyze structural motivation or its relationship to individual actors; a connection that is necessary given the global context of terrorism. Finally, alternative theories of terrorism offer ways to move beyond the confines of the rational actor model of understanding terrorism. The following chapter addresses the consequences of our continued use of deterrence as a counterterrorism strategy.

### **Chapter III** **Consequences of Deterrence**

#### *Introduction*

If rational choice and deterrence approaches to terrorism are problematic theoretically, analytically and practically. What effect do these policies have? Who is gaining and who is losing a war on terror based on deterrence? In this chapter, I argue that deterrence theory has the consequence of de-politicizing terrorism. Further, I argue that this counterterrorism strategy is beneficial for elites, but dangerous for the international general public. When terrorism is labeled a threat to democracy and freedom (free market enterprise), people who fear terrorism are convinced to do whatever it takes to secure their way of life. Political and economic elites offer a strategy of deterrence in order to prevent terrorism, but through the process of implementing deterrence policies, wealth and power become increasingly concentrated within the upper echelons of society. This chapter outlines the various ways in which deterrence policies impact the distribution of political and economic power in that order.

#### *Rational Choice as Hegemonic Thought*

Rational choice and routine activities theory are common sense, intuitive theories; they are tangibly implemented and appeal to historical notions of punishment, prevention and retribution. Harvey (2005:5) claims that, “For any way of thought to become dominant, a conceptual apparatus has to be advanced that appeal to our intuitions and instincts, to our values and our desires, as well as to the possibilities inherent in the social world we inhabit. If successful, this conceptual apparatus becomes so embedded in

common sense as to be taken for granted and not open to question.” Similar to Harvey (2005), in discussing the aftermath of 9/11, Ackerman (2006) proposes that in the midst of panic, the government’s response to the attacks appealed to human rationality. Efforts by the government to demonstrate their swiftness to enact laws to protect the United States and to respond to the terrorists through military action appealed to collective human emotions. If the deterrence paradigm can be characterized as “dominant thought”, who benefits from adhering to a deterrence model of terrorism? Who is threatened by alternative theories of terrorism, including examinations of international political and economic structures?

Economic incentives explain part of the hegemony of deterrence, but not all of it. The government also has a political stake in conforming to the rational choice paradigm. “The government may...prefer a deterrence policy, because they can therewith demonstrate to the population that they are determined to ‘fight terrorism at all costs’. The ‘macho’ - image may help them to win elections, especially if there is no open discussion of the merits and demerits of various strategies” (Frey and Luechinger 2003:246). Deterrence serves elite interests because efforts to deter terrorism support various businesses financially, provides a political platform for politicians and therefore reinforces present power structures.

The interests of organizations such as the state, corporations, military and law enforcement are not aligned with a strategy of reducing terrorism through non-deterrence means. One reason for this lack of interest in alternatives may be due to the fact that these same organizations will lose funding and profits that they have received through the implementation of a deterrence strategy.

Alternatives may also be perceived as illegitimate. For instance, alternative explanations are viewed as tantamount to justification of terrorist acts. Two months after the Twin Towers were attacked, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni produced a pamphlet condemning academics of “[blaming] America first.” This type of condemnation coupled with calls for patriotism, discussions of good and evil as well as the “virtue(s) of a free society”<sup>23</sup> attest to the reluctance of politicians<sup>24</sup> and academic organizations to support more complex understandings of terrorism. With this kind of pressure, according to Wallerstein, academics are not being encouraged to attempt formulating responses to the question of *why* terrorists attacked the U.S. on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Alternative strategies may not require the use of these same (state, military, business) organizations and corporations to the extent that a deterrence policy employs them (Frey and Luechinger 2003:246). In fact, alternative understandings of terrorism that explore political, economic and cultural processes may expose the inability of rational choice to illuminate the global context of terrorism or the consequences of counterterrorism policies based on deterrence.

### *Terrorism as Political Violence*

Operating under the assumption that agents’ reasons for their actions can be reduced to a cost benefit calculation is problematic not just theoretically, but also politically (Giddens 2002). When the motives of actors are disregarded, politicians are not encouraged to inquire about the social context in which terrorism arises. The focus on deterrence rather than motivation suggests that politicians and theorists do not recognize

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<sup>23</sup> As quoted in Immanuel Wallerstein’s presentation titled “America and the World: The Twin Towers as Metaphor”.

<sup>24</sup> Lynne Cheney and Senator Lieberman are both founders of the Council.

that “all actors ...have some degree of penetration of the social forms which oppress them” (Giddens 2002:240).

The individual cost benefit rationale that deterrence theory assumes terrorists operate under eliminates the political context of terrorism. Therefore, within rational choice theory, terrorist acts are not part of a larger political project. In fact, rational choice theory places an emphasis on economic and material goals. As Moghaddam (2006:24) suggests, it is certainly possible that terrorists are rationally motivated to gain geographic territories or even material or natural resources. However, in the process of committing terrorist acts, terrorists often destroy material resources and sometimes destroy themselves. He suggests that acts such as suicidal terrorism are inconsistent with materialist motivation. Therefore, the deterrence paradigm removes terrorist acts out of the political realm. By rethinking terrorist explanations, we change how we interpret terrorist acts i.e. politically. For instance, a deterrence approach to terrorism does not facilitate the inclusion of political and structural inequalities into the terrorism discourse; thereby making terrorism apolitical. Conversely, when terrorism is understood within a global context, not only are the structural inequalities revealed, but the political context of terrorism, by definition becomes apparent.

Deterrence, as a counterterrorism strategy does not regard terrorist acts as political, even though terrorism is recognized as a political act by definition. Although no agreed upon definition of terrorism exists, there are some common elements among the varying definitions. For instance, Moghaddam (2006:4) claims that terrorism is fundamentally a political concept that describes violent action in pursuit of a political goal. Violence as a pathway to achieving political change is what differentiates terrorism

from crime in general. A further distinction between crime and terrorism lies within the assumption that crimes are committed in pursuit of material or personal gain<sup>25</sup>, whereas terrorism is politically motivated violence (Moghadam 2006, Frey and Luechinger 2003). Therefore, Moghadam (2006:5) defines terrorism as “premeditated violence, or threat of violence, in the pursuit of a political aim, perpetrated by organizations primarily against noncombatant targets, and usually aimed at influencing a wider audience through the creation of fear”. Similarly, the Homeland Security Act defines terrorism as acts that are in violation of United States laws, violent or intended to endanger human life that are premised on influencing or intimidating policies or government (Dohrn 2003:133).

Placing terrorism within a political understanding of rationality may bring in other cultural, historical interpretations as well as illuminate global injustices. For example, moving toward a political understanding of terrorism may reveal the motives of terrorists that stem from inequalities. Terrorists might be motivated by a desire to improve their global position politically, economically, or socially. Factors that contribute to political motivations include foreign occupation, repression and a perceived lack of political freedom. After September 11<sup>th</sup>, the list of grievances the terrorists expressed collectively included the occupation of Middle Eastern lands, the colonization of Arab states as well as support for the Israeli state. Additionally, the terrorists expressed outrage at the exploitation of their natural resources (oil) and the relative poverty of those in the Middle East compared to the West, who are benefiting from those natural resources. Other contemporary examples of political occupational that resulted in terrorism include Israel

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<sup>25</sup> The assumption by Moghadam (2006) that we can understand crime as strictly materially motivated is problematic for similar reasons that understanding terrorism in such a fashion is problematic. Nonetheless, he is pointing out that terrorism is understood to be politically motivated, yet is responded to as though it were materially motivated.

and Palestine as well as the French occupation of Algeria. All of these motivations can be understood as collective grievances, rather than simply the basis of individual choices.

Terrorism could be viewed as a pathway to gaining power within the political realm as well as a way to decrease the power of other political actors. From a political perspective, terrorism can be understood as “asymmetric warfare” (Moghadam 2006, Cooper 2007). In other words, it is people of differing resources conducting war.

Asymmetric warfare occurs when one group is militarily, politically and/or economically weaker than its opponent. Terrorist tactics are employed when the weaker group is incapable of employing the tactics of legitimate war used by stronger states. Methods of asymmetric warfare include “using... weapons in ways that are difficult to prevent or defend against, employing the element of surprise, altering the battle space; attempting to make use of all segments of its society, and targeting large segments of the enemy’s population” (Moghadam 2006:39) One example of a terrorist tactic that contains all of these elements is the suicide bombing used in places such as the West Bank where suicide bombings are hard to protect against, contain the element of surprise and induce mass fear. If groups are attempting to engage in terrorism in order to alter the political landscape, terrorism then becomes a political strategy to address collective grievances rather than a means ends decision based on individual material benefits. Deterrence depoliticizes terrorism by ignoring its collective political bases that supply motivation for individual and collective actors.

## *Political Consequences of Counterterrorism*

If terrorism is essentially a political tactic, what effect does our deterrence as counterterrorism doctrine have on the political landscape? Adhering to a deterrence strategy to combat terrorism, including preemptive strikes, may bolster the legitimacy of the government actors and their policies within the domestic front<sup>26</sup>. One problem for liberal democracies is that when those in power do not sufficiently exhibit that their ability to protect their public, the government loses legitimacy and politicians risk losing their office (Enders and Sandler 2006:27). As Frey and Luechinger (2003) note, when those who hold office fail to show they are willing to do whatever it takes to fight terrorism, the current administration loses legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

From the Spanish-American conflict, through the Cold War era and now the 'war on terror' the power of the executive branch of government has increased compared to other government entities such as Congress. An explanation for the transition of power include the difficulty Congress has in running wars because of its many chiefs rather than centralization under the Commander in Chief (Eland 2004). Most recently, President Bush declared that Congress's current role in the 'war on terror' is to provide and approve funding for security efforts and the troops and not to act as conductors of war (Bush, Press Briefing 2007).

When legitimacy is weakened, politicians not only risk losing their offices, but the entire structure of the democratic system may be called into question (Chomsky 1996)<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> It may simultaneously reduce the government's legitimacy elsewhere.

<sup>27</sup> A loss of legitimacy for the state may also mean an increase in terrorist acts. According to defiance theory, when punishment is viewed as illegitimate or unfair, crime or



Maintaining the deterrence rhetoric and policies that demonstrate a determination to rid the world of terrorists may be one avenue of maintaining the legitimacy of the political actors involved in our current democratic system, as well as efforts to fight terrorism such as the war in Iraq and the use of Guantanamo Bay. This legitimacy is based on providing both economic security as well as security from violence. An additional way that individual incumbents are able to strengthen the likelihood of reelection in the new war on terror is by acquiring security grants for their constituents from the Department of Homeland Security. Further, “per capita funding is related to electoral votes per capita, i.e., to the politics of the Presidential re-election (Coats, Karahan and Tollison 2006:275). The war on terror has become not just an element of the dominant ideology it has also become a source of pork-barrel resources.

The government’s rhetoric of ridding the world of terrorists through a “war on terror” offers an unending source of justification for deterrence-based strategies. “By characterizing the response (to terrorism) as a war, the proactive government gives a false impression of a possible victory in which terrorism will eventually be defeated...but terrorism, especially transnational terrorism, remains a tactic that will be embraced by new members and new groups” (Enders and Sandler 2006:89). Therefore, as long as deterrence appears to be working (we have not had another attack on U.S. soil), but only to a certain extent (insurgency in Iraq, attempted attacks internationally) the government will be supported in continuing to allocate more funds to counterterrorism and the war. Some of these resources can be captured to support elite economic power.

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terrorism will increase or continue. Within the rational choice paradigm, the utility of terrorism as a form of protest increases when legitimacy is reduced.

The deterrence strategy promoted by the Bush Administration is also advantageous politically because the threat of terrorism and the call for counterterrorism act as a distraction from domestic issues. The diversion from domestic policy issues such as health care, poverty, education and unemployment was met simultaneously with the collective “domestic mobilization” that called for counterterrorism measures in the face of America’s newly discovered vulnerability after September 11<sup>th</sup> (Hoffman 2006:122). Therefore, as long as politicians are doing everything possible to combat the threat of terrorism, their political clout is maintained. People who view the terrorist threat as more important than other domestic issues are going to vote for politicians that make counterterrorism a priority. Similarly, citizens are willing to have their tax dollars spent on security measures in order to deter terrorism rather than on education, public support programs or welfare systems. The threat of terrorism allows for the maintenance of structural power and the funding supporting security measures.

The domestic mobilization to combat terror has come at the cost of civil liberties, which Americans have submitted to in the name of patriotism and protection. The decline in civil liberties allows the government more leeway to exercise deterrent measures in the name of doing everything it takes to prevent another terrorist attack. Objections to policies that are supposed to help protect the United States, even if they violate civil liberties are tantamount to supporting terrorism or at least acting unpatriotically. Therefore, the reduction in civil liberties gives the government more control through fear and a decreased ability for the citizenry to object.

The threat to civil liberties lends strength to the government to employ various deterrence practices in the name of combating terrorism that might not otherwise be

acceptable. The “war on terror”, as with other wars has also increased the power not only of the government in general, but the executive branch in particular. Therefore, efforts to promote democracy abroad and fight terrorists in unknown regions of the world are fundamentally at odds with a truly democratic process at home. A process that is reducing individuals’ power as well as the power of congressional elected officials; gives the executive branch unchecked decision making power in the name of a democratic collectivity. In other words, in the process of defending democracy through deterrence measures (domestic spying program etc) government actors are reducing democracy at home.

When wars require domestic mobilization of civilian resources and the private sector for support such as WWI, WWII and the present ‘war on terror’ the executive branch and the president are the “only entit(ies) capable” of mass mobilization and organization (Eland 2004:188-189). Bush’s assertion that his role is to run the war and Congress’s role is essentially to support him reflects this ideology that the Commander in Chief is the most efficient means of making decisions in a time of war. When asked what he thought about Congress taking away his decision making power through legislation, Bush replied, “I don’t think Congress ought to be running the war... I’ll work with Congress; I’ll listen to Congress. Congress has got all the right to appropriate money. But the idea of telling our military how to conduct operations, for example, or how to deal with troop strength, I don’t think it makes sense. I don’t think it makes sense today, nor do I think it’s a good precedent for the future” (Bush, 2007). Now, deterrence policies allow the President unprecedented power to exercise force in the name of protecting and

promoting democracy. Centralized power gives that section of elites allied to President Bush greater flexibility and more prerogatives in policy-making.

“After the attacks of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush has used the perceived need for extensive government action to prevent future attacks to extend the accrual of executive power into the twenty-first century” (Eland 2004:189). One example of the extension of power to the executive branch was supported by Congress through the passing and re-approval of the USA PATRIOT ACT that allows for domestic surveillance and increased police powers. Similarly, the newly created Office of Homeland Security is a counterterrorist agency that is only responsible for answering to the president. In other words, the agency has no congressional oversight (Kellner 2003).

The decrease in congressional power alongside the increase in executive powers has obvious consequences for the checks and balances system that American democracy was built upon. Presently, Congress people are more reluctant to assert their power through denying a declaration of war or refusing to approve increased budgetary spending for conflicts including terrorism because they may be concerned that any attempt to do so could jeopardize their ability to be reelected<sup>28</sup>.

### *Economic Consequences of Counterterrorism*

If deterrence is a flawed counterterrorism policy, what impact do counterterrorism efforts have economically? Who benefits from these policies? Are all people economically secured or have benefits gone to a select few? This section will address

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<sup>28</sup> The recent war spending bill in Congress that approved \$184 billion if a stipulation was present for a specific date for the withdraw of troops from Iraq may be one exception to the idea that congress is unwilling to check executive power. However, President Bush has threatened to veto any bill that includes a troop withdraw stipulation (Wright 2007)

these questions through a world systems perspective. Various companies have received huge contracts as a result of the Iraq war. Some of these companies include Bechtel, Halliburton, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman. Imperialism and war are good for profits for some companies, but not all (Ali 2005:71). Likewise, post war reconstruction requires a large initial investment by various transnational corporations. War and post war reconstruction by transnational corporations in Afghanistan and Iraq brings these countries further into the world capitalist system in which resources are extracted and are sent to the core countries (the West). For example, Klein (2003) points out, reconstructing areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan is only part of the U.S. future economic plans. Iraq, for instance, “is being treated as a blank slate on which the most ideological Washington neoliberals can design their dream economy: fully privatized, foreign owned and open for business” (Klein 2003:14).

Reconstruction, democracy promotion and security contracts do not benefit a majority of Iraqis or a majority of Americans. Thus far, the Middle East is considered to be one of the areas to suffer from increasing poverty from globalization and capitalist incorporation (Chua 2003:245). The increasing poverty is due to the fact that money and resources are being extracted from the Middle East and Afghanistan and sent to areas in the West such as the United States. As Chua (2003:246) claims, while the United States is wealthy and exploits developing nations by using the World Bank, IMF and multinational corporations, people living in places like Iraq and Afghanistan are poor, hungry, powerless and angry.

While the Middle East, like much of the developing world, is experiencing an increase in poverty, U.S. companies are increasing their profits. Unequal exchange is an

essential feature of the world market economy where strong states benefit from the exploitation of weaker states (Wallerstein 1997:40) For instance, Bechtel Corporation received a \$680 billion (later increased by \$1.03 billion) contract to perform infrastructure development in Iraq including sewers and electric grids. The contract between Halliburton Company and Iraq oil fields has been met with controversy (and violence) because of Vice President Dick Cheney's prior involvement with the company. After several years of sliding profits, Bechtel Corp. reported unprecedented earnings at the end of 2003 with reported revenues of \$16.3 billion (Baker 2004).

Lockheed Martin is the top U.S. defense contractor with reported profits of \$830 million (an increase of 41%) in the first half of 2005. As of August 2005, Lockheed projected sales in the \$38 billion range with outstanding orders worth \$73 billion dollars (Bauer 2005). Lockheed Martin has contracts in various areas of defense. According to the World Policy Institute in New York, "Lockheed Martin is now positioned to profit from every level of the war on terror from targeting to intervention, and from occupation to interrogation" (Chatterjee, 2005).

Halliburton, an oil and logistics company received \$8 billion dollars in contracts in Iraq in 2003. As of May 5, 2005, Halliburton had completed \$10.5 billion worth of logistical work in Iraq as well as \$813 million in Afghanistan. Additionally, Halliburton is contracted to aid in the reconstruction of the oil industry in Iraq with a price tag of \$3.7 billion dollars. Halliburton has also come under fire stemming from accusations of bill padding for "questionable and unsupported costs". Finally, Halliburton is responsible for building and supporting the suspected terrorist containment facility in Guantanamo Bay and Lockheed Martin has supplied the interrogators (Phinney 2005).

With Congress approving increased spending for defense in 2006, the various defense contractors can expect another lucrative year. The budget for fiscal year 2006 was set to increase by 441 billion dollars (an increase of 21% from 2005). Of that, Congress has approved 79 billion dollars for weapons systems procurement and another estimated 69 billion for military development and research (Bauer 2005).

The marriage between military contractors such as Halliburton and the Bush administration, particularly Vice President Dick Cheney, are now well known, but the extent of the privatization of the “war on terror” is still coming to light. Jeremy Scahill traces Donald Rumsfeld’s doctrine to further privatize military operations in order to make the Department of Defense operate more like “venture capitalists” (Scahill 2007:2). Rumsfeld planned on achieving this goal through private contracts to the Blackwater Company (as well as other private contractors). Rumsfeld’s plan to reduce the bureaucratic nature of the Department of Defense through increasing the outsourcing of military operations was realized with the invasion of Iraq. By 2006, an estimated 100,000 private contractors were operating in Iraq alone not including Afghanistan and other nations. Since the “war on terror” began, Blackwater secured numerous contracts through the Department of Defense as well as Congress. Further, the company is well connected politically. From its infancy, Blackwater has dumped money into Republican Party candidates, include George W. Bush. Blackwater has also hired J.Cofer Black who was the head of the counterterrorism unit at the CIA and Joseph Schmitz, who was the Pentagon Inspector General both during the Bush Administration (Scahill 2007).

The relationship between the current Administration with their policy of deterrence and private contractors serves Blackwater well as they received more than \$1

billion in war contracts to provide everything from security services to cooks for the military. The recent call for a troop surge in Iraq is being coupled with an increase in the number of private contractors to be sent overseas. Kucinich, an investigator who is looking into violations of military contracts comments,

“it’s the privatization of war...linking private war contractor profits with war making. So we’re giving incentives for the contractors to lobby the Administration and the Congress to create more opportunities for profits, and those opportunities are more war<sup>29</sup>”.

### *Conclusion*

Terrorism and counterterrorism are best understood when the actions of individuals and groups are placed within a global context. The global context also provides a lens through which we can assess the consequences of deterrence domestically and internationally. Globalization, world systems theory and the promotion of polyarchy are not critically examined as part of deterrence thinking that then informs counterterrorism efforts. Instead, deterrence theory shuts down the analysis of terrorism as a political act by assuming that terrorists engage in violence in the name of material gain. Further, deterrence policies reinforce the power of political and economic elites. When these global factors are neglected, we risk not only engaging in reductionist thinking about terrorism, but actually inciting terrorism. Finally, deterrence as counterterrorism policy upholds the present international political and economic structures of power by reinforcing the status quo.

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<sup>29</sup> As quoted in (Scahill 2007:8)



## **Chapter IV**

### **Conclusion**

Deterrence is the guiding theory of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy. Deterrence emphasizes reducing the attractiveness of terrorism as an option when people engage in cost-benefit analysis. However, theories of rational choice do not incorporate the global structures and conditions in which terrorism occurs. Therefore, deterrence de-contextualizes and de-historicizes terrorism (Said 1988). Although it is understandable why rational choice theorists bracket structure and focus on individual actors, the result of this bracketing is a less than adequate understanding of the terrorism phenomenon.

What is at stake? Particular political and economic structures appear to be upheld through the use and discourse of deterrence. For instance, the political positions of various domestic and international actors depend largely upon the way they respond to terrorism. A tough on terrorism approach, much like the tough on crime approach, is crucial in order for those in power to remain in power. Similarly, international economic elites depend on the war on terror to maintain and increase profit margins. Some corporations are entirely dependent on the ongoing war on terror in order to succeed in business.

Simultaneously, the domestic and international gap in wealth is increasing. Whether the benefit is financial security or safety from violence, not all people are benefiting from efforts to deter terrorism. In the name of fighting the war on terror, the government has severely altered the civil rights of U.S. citizens, while promoting “democracy” abroad. The promotion of fear of terrorism at home also promotes the use of violence as a deterrent abroad.

Finally, answering terrorism with violence in the name of deterrence or preemption in the name of prevention may not have the desired effect of deterring terrorism. In fact, our response to terrorism, may fuel ongoing conflict and violence by increasing the motivation of terrorists or upholding present inequalities (Sherman 1993). Recent evidence suggests that the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan have not accomplished their goals of ending terrorism and implementing democratic governments.

The outlook for “progress” in the war on terrorism through the continued use of deterrence is not optimistic either. For example, according to the National Intelligence Estimate, a collaborative of 16 agencies, concludes in their report “The Terrorist Threat to Homeland Security” that we are facing ongoing and increasing threats to the United States. Although they claim that al Qaeda perceives the U.S. to be a hardened target that is less vulnerable than it was on 9/11, the threat of another attack is highly likely.

Further, the report implies that the occupation of Iraq as well as the spread of Islamic extremism may promote terrorism rather than deter. Although the U.S. claims to have intercepted some terrorists’ plots, the U.S. presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, targeted killings in Pakistan and Yemen, increased security and intelligence measures are met with the spread of al Qaeda, an increase in the number of radical Internet sites, and now a new threat from Hezbollah. These increased threats suggest that terrorists groups are not deterred by the U.S. occupation and ongoing violence. Rather, the actions of the U.S. are reinforcing and possibly increasing the collective motivations of terrorists. Despite the evidence that “some administration policies have been ineffective or have backfired,” the report states that the U.S. should remain in Iraq or even increase its

presence there in order to respond to the “network built up” by al Qaeda affiliates in Iraq (Shane 2007:A1).

Is deterrence effective? To assert that deterrence is an effective means to combat terrorism is impossible to falsify. What is apparent is that deterrence theory does not supply us with the most effective means of understanding (combating, thwarting) terrorism. Further, the terrorism/counterterrorism dynamic is a cyclical process of violence that does not facilitate understanding the larger context of global inequalities, collective grievances and identity crises. Until we are willing to think critically about the modern state of terrorism, we will not have the capability to practically avoid future atrocities.

If deterrence theory is not the most appropriate means to address terrorism, what other options are at our disposal? Is there any kind of policy that we could implement to address terrorism that would not be bound to elite interests, but recognizes terrorism as a political act? We might begin to formulate new counterterrorism policies based on the work of cultural criminologists such as Jack Katz, Donald Black and Jock Young. Such policies would have to recognize that (a) terrorism as a political act that (b) emerges from real collective grievances. The recognition of both is necessary to move past the conversion of all grievances to costs and all attempts to remove or reduce those grievances to benefits. However, given the current constellation of international elite power, any alternative counterterrorism policy is unlikely to be recognized or implemented for that matter.

The fact that thinking about and addressing terrorism outside of a deterrence paradigm is so difficult may suggest that what is necessary in order to really tackle

terrorism is not a new counterterrorism policy that implicitly presumes the present world order as given and inalterable, but a restructuring of the later. Such restructuring would have to be geared toward easing constraints that corporate and political elites place on society, precisely those constraints that conflict with prevailing cultural norms and contribute the collective grievances. Creating a more just social order in which people feel they have a voice in decision making processes and agency over their own lives may be the only venue for eradicating collective grievances whose most visible manifestation today is terrorism.

How is the present social order not conducive to reducing, eliminating or making unnecessary collective grievances? The modern social order places the role of the state as manager where the responsibility of the state is not to solve social problems, but control them. Deterrence is how the state chose to manage terrorism, but claimed deterrence was a way of “solving” or eradicating terrorism. However, deterrence efforts may not only be ineffective or theoretically insufficient, but deterrence may also “prepare conditions that will further weaken, or preclude, opportunities to tackle social problems” including terrorism (Dahms 2005:208).

Despite the apparent unfeasibility of alternative policy options for addressing terrorism, it is increasingly important for social scientists to critically analyze the present efforts to combat terrorism. Critiques of deterrent measures are the first step in the creation not just of alternative policies, but visions of an alternative world order. If social scientists refrain from engaging in such critiques with the goal of illuminating alternatives, they run the risk of upholding the present power structures that make those alternatives appear nonexistent or impossible.

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## **Vita**

Casey E. Cordy was born in New Jersey in July, 1982. After moving to Rhode Island at the age of three, she attended Toll Gate High School and Warwick Area Career and Technical School where she graduated in 2001. Casey attended the University of Rhode Island where she worked part time in the Honors Program and various other jobs to pay for school. After graduating with a B.A. in Sociology and a minor in Justice, Law and Society, she moved to Knoxville, TN to accept an Assistantship with the University of Tennessee, Department of Sociology in 2005.