Putting Terror in its Place:
An Experiment on Mitigating Fears of Terrorism Among the American Public

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Abstract:
An American’s yearly chance of being killed by a terrorist attack sits at roughly 1 in 3.5 million. Yet, over 40% of Americans consistently believe that they or their family members are likely to be a terror victim. Can these inflated estimates of the risks of terrorism be brought closer to reality? With trillions of dollars spent on the “War on Terror,” this question is not just theoretically but practically important. In order to investigate, we use an experimental approach assessing whether people update their beliefs about terrorism when given factual information about the relative risks it presents. We find that public fear of terrorism and demand for countering it can be sharply reduced with better information, dropping essentially to pre-9/11 levels after the treatment and staying that way two weeks later. These results suggest that countering the indirect costs of terrorism may largely require providing more context and perspective.

Acknowledgements:
The authors would like to thank audiences at the Ohio State University, Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of California-Berkeley in addition to APSA and ISA panels for their helpful comments and feedback on earlier versions of this manuscript.
“Get on the damn elevator! Fly on the damn plane! Calculate the odds of being harmed by a terrorist. It’s still about as likely as being swept out to sea by a tidal wave” – former U.S. Senator John McCain (R-AZ)¹

Since the attacks of September 11th, 2001, counterterrorism has arguably become the central goal underpinning American security policy. According to one key estimate, the United States spent $5.93 trillion from 9/11 through the end of Fiscal Year 2019 on efforts to thwart terrorism, including the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the conflicts in Syria and Pakistan, and U.S. homeland security (Crawford 2018).²

In one sense, the centrality of terrorism for American foreign policy over the last 18 years seems appropriate in light of the public's ongoing concern about the issue. As recently as June 2017, for example, Gallup found that 60% of Americans said it was “very” or “somewhat” likely that there would be acts of terrorism in the country “over the next several weeks.” Even more dramatically, around 45% of respondents in the same poll said they were “very” or “somewhat” worried that they or someone in their family would become a victim of terrorism.³ Moreover, this level of public anxiety over terrorism has changed very little since late 2001.

But the public's fear of terrorism persists despite the fact that the risk of death Americans face from terrorism is remarkably low, even when counting the devastating but highly unusual attacks of 9/11. According to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), from September 11th, 2001 through December 31st, 2018, 3,129 Americans died in terrorist attacks on American soil, with

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² Indeed, counterterrorism was of course a primary motivation and justification for the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, and at least an important secondary consideration and justification in Iraq.
2,889 of the deaths taking place on 9/11 and 240 Americans dying over the following 17 years. That toll equates to an expenditure of roughly $1.5 billion for each American killed by terrorists from 2001 through 2018. This cost far outstrips American spending on any other cause of death. Additionally, according to U.S. Department of Defense statistics, more Americans have died in U.S. military operations touted as combatting terrorism during the same time frame (6,950) than have actually been killed by terrorists.

The observation that both Americans’ fear of terrorism and their responses to it have been dangerously excessive is not new. John Mueller (2006) is perhaps most famous for documenting the inflated American response to 9/11. More recently, Mueller and his co-author Mark Stewart (2015) examine the extensive institutionalization of this over-reaction across many government bureaucracies, leading to the expenditure of vast public resources abroad and at home. Yet while we know a great deal about the country’s exaggerated reactions to the terrorist threat, far less is known about what could alleviate or mitigate them.

In particular, with regard to the American public’s deeply inflated sense of the terrorist threat, would knowing more about the real risks of terrorism moderate the public’s response on this issue? On the one hand, scholarship about terrorism and its psychological consequences is largely skeptical that increased public knowledge about the risks of terrorist attacks would have an ameliorating effect on public fears, perceiving the threat as a psychological “perform storm” (Friedman 2011: 89) that resists rational judgment. On the other hand, literatures on belief correction and foreign policy opinion offer grounds for optimism, suggesting that the public can

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4 See “Global Terrorism Database,” National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), The University of Maryland, 2018. Available at https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/. We rely in this article on the definition and measurement of terrorism used in the GTD, which captures violence by non-state actors intended to spread fear or intimidation for social, political, or economic ends. This includes both international and domestic terrorism on U.S. soil. The statistics in our experiment are from Mueller and Stewart (2015), which also uses the GTD for its underlying calculations.

make reasoned cost-benefit analyses of difficult life-and-death issues and thus would likely be responsive to more accurate information on the real costs of terrorist activity. While the theoretical arguments in these literatures are varied and complex, the central empirical claims are fairly straightforward and manifestly important. Yet we have very little evidence about how the American public would respond to learning more about the actual risks of terrorism.

In this study, we explore the extent to which popular fears of terrorism can be mitigated by exposing people to information about the risks of terrorism. We carried out a nationally representative survey experiment in the U.S. with support from Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS) that provided Americans with factual information about the risks of death from terrorism in the context of other dangers. We varied not only whether people received this corrective information, but also whether it came with an endorsement from one of three realistic sources: a Republican official, a Democratic official, or a military general. Finally, we fielded an identical experiment on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) that included a two-week follow-up after the initial experiment in order to evaluate the longer-term effects of exposure to accurate information about the risks of terrorism.

Overall, we found that presenting people with factual information about the relative risk of terror attacks substantially altered their perceptions and beliefs. After receiving the treatment, subjects were much less likely to rate terrorism as an important threat to U.S. national security and to prioritize combatting it as a core U.S. foreign policy objective. The effects we observe are quite substantial, including a roughly 20-point drop in the percentage of the American public that is very or somewhat worried about the threat of terrorism. Surprisingly, the robust effects of this single exposure to accurate information endured two weeks after the experiment in our follow-up survey, with only very modest erosion.
While the ameliorative effects of the factual information about terrorism were generally strong and robust regardless of its source, we did see some variation in its efficacy depending on the political elites with which it was associated. Specifically, the effect of corrective information on terrorism eroded more quickly when it was associated with the Democratic Party rather than the Republican Party or senior American military officers. Importantly, however, we find that the effects of corrective information were not limited to cues from particular sources, such that the main story is informational – rather than partisan or institutional – in nature. In sum, our results indicate that providing the American public with better information and clearer perspective about the risks of terrorism would dramatically reduce its emphasis on terrorism as a national security threat and its demand for policies designed to counter it. These results have key implications for our understanding of the costs and consequences of terrorism in modern democratic societies like the United States, as well as the best way to counter them.

**The Public’s Persistent Fear of Terrorism**

Terrorists rarely achieve their expressed political objectives, but they often impose high costs on target states by inciting a pervasive and disproportionate sense of fear among – that is, by terrorizing – their populations (Abrahms 2006, Kydd and Walter 2006, Cronin 2009). This fear can have numerous painful consequences – prompting the target state to undertake costly military campaigns, allocate vast resources to homeland security over other major national priorities, and undermine its own civil liberties, social cohesion, and democratic accountability as it seeks to eradicate the threat.
Nowhere are such dynamics more apparent than in the United States over the past quarter century. With two overseas wars, vast intelligence operations, an extensive campaign of targeted killing, and unprecedented domestic oversight mechanisms, the ongoing Global War on Terror is likely to go down as the most expensive defense campaign in American history, with a price tag of about $6 trillion and rising (Crawford 2018). While these policies are fueled by many factors, one key driver is public perceptions and preferences: polls routinely show high levels of fear about terrorism among Americans, with about 40% of the country afraid that they or their families will become victims, and 70% viewing major attacks as likely to occur in the near future (Mueller and Stewart 2015: 80-88). In the words of one terrorism scholar, public fear has created a “permissive environment” and a “seller’s market” for aggressive responses to the threat, playing an important role in fueling the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the ballooning of the country’s defense budget, and the establishment of a bloated homeland security apparatus (Friedman 2011: 80).

The American public’s fear of terrorism persists in spite of the fact that the actual risk of terrorism for those in the United States is extremely low. Over the past half-century, the chance that an American would be killed by a terror attack on U.S. soil is roughly 1 in 3.5 million, with under 90 deaths per year between 1970-2007. Even in 2001, a year when terrorism was uniquely dangerous in the United States, terrorism accounted for less than 0.14% of deaths in the country. In contrast, the risk of death from other hazards like cancer (1 in 540), car accidents (1 in 8,000), drowning in a bathtub (1 in 950,000), and flying on a plane (1 in 2.9 million) are all greater than terrorism (Mueller 2006).

Scholars have written at length about this vast public overreaction to terrorism in the U.S. Some have focused on documenting and describing the phenomenon, likening it to falling into a trap set by the terrorists or activating a series of powerful “antibodies” that kill the host as well as
the virus (Lustick 2006). Others have studied the causes of these fears, showing how fundamental cognitive errors and biases, stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims, the nature of the mass media environment, emotional responses to threatening stimuli, and political discourse around the threat all contribute to such overreactions (Sunstein 2006, Sides and Gross 2013, Nacos, Bloch-Elkon, and Shapiro 2011, Huddy et al. 2005, Friedman, Harper, and Preble 2010). Moreover, studies have also shown that this overreaction cuts across ideology, afflicted both liberals and conservatives to a substantial degree (Hetherington and Suhay 2011, Malhotra and Popp 2010).

Perhaps the most prominent scholarship within this area has come from John Mueller. In Overblown (Mueller 2006), he extensively evaluates and documents the overreaction to terrorism both across the American public and its political leaders. Then, in Chasing Ghosts, Mueller and his co-author Mark Stewart (2015) document the institutionalization of this excessive response across numerous U.S. government bureaucracies. Yet, while their scholarship unearths a mountain of evidence regarding America’s vast overreaction to 9/11, they provide relatively little evidence about what could alleviate the problem.

Mueller and Stewart generally view the exaggerated American response to terrorism as a “bottom-up” phenomenon. That is, they suspect that American political leaders are responding to – rather than creating – public anxieties on this issue. Yet, they remain puzzled by the persistence of this fear, since “not only has there been no repeat of 9/11, but, although al Qaeda, ISIS, and their various affiliates have served as inspiration for some jihadists in the United States, these groups have failed on their own to directly consummate any attack of any magnitude whatsoever on American soil — or, for that matter, in the air lanes approaching it” (Mueller and Stewart 2018). Mueller and Stewart speculate about several reasons for the stubbornness of public anxieties, but
one explanation that receives scant attention is that citizens may not be aware of the fundamental fact described by their research: that the risk of terrorism facing Americans is very low.

Recent data regarding media coverage and public interest in various causes of death seem to support the notion that a badly distorted news environment may be contributing to severe and persistent public misestimation of the risks and importance of terrorism. In particular, Shen et al. (2018) and Ritchie (2019) analyze 2016 data on the real causes of death among Americans, the proportion of news stories about each cause of death in the New York Times and the Guardian, and Google Trends data on Google searches about each cause of death. Google searches give us a useful behavioral measure of public concern, since they involve citizens taking action to seek out information about an issue. According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control, terrorist attacks accounted for less than 0.01% of deaths in the United States, yet nearly 36% of the news stories about fatalities that appeared in the New York Times in 2016 were about deaths from terrorism.\(^6\) The Google Trends data suggest that the public may have been influenced by such media coverage, because 7.2% of Google searches about causes of death during 2016 referred to terrorism. Public concerns about terrorism are not nearly as exaggerated as the depictions of this threat in the media, but the serious biases in news coverage around the risks of terrorism may have led to persistently exaggerated fears among the public.

If the public has a deeply distorted view of the risks of terrorist activity, would educating the public on the actual risks alleviate some of these exaggerated fears? Surprisingly few studies explore what alleviates public fears of terrorism, and none of them explicitly focus on educating the public on the reality of the risk they face from terror. For example, Bausch, Faria, and Zeitzoff\(^6\)

\(^6\) Coverage in the Guardian is almost as distorted as that in the New York Times, with 33% of death-related stories referencing terrorism. It is also notable that both of these outlets are associated with left-leaning political perspectives. Thus, the media hyping of terrorism reaches across both national and partisan boundaries.
(2013) investigate people’s resilience to terrorism with a laboratory experiment in which subjects choose between a safer option and a lottery with a higher payoff but a small risk of extreme loss – approximating the choice between staying home and continuing their daily lives in the face of a terrorist threat. Meanwhile, Hoffman and Shelby (2017) study how information about effective counterterrorism activities shapes public fear of terrorism in several laboratory and MTurk experiments.

These studies offer valuable contributions and insights, but they do not directly address the question of whether providing the public with more accurate information about the risks of terrorist attacks would diminish its demand for counterterrorist activities. First, the treatments in these studies do not offer information about the actual risk of terrorism itself. Bausch, Faria, and Zeitzoff provide signals about the risk of loss in a laboratory game with various payoff structures. While this is a clever simulation, citizens are not given any information about terrorism in the study – nor are they even informed it is about terrorism at all. This is crucial because, as discussed above, terrorism may be particularly frightening to people for a host of reasons (Slovic 2000, Nacos, Bloch-Elkon, and Shapiro 2011). One wonders if Bausch, Faria, and Zeitzoff’s subjects would have reacted so rationally to the information provided had it been about the threat of terrorist attacks rather than a generic risk of payoff loss.

Hoffman and Shelby (2017), meanwhile, focus on the state’s capacity to boost public confidence in counterterrorism by publicly demonstrating their ability to restore a sense of order and control. While intriguing, this focuses on informing people about the government’s response to the threat, rather than the actual severity of the threat itself. This approach presumes that governments should vigorously respond to the threat to ease public fears. Yet a more direct and
cost-effective approach might be to challenge the fears that drive the need for such a robust and resource-intensive response in the first place.

Additionally, our study also offers some key methodological advances over related work. Unlike previous efforts, which have used opt-in or convenience samples, we fielded our study on a nationally representative probability sample of the American public. Representative sampling allows us to estimate the extent to which exposure to factual information and elite cues about the threat actually diminish public fears nationwide. This ability is key because convenience samples on college campuses or MTurk tend to skew young, educated, and liberal. Given the Republican party’s longstanding discourse about the War on Terror, there might be concern about the extent to which results from such studies would generalize to rank-and-file Republicans.

Finally, in addition to the nationally representative sample, we also carried out the same study simultaneously on MTurk with a follow-up wave fielded two weeks after the experiment. The vast majority of experimental studies of foreign policy views capture very short-term shifts in attitudes. These effects are important, but there is reason to be concerned about how long they last. This is especially true for the study of attitudes toward terrorism, since the public is consistently presented with a distorted view of this issue in the news. We take advantage of the ability of MTurk to conduct low-cost multi-wave experiments (Gross, Porter, and Wood 2008) to speak to the stickiness and persistence of our treatments over time.

Educating the Public on the Risks of Terrorism – Theoretical Expectations:

Our central question is whether greater public knowledge of the actual risks and costs of terrorist activity to the American population would reduce the exceedingly high priority that the
public has placed on this issue for nearly two decades. Literatures on terrorism, public opinion, and foreign policy present a variety of answers to this question, but these disparate perspectives can be broadly synthesized into what we label updating, non-updating, a conditional updating perspectives.

Non-Updating Perspectives

The existing literature on the psychological consequences of terrorism suggests a deep skepticism about the ability of the public to update its beliefs in response to new factual information about terrorism. Scholars have identified a number of ways in which human cognitive patterns interact with the distinctive attributes of terrorist activity to produce an outsized public reaction. Some scholars have drawn on work in risk communication, arguing that terrorism is innately frightening because it is a risk high in “dread” (since it is a terrible way to die) and low in “control” (since people have little power to prevent it) (Slovic 2000, Hoffman and Shelby 2017). In this sense, it is often perceived as something akin to shark attacks that can occur on land and not just in the water. Meanwhile, other scholars such as Cass Sunstein (2003) have drawn on judgment and decision-making theories to explain overreactions to terrorism, blaming them chiefly on the phenomenon of “probability neglect” – the tendency of individuals to fixate on the risk of rare events that are severe or salient in nature, neglecting their actual probability of taking place. Still others like Max Abrams (2006) have used “correspondent inference theory” to explain excessive public reactions to terrorism, arguing that it leads targeted nations to infer that its users have extreme ends – the destruction of their society – to match the extreme means they employ.

In sum, whatever the precise combination of psychological attributes or processes behind outsized public fears of terrorism, a number of scholars view the threat of terrorism as “special” –
or at least in a special category of threats along with shark attacks, plane crashes, and nuclear wars or disasters – in its profound resistance to rational judgments and considerations. In the words of one such scholar, “because of how we are wired, terrorism is almost a perfect storm for provoking fear and overreaction, which is its point” (Friedman 2011: 89). In sum, these ideas suggest that we should be deeply skeptical of our ability to reassure people about the terror threat with factual information. As stated by Sunstein, “[i]n the face of probability neglect, government is unlikely to be successful if it attempts to reduce fear by emphasizing the low likelihood of another terrorist attack” (2003: 122).

**Updating Perspectives**

Other research on public opinion suggests that members of the public may be more capable of updating their beliefs in response to new information than the terrorism literature would predict. First, an extensive literature on the “rational public” in American foreign policy indicates that citizens often respond in systematic and reasonable ways to new information about foreign policy events (e.g., Nincic 1992, Page and Shapiro 1992, Peffley and Hurwitz 1992, Aldrich et al. 2006). For example, in their review of more than 6,000 U.S. survey questions between 1935 and 1982, Shapiro and Page (1988: 211) conclude that “[t]he public has not always successfully judged the best interests of the United States or that of people elsewhere, nor have elites and the media always reported truthfully and interpreted correctly. Nevertheless, we maintain that Americans, as a collective body, have done well with whatever information has been provided, and that they have formed and changed their policy preferences in a reasonable manner.” This result mirrors research on the public’s ability to make reasoned cost-benefit judgments of military operations (Mueller 1973, Jentleson 1992, Kull and Destler 1999, Larson 2000, Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler 2009). In
particular, the rational expectations model stresses the public’s ability to update its beliefs about a conflict in response to new information (Gelpi 2010, Gartner and Gelpi 2016). This model indicates that individuals will alter their beliefs about a military operation when they get new information about it – like casualties or signs of battlefield failure – and that the impact will be especially strong when it clashes with prior expectations and beliefs.

Second, research on the correction of false and unsubstantiated beliefs more generally – from fears of voter fraud to climate change denialism – has increasingly shown that they usually respond to factual information when it is offered. While some prominent “belief correction” studies have found that attempting to correct misperceptions about emotionally charged issues can “backfire” and entrench them among key audiences (Nyhan and Reifler 2010), recent analyses have questioned the robustness of this finding. Wood and Porter (2018), for example, carried out a number of experiments on more than 10,000 subjects and found that people largely update their beliefs with new factual information. There is a growing consensus that persistent backfire effects and intransigent false beliefs are fairly rare when the facts are clearly laid out in front of people (Nyhan and Zeitzoff 2018, De Vries, Hobolt, and Tilley 2018). This pattern dovetails with key risk communication studies which show that people’s perceptions about the risks posed by even some of the most salient hazards can be shifted closer toward reality when the information about them is presented in a clear and compelling way (e.g., Corso, Hammitt, and Graham 2001). In sum, these literatures converge around the expectation that providing new information about the risks of terrorism to the American public will reduce public evaluations about the threat of terrorism and its importance as a foreign policy issue.

*Conditional Updating Perspectives*
Finally, other literatures on the formation of attitudes and beliefs suggest that attempts to
educate citizens about the risks of terrorism will only be effective under certain conditions. We
focus on three such conditions here. First, a large literature on elite opinion leadership suggests
that providing citizens with accurate information will only shift their attitudes if the information
is endorsed by trusted elites. In particular, an extensive literature on this topic indicates that one
of the most influential sources of trust with regard to political issues is partisanship (e.g., Zaller 1992,
have found that when there is elite consensus behind a specific foreign policy stance, a consensus
will emerge among the informed public as well. Yet, when elites are divided and fall into partisan
debate, informed citizens are likely to divide too, adhering to the positions of their respective
partisan cue-givers (Zaller 1992, Berinsky 2007). This literature on the partisan filtering of elite
cues thus suggests that corrective information about terrorism risks will only impact beliefs when
it is endorsed by a politician who shares the recipient’s partisan affiliation.

Second, co-partisanship may not be the only source of trust regarding information about
the terror threat. For example, the elite consensus literature suggests that the endorsement of new
information by a leader supported across partisan lines would be most effective in enabling it to
reduce aggregate fears. In our present age of partisan polarization, one key American institution
that retains strong bipartisan confidence, especially on foreign policy issues, is the U.S. military.
A recent Pew study shows that large majorities of Democrats and Republicans express confidence
in the U.S. military (Johnson 2018). Thus, the elite opinion leadership argument might also suggest
that providing Americans with corrective information about the threat of terrorism will be effective
when the information is endorsed not by a co-partisan politician, but a broadly trusted figure like
a senior U.S. military officer.
Finally, a third conditional perspective on alleviating popular fears of terrorism concerns the notion of partisan issue ownership. The partisan issue ownership model holds that the public views issues chiefly as problems that require solutions and believes that political parties vary in their competence in addressing these problems (Budge and Farlie 1983, Petrocik 1996, Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003). The model expects that parties develop and maintain relatively stable reputations for handling particular issues that allow them to recruit, maintain, and motivate their core constituents. Officials from the party that “owns” an issue will generally be trusted as having greater competence on that issue than will representatives of other parties. Because of the stickiness of these reputations, politicians will struggle to persuade voters of their competence in handling an issue if the opposition owns it.

While not every political issue in contemporary American politics is clearly owned by the Democratic or Republican Party, military and security policy issues have largely been owned by the Republican Party since the Vietnam War (Petrocik 1996, Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003). Republicans have particularly strong ownership with respect to the issue of terrorism. Merolla and Zechmeister (2013), for example, find that citizens increase their level of support for Republican candidates over Democrats when presented with cues about terrorism. Thus, according to the issue ownership model, the public will be more likely to respond to information about the actual danger of terrorism when that information is endorsed by the party that generally “owns” the issue: the Republican Party.

Table 1 summarizes the hypotheses that can be derived from each perspective. Ultimately, the non-updating, updating, and conditional updating perspectives are all plausible at face value. Yet, we lack the evidence to adjudicate between them. John Mueller, reflecting on the issue of

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7 The non-updating perspective is represented in Table 1 by the null hypothesis associated with H1.
popular fears of terrorism, notes that “in the end, it is not clear how one can deal with the public’s often irrational, or at least erratic, fears about remote dangers” like terrorist attacks (2005: 498). Likewise, Cass Sunstein notes in his work on public overreactions to terrorism that “whether information and education will work is an empirical question on which clear evidence is absent” (2003: 132). We concur, and thus turn to the task of obtaining it.

Table 1: Summary of Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1 (General Updating)</td>
<td>Providing new information about the risks of terrorism to the American public will reduce public evaluations about the threat of terrorism and its importance as a foreign policy issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2A (Conditional Updating, Co-Partisanship)</td>
<td>Providing new information about the risks of terrorism to the American public will only reduce public evaluations about the threat of terrorism or its importance as a foreign policy issue when that information endorsed by a politician who shares the recipients’ partisan affiliation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2B (Conditional Updating, Institutional Trust)</td>
<td>Providing new information about the risks of terrorism to the American public will only reduce public evaluations about the threat of terrorism or its importance as a foreign policy issue when the information is endorsed by a senior military officer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2C (Conditional Updating, Issue Ownership)</td>
<td>Providing new information about the risks of terrorism to the American public will only affect public evaluations about the threat of terrorism or its importance as a foreign policy issue when the information is endorsed by a representative of the Republican Party.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Design:

We fielded a nationally representative survey experiment (N=1,250) via TESS and the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in May 2019. We randomly varied whether people received factual information about the relative risk of terrorism, and whether that information was endorsed by different elites. The information we provided was adapted directly from the aforementioned work by Mueller and Stewart (2015). Our core treatment focuses exactly on the question of what would happen if the public were more educated about the risks of terrorism facing
Americans. Meanwhile, the randomly assigned elite endorsements of this information were critical for checking the conditional arguments about co-partisanship, broad institutional trust, and issue ownership as key to successful perceptual change.

Table 2: The Relative Risk Table in Treatment Vignettes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Annual Deaths</th>
<th>Annual Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>560,000</td>
<td>1 in 540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Accidents</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>34,017</td>
<td>1 in 8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>14,180</td>
<td>1 in 22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disasters</td>
<td>1999-2008</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>1 in 480,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Appliances</td>
<td>Yearly Average</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1 in 1,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Aviation</td>
<td>1989-2007</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1 in 2,900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Terrorism</strong></td>
<td><strong>1970-2007</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 in 3,500,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1 in 7,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from Mueller and Stewart 2015

The experiment was designed as follows. First, all participants read a brief vignette about recent terrorist attacks that mirrored the general discourse around terrorism in the country and served to reinforce public concern. This follows the “belief-perseverance” approach used in related studies in which the relevant misperception is reinforced before being challenged, yielding a harder test of its correctability (Nyhan and Reifler 2010). Participants who just read this initial priming article were in the control group (Control). Then, those assigned to the treatment groups also received one of four vignettes with information about the actual risk of terrorism vs. other safety hazards in the U.S. The first treatment group’s vignette showed just the risk statistics (Correct_Only). The other three vignettes also included an endorsement of those statistics by one of three fictitious, yet realistic, political elites: a Democratic congressman (Correct_Democrat), Republican congressman (Correct_Republican), or senior military officer (Correct_Military). The elite endorsement read: “Indeed, these facts have been noted by officials. For example,
[Republican Congressman/Democratic Congressman/four-star Army General] John Baker stated recently “The truth is that you are far more likely to be killed by routine, mundane dangers than you are by a terrorist attack. We as Americans need to take a closer look at the risks and choices we face.” Participants were thus randomly assigned to one of five different experimental conditions, including four treatment groups and one control group. The risk table used in all of the treatment vignettes is shown in Table 2, and the five experimental conditions are in Table 3. The full treatment vignette is in the Appendix (Figure A1).

Table 3: The Five Experimental Conditions in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>No correction</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 1</td>
<td>Correction + No endorsement</td>
<td>Correct_Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 2</td>
<td>Correction + Democratic endorsement</td>
<td>Correct_Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 3</td>
<td>Correction + Republican endorsement</td>
<td>Correct_Republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 4</td>
<td>Correction + Military endorsement</td>
<td>Correct_Military</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted earlier, we also fielded a parallel survey experiment simultaneously on MTurk (N=1,250) that included a second wave in which we re-contacted subjects in order to explore the persistence of our treatment effects over time. This follow-up wave allows us to observe whether our treatment effects are just fleeting responses (Hoffman and Shelby 2017: 628), or represent a more enduring change in opinion. Both experiments were fielded with IRB approval (Ohio State University 2018B0235, Carnegie Mellon University STUDY2019_00000063) and pre-registered with the Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) initiative (20190430AB).
We use two key questions as our primary outcomes in this study. First, we use a question about perceptions of terrorism as a threat to U.S. national security. The wording for this item was: “Here is a list of potential threats to our country’s national security over the next 10 years. For each one, please tell me whether it is very serious, fairly serious, not too serious, or not a threat at all (Terrorism).” Second, we use a question regarding support for countering terrorism as an American foreign policy priority. The wording was: “Here is a list of potential goals that the U.S. can pursue in its foreign policy. For each one, please tell me whether it is very important, fairly important, not too important, or not important at all (Preventing future acts of terrorism on U.S. soil).” We believe that both items capture key layers of public overreaction to terrorism, with one focusing on the severity of the threat and the other on the urgency of the government’s response.

In both the NORC and the MTurk survey experiments, each of the 1,250 participants was randomly assigned to one of the five treatment conditions, yielding at least 240 respondents per condition. To check the effectiveness of our randomization across treatment groups, we conducted parametric ANOVA testing to determine if random assignment led to separation. We found no evidence of significant differences across the five groups in either our NORC or Mechanical Turk samples. Accordingly, we are confident that any observed treatment effects are not a function of different demographics across treatment groups.8

We used multiple manipulation checks to ensure that participants received the treatments in our study. Specifically, we asked subjects about the facts given to them about terrorism itself as well as the threats posed by other risks presented in the treatments. We found strong evidence of citizens attending to our treatments, as they significantly increased the extent to which people correctly identified the number of annual terrorism deaths in the U.S. and increased their fear of

8 For a visual representation of covariate balance, see Figure A2 in the Appendix.
other key risks at the top of the table (e.g., cancer). The impact of our treatments on these additional risks are presented in the Appendix in Figure A3.\(^9\)

Given the success of the randomization, we opt for simplicity in terms of estimating the impact of our treatments. In each wave of the survey, we simply estimate ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models with dummy variables for each treatment category and with the control group (i.e. no corrective information) as the excluded category.\(^10\) Our coefficients thus reflect the average difference in the perceived severity of the terrorist threat and priority of countering it as a foreign policy goal between each treatment group and the control group. Robustness checks using other estimators and including all of our demographic control variables revealed no changes in the direction or significance of our estimated effects.

**Empirical Results**

Figure 1 shows the average effect of our treatments, along with 95% confidence intervals, for the nationally representative NORC sample. The average effect is indicated by a triangle for citizens’ perceptions of terrorism as a threat to the country’s national security and by a circle for their demand for counterterrorism as a foreign policy priority. The 95% confidence intervals are indicated by horizontal lines. It is worth noting that the baseline attitudes in the control group are similar to those in extant polling. For example, 33% of our subjects report being very or somewhat worried that they or their families could become victims of terrorism – a figure relatively similar to historical polling results on this issue by Gallup and other firms over the previous two decades, 

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\(^9\) We drop individuals who fail the (direct) manipulation check about terrorism, about 10% of each sample. However, this decision has no substantive impact on our results, with all key relationships maintaining direction and significance. This is reassuring given recent work on the pitfalls of dropping subjects that fail manipulation checks (Aronow, Baron, and Pinson 2019). In the NORC survey, we use sampling weights provided by NORC to maximize representativeness, but this has no substantive effect on our results.

\(^10\) Our appendix also includes each model run with an ordered probit as well as a standard set of demographic controls to ensure robustness (Figures A4-5). The results are substantively unchanged.
which hover around 40% (Mueller and Stewart 2015: 80-88). On this and other key questions, we thereby have a broadly similar starting point to most recent polling on the issue.

**Figure 1: Treatment Effects on American Perceptions of Terrorism, NORC Sample**

The results in Figure 1 show that our provision of accurate information about the risks of terrorism to the American public significantly reduced the public’s perception of terrorism as an important national security threat and foreign policy priority. All four of our treatment conditions clearly had a negative and statistically significant impact. In addition, these effects are substantial. For example, the impact of the correction-only treatment on perceptions of terrorism as a national
security threat is roughly 10 percentage points (0.4 on a 4-point scale). For comparison, consider that a dummy variable for Republican identification has an impact of around 3 percentage points (0.13 on a 4-point scale), while a dummy variable for conservatives has an effect of around 6 percentage points (0.25 on a 4-point scale). In other words, the effects of the treatments are about twice as large as two important conventional variables – party affiliation and political ideology – often linked to American public fear of terrorisms and support for robust counterterrorism efforts since 9/11 (Kam and Kinder 2007, Malhotra and Popp 2010).

Moreover, we can also see that there is little separation between treatments, suggesting that the provision of factual information about terrorism is more important than whether it comes with an elite endorsement (or who endorses it). The endorsement of the information by a Democratic official has a modestly larger impact than the other treatments, but this gap does not approach statistical significance. Additionally, we see that the treatments have a slightly larger impact on perceptions of terrorism as a national security threat than on views of terrorism as a foreign policy priority, but once again these differences are not significant.

Next we explore the possibility that the effects of factual information on attitudes toward terrorism are limited by partisan polarization. Figure 2 displays the estimated treatment effects of corrective information for co-partisan versus cross-partisan cues. That is, we compare the impact of the information when it is endorsed by a member of the participant’s own political party versus its impact when endorsed by a member of the opposing party. While the public may have limited openness to information from the opposing party on many issues, partisan polarization does not affect its attentiveness to information about the risks of terrorism. Figure 2 clearly indicates that the impact of factual information with a cross-partisan endorsement (i.e., a Democratic respondent

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11 The size of the treatment effects vs. party identification in both samples is visible in Appendix Figures A7-8.
receiving information endorsed by a Republican politician or vice versa) is virtually identical to
the impact of the information accompanied by a co-partisan endorsement. In addition, both of these
effects are negative, strongly significant, and very similar in magnitude to the treatment effects
displayed in Figure 1 when we do not distinguish by co-partisanship. In other words, the corrective
information we provided about the risks of terrorism has a substantial impact on fears regardless
of the partisan identity of the individual receiving the information, the identity of the individual
endorsing the information, or whether anyone endorses the information at all.

Of course, our results do not imply that there are no partisan differences in attitudes toward
terrorism. Our data indicate that self-identified conservatives and Republicans are significantly
more likely to state that terrorism is a critical national security threat and foreign policy issue. We
report the full results of statistical analyses with party identification in the online appendix. The
key implication of Figure 2 is that both Democrats and Republicans are willing to update these
beliefs in response to new information, even when that information is associated with a politician
from the opposing party. We focus here on the models without control variables because their
inclusion does not affect our estimated treatment effects. Moreover, we are hesitant to impute
causal impact to these control variables, since our research design is not optimized to generate
causal identification for observational controls (Keele et. al. 2020).12

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12 Our results in Appendix Figure A7-8 indicate that our informational treatment effects are larger than the association
between participants’ partisan identification and attitudes toward terrorism. But again, we are hesitant to place great
weight on these comparisons since our design does not focus on causal identification for party ID.
Notes: Treatment effects when the endorsement comes from an elite of the same (co-partisan) or a different (cross-partisan) political party. Co-partisan and cross-partisan cues occur when participants are assigned at random into the Democratic or the Republican elite endorsements; this treatment assignment then produces co-partisan and cross-partisan cues based on the participant’s political party. In both cases, whether or not a participant received a co- or cross-partisan cue occurs at random and therefore can be interpreted causally. Specifically, co-partisan cues are either Republicans exposed to a Republican messenger or else Democrats exposed to a Democratic messenger. Cross-partisan cues are Republicans with a Democratic messenger or Democrats with a Republican messenger.

The results in Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that providing accurate information about the risks of terrorism could substantially reduce threat perceptions among the American public, and that this reduction is not the result of co-partisan cue-taking. Yet, these effects are measured only minutes after receiving the treatment. How robust will the influence of corrective information be over time as the salience of our treatment fades and participants are exposed to the typical news cycle of events (including sensationalist media coverage of terrorism)? To address that question,
we turn to the analysis of our two-wave Mechanical Turk survey. Figure 3 presents the influence of all four treatments on the full MTurk sample in the initial experiment (left panel) plus the follow-up on the same subjects two weeks later (right panel). The response rate for the second wave was quite high, at 72% of the original sample, with no systematic attrition by experimental condition.\footnote{While we find no systematic attrition by condition, there is some evidence of greater attrition of Republicans in the second wave overall. Yet controlling for partisan identification yield no meaningful change in results.}

**Figure 3: Treatment Effects on American Perceptions of Terrorism, MTurk Waves 1 and 2**

*Notes:* Treatment effects in the MTurk sample. The left panel shows the effects immediately after treatment. The right panel shows the effects in a follow-up fielded two-weeks later. The statistical models are identical to the models run with the NORC data, with OLS on perceptions of terrorism as a national security threat and foreign policy priority. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals.

First, the results in the left panel indicate that those of the first wave of the MTurk survey are very similar to those obtained in the nationally representative NORC survey. Specifically, all
four treatments significantly diminish perceptions of both terror threat and priority, with roughly similar effect sizes as before (reductions of between 5-15 percentage points). In other words, we once again see evidence that factual information is effective in mitigating public perceptions of the threat (and support for countering it), regardless of its source. Moreover, we find that the new information influences perceptions of threat slightly more than foreign policy priorities, but this difference is not statistically significant. The similarity of these effects to those of our NORC study give us great confidence in the robustness of our treatments, and the validity of using the second wave of the MTurk study to gauge their persistence.

Turning our attention to the right-hand panel of Figure 2, we see some modest erosion of our treatment effects over time, but in general they remain strikingly robust. Overall, we see a decline in the size of the treatment effects of about 0.1 to 0.2 points on a 4-point scale. For example, the provision of information reduced perceptions of terrorism as a national security threat by 0.4 on a four-point scale, but the effect is only 0.25 when we asked again two weeks later. Nonetheless, this effect remains substantively and statistically significant.

In addition to somewhat more modest treatment effects, the results of our follow-up study show slightly larger confidence intervals around our estimates since we did not receive responses from roughly a quarter of our first-wave participants. As a result of these two changes, not all of our observed treatment effects remain statistically significant in the second wave. In particular, the corrective information with the Democratic endorsement no longer has a significant impact in the second wave. Moreover, while our facts-only treatment still has a statistically significant impact on perceptions of the terrorist threat, its influence on terrorism as a foreign policy priority falls just short of conventional significance at the 95% level.
Taken together, one might read these results as indicating that accurate information about the effects of terrorism has a longer-lasting and more robust impact on public attitudes when the information is endorsed by the Republican Party or the U.S. military. We are cautious, however, about overemphasizing this distinction. It is true that the influence of the new information along with a Democratic endorsement is not significantly different from zero with 95% confidence in our follow-up wave. It is also true that the effect of this same information with a Republican or military endorsement remains statistically different from zero in our two-week follow up wave. Yet, the Democratic treatment is also not statistically significantly different from the Republican or the military treatments (as opposed to different from zero). These two facts make it critical to interpret the results with care.

Our follow-up wave thus offers some suggestive evidence that partisan cues may shape the persistence of the American public’s response to new information about terrorism. However, the stronger and more robust takeaway is that giving citizens accurate information about terrorism decreases its perceived importance as a national security threat and a foreign policy priority even as much as two weeks later. In other words, with the partial exception of Democratic politicians, there is evidence that the factual information has a persistent effect on public attitudes across the political spectrum, regardless of who provides it.

Finally, we take a closer look at the substantive magnitude of these results by comparing them to polling data from the last quarter century. Figure 4 shows the historical trend line for the percentage of Americans from 1995-2019 who are “very” or “somewhat” worried that they or a family member will become a terror victim, along with the same percentages among respondents (both treated and untreated) in our two-wave MTurk sample. We use this question for historical comparison since it is identical to the one asked in most polling about the issue (rather than the
national security threat and foreign policy priority items, which were altered slightly to enhance question wording). The historical data are adapted from Mueller and Stewart, who collected toplines from Gallup and other survey firms via the Roper Center Archive (Mueller and Stewart 2015: 80-88). We use the two-wave MTurk data so we can compare our effects not only during the initial survey but in the two-week follow-up to the historical data.

Figure 4: Percentage of Americans Who Are Very or Somewhat Worried about Terrorism, Our Results vs. Historical Trend

Notes: Our results vs. prior national polls about terrorism since 1995. Prior polls are on the blue line, while the orange triangles represent the responses to our experiments. The top triangle is the average response in our control group (37% worried). However, we see a substantial drop (roughly 20% worried) in both waves among those treated in our experiment.
As can be seen, the percentage of Americans who are worried about terrorism victimizing them or their family members has long been quite substantial. In particular, the average percentage of Americans who report being worried throughout the entire period of 1995-2019 is 41%, and the average since the rise of ISIS in 2014 is 42%. The amount of fear does appear to have fluctuated with real-world events, noticeably peaking in 2001 shortly after 9/11 (59%) and spiking after other major attacks such as the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, in 2016 (53%). Yet overall, the figure shows that public fears of terrorism have been fairly prevalent in the U.S. for more than two decades. The percentage has only dropped below 25% once in 79 polls: in 2000, several years after the Oklahoma City bombing but before the events of 9/11.

In this context, our results are quite notable. Indeed, we can see that the percentage of our respondents within the control group who are worried about a member of their family becoming a terrorism victim is 37%, relatively similar to the historical average. In contrast, the percentage of respondents in one of the treatment groups who are worried is just 22%. Moreover, that figure drops even lower in the follow-up survey, with only 19% of treated subjects worrying about the threat to themselves or their families two weeks later. This decline is substantial when viewed in historical perspective, since the percentage of worry drops from a more or less average level to below the lowest recorded value – the historical nadir of 24% over the last quarter century – after receiving our treatments. In other words, this shows that the treatments reduce American public fears of terrorism to levels not seen since before 9/11, underscoring their power and highlighting their promise were they to become more widely embraced.

Taken as a whole, our results provide strong support for approaches which expect that the American public will update its beliefs and attitudes when facing surprising new information about foreign policy issues or events. Our results are striking because American fears of terrorism have
been so strong and persistent for nearly two decades (Mueller and Stewart 2015). Yet, providing the populace with a relatively small piece of clearly packaged information about the risks of terror had a strong substantive effect on attitudes toward terrorism as a foreign policy issue. Moreover, this single modest informational treatment had consistent effects across both of our studies, and in our follow-up we found that it had enduring effects even when we re-contacted subjects after two weeks. Like other experimental studies, we recognize that it would require a sustained shift in public discourse – in which our treatments were repeatedly adopted – to drive lasting change. But our strong results show that the discursive strategy used here is very effective when applied, and that the public is quite receptive to a different type of message about terrorism. This gives us every reason to expect that – if it were to become the dominant narrative – meaningful attitudinal change about terrorism could ensue.

**Conclusion:**

In 2015, then-U.S. President Barack Obama cautioned against giving “a victory to these terrorist networks by overinflating their importance and suggesting in some fashion that they are an existential threat to the United States.”[^14] But Obama’s comments received broad condemnation from pundits and politicians of various stripes, and the President soon backed away from this moderated rhetoric. Obama’s quick capitulation to the entrenched elite consensus around terrorism underscores the fact that few American politicians have ever compared it to other more mundane dangers, preferring instead to paint it as uniquely terrifying and existential in nature. This tendency has left us unable to observe how the public might respond to a sustained educational campaign to place terrorism in appropriate context.

Empirical studies have shown that media coverage of mortality risks exaggerates the risk of death from terrorist attack by a factor of nearly 4,000 relative to other risks facing the public (Shen et al. 2018; Ritchie 2019). The classic media maxim "if it bleeds, it leads" has led to an increasing coverage of violent death in the news (Hanusch 2010; Barnes and Edmonds 2015), and this rule applies to the coverage of international events too (Miller and Albert 2015). Thus, media coverage of terrorism has followed the pattern of political elite rhetoric and left the public with a deeply distorted view of the threat of terrorism (Mueller and Stewart 2015; Shen et al. 2018; Ritchie 2019).

Scholars have written at length over the past two decades about the psychological, political, and social factors contributing to exaggerated fears of terrorism (e.g., Huddy et al. 2005, Friedman, Harper, and Preble 2010). Yet, there has been very little research gauging the extent to which they can be ameliorated by providing citizens with factual information about the threat. To fill this gap, we fielded a nationally representative survey experiment in which we exposed people to data about the dangers of terrorism on American soil vs. other major risks, varying whether the information was shown alone or endorsed by different political elites.15 Moreover, we carried out an identical experiment simultaneously on Amazon Mechanical Turk with a two-week follow-up to check the persistence of any effects over time. Overall, we found that our treatment was quite effective. Perceptions of the terrorist threat and support for efforts to counter it were significantly reduced. In addition, these effects largely persisted when subjects were re-contacted two weeks later in the follow-up wave.

15 One possible limitation of our experiment is that it used fake political and military elites in our treatment vignette, which might limit its external validity. Yet, using real political figures can also limit external validity if respondents have strong prior views toward them. We opted for a realistic but fictitious political actor to balance these concerns, following other examples in foreign policy opinion research (e.g., Isani and Silverman 2016).
These results suggest that much of the vast overreaction to terrorism in the U.S. over the past quarter century might have been avoided – or at least substantially ameliorated – if citizens were given a more accurate picture of the threat and the risks it poses to them. As stated earlier, the U.S. has spent nearly $6 trillion since 9/11 on a threat that claims very few lives per year vs. other major dangers facing the country. Moreover, the exaggerated response to terrorist attacks in the U.S. has also cost the country thousands of lives, ballooned the national debt, undermined civil liberties, encouraged excessively cautious behavior (e.g., not flying), distracted the country from more pressing issues, and possibly generated more malice and violence toward the country than it has eliminated (Friedman, Harper, and Preble 2010, Mueller and Stewart 2015). While American counterterrorism policies stem from various sources, our study reveals that one key source – the public’s inflated threat perceptions – is not a fixed property of how people react to dreaded, rare, or unpredictable dangers, but something that can be greatly reduced by providing them with clearer context and perspective about the risks they face.

The study also raises important questions for future research. First, how well would these results generalize to other inflated risks and hazards in political life? On the one hand, terrorism represents a “hard case” for studies seeking to reduce exaggerated threat perceptions, especially in the U.S., due to the degree to which citizens have already been “treated” with fear-inducing media coverage and political discourse over the last two decades, and the emotional and visual salience of the threat. On the other hand, there are also ways in which terrorism may be more ripe for belief updating than some other major misperceptions. A recent study by Alexandra Guisinger and Elizabeth Saunders (2017) finds that a key driver of the correctability of misperceptions on foreign policy issues is the extent to which they are politicized across partisan lines. In particular, they found that informational effects dominated where polarization was low, while only co-partisan
cues mattered on very polarized issues. Thus, while our intuitive and comparative treatment format may hold promise for other similar issues, it is an open question whether they would extend into more politically polarized terrain.16

Second, would these results extend to other countries facing terrorist threats? One natural extension would be to conduct a comparative survey exploring the effects of a similar treatment in Western European states like France, Germany, the UK, and the Netherlands – all nations where (relatively) few people die per year from terrorism, but public fear and concern has been rising with recent terrorist attacks. Extending such a study to encompass other more “frontline” states such as Israel would also be informative, perhaps demonstrating its situational limits – or perhaps its general influence, given that even in countries like Israel, terrorism is still much less of a killer than cancer and heart disease (Israeli Ministry of Health 2018).

Finally, of course, we cannot say how a new terrorist attack similar in magnitude to 9/11 – one of the deadliest in modern history – might alter responses to the kind of information that we provided. America’s response to such an event is outside the scope of this study, not least because the information we provided in our treatments would no longer be “corrective” under those circumstances.17 It is possible that after another such a catastrophe, our treatments would be ineffective, just as a “Black Swan” event in any other domain of public safety could change perceptions of that threat as well. But speculation about the response to such possibilities is not the focus of our study. Instead, we examine why American public fears of terrorism have remained so high despite persistent evidence about the modest size of the threat, and what could be done to

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16 Again, while the parties may differ in proposed solutions, they have generally both treated the problem of terrorism as a grave national security threat that demands substantial resources and attention.
17 Yet, it is worth noting that another 9/11 would not change relative risk very much. In fact, with one 9/11 each decade from the 1970s-2000s (that is, an attack killing 3000 Americans), there would have been around 402 terrorism deaths per year instead of 87. This would put annual risk at about 1 in 750,000, not far above home appliances.
bring those fears into closer alignment with the information we have about the actual level of threat we have faced. In this context, our study demonstrates that the American public’s overreaction to terrorism is more malleable than widely believed. With the right messages, public support for a more realistic and grounded approach to terrorism in the U.S. is indeed within reach.
References:


Miller, Ross, and Karen Albert. 2015. “If it leads, it bleeds (and if it bleeds, it leads).” Political Communication 32(1): 61-82.


