

The Only Thing We Have to Fear: Post 9/11 Institutionalization of In-security

Mitat Çelikpala and Duygu Öztürk*

ABSTRACT

During the last decade, billions of dollars have been spent to increase security measures in the United States. New institutions, including a department for homeland security, have been established, new security tools have been developed, and surveillance of Americans has been increased. However, despite the creation of 'safety zones,' neither the level of the Americans' feeling of security from further terrorist attacks, nor their confidence in the ability of US governments to prevent attacks, has seen an increase. According to Beck, who introduced the concepts of 'world risk society' and 'reflexive modernity', terrorism is one of the products of reflexive modernity which cannot be addressed by traditional security measures. Within this framework, this paper analyzes the case of the Americans since 9/11 attacks. In this vein, it is argued that the gap which has arisen as a result of addressing non-territory and non-state-based terrorism through state-based security measures has caused a continuation of a high level of insecurity, fear, and anxiety among the Americans. Public opinion surveys conducted in the United States since the 9/11 attacks by various institutions are used to analyze Americans' thoughts about security and the terror risk in the United States.

Key Words: World Risk Society, Reflexive Modernity, Security, Fear, 9/11 Attacks.

Korkmamız Gereken Tek Şey: 11 Eylül Sonrasında Güvensizliğin Kurumsallaşması

ÖZET

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde son on sene içinde güvenlik önlemlerini arttırmak için milyar dolarlar harcanmıştır. Yurtiçi Güvenlik Departmanı da dahil olmak üzere yeni kurumlar oluşturulmuş, yeni güvenlik araçları geliştirilmiş ve Amerikalıların gözetlenmesi artmıştır. Çeşitli 'Emniyet bölgeleri'nin oluşturulmasına karşın, ne Amerikalıların olası terör saldırılarına karşı daha güvenli hissetmeleri sağlanabilmiş, ne de muhtemel terör saldırılarını önleyebilme konusunda Amerikan hükümetlerine olan güven artmıştır. 'Dünya Risk Toplumu' ve 'Refleksif Modernite' kavramlarını geliştiren Beck'e göre, refleksif modernitenin bir ürünü olarak terörün geleneksel güvenlik tedbirleri ile engellenmesi mümkün değildir. Bu çerçevede, bu çalışma 11 Eylül saldırılarından itibaren Amerikalıların durumunu incelemektedir. Bu bağlamda çalışmanın temel argümanı, devlet merkezli güvenlik önlemleri ile devlet ve ülke merkezinden yoksun terörün hedeflenmesi sonucu oluşan boşluğun Amerikalılarda yüksek düzeyde güvensizliğin, korku ve endişenin devam etmesine neden olmasıdır. Bu çalışmada, Amerikalıların ülkelerindeki güvenlik ve terör riski konularında düşüncelerini analiz etmek için farklı şirketler tarafından 11 Eylül saldırıları sonrasındaki on yıllık dönem içinde Amerika'da yapılan çeşitli kamuoyu anketleri kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dünya Risk Toplumu, Refleksif Modernite, Güvenlik, Korku, 11 Eylül Saldırıları.

Mitat Çelikpala, Assoc. Prof. Dr., Department of International Relations, Kadir Has University, İstanbul. E-mail: mitat@khas.edu.tr. Duygu Öztürk, PhD. Candidate, Department of Political Science, Bilkent University, Ankara. E-mail: duyguoz@bilkent.edu.tr.

Risk Society and Reflexive Modernity

German sociologist Ulrich Beck introduced the thesis of "risk society" in 1986 with his book *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, which was translated into English in 1992 as the *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. According to Beck, risks and security challenges which have been faced since the early decades of the twentieth century are different from the risks the world faced before. He argues that "modern society has become a *risk society* in the sense that it is increasingly occupied with debating, preventing and managing risks that *itself* has produced."¹ The concept of "reflexive modernity" and "risk" have crucial importance to understanding Beck's argument.

According to Beck, the world has been undergoing an irreversible transformation, which is not propelled by contradictions, class struggles, systemic institutional failures or revolts to overthrow modernity. Instead, this transformation is the natural outgrowth of the successes of an industrial society.² It did not mean the end of modernity but the start of a new historical epoch, which is defined as the "reconstruction of modernity,"³ "a modernity *beyond* its classical industrial design," "second modernity," "further modernization," "modernization of modernization" or "modernization of industrial society," or, as widely known, "reflexive modernity."⁴

Because of this self-destruction feature, Beck calls this new stage "reflexive modernity". He argues the dynamism and the success of industrial modernity has turned into self-destruction, which means, modernity has been undermining its fundamental structure of social and economic classes, gender roles, nuclear family structure, plants, the business sector and the prerequisites of techno-economic progress.⁵ There is not only "reflection" in reflexive modernity but also "self-confrontation" with the risks that modernity itself produced, which cannot be addressed and overcome in the system of industrial modernity.⁶

According to Beck, in this new epoch, the world is not exclusively concerned anymore with making nature useful or with releasing humanity from traditional constraints, but it is essentially concerned with problems and risks resulting from techno-economic develop-

¹ Ulrich Beck, "Living in the World Risk Society", *Economy and Society*, Vol.35, No.3, 2006, p.329-345. Emphasis added.

² Darryl S. L. Jarvis, "Risk, Globalisation and the State: A Critical Appraisal of Ulrich Beck and the World Risk Society Thesis", *Global Society*, Vol.21, No.1, 2007, p.25; Ulrich Beck, Wolfgang Bonss and Christoph Lau, "The theory of Reflexive Modernization", *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol.20, No.2, 2003, p.1-33.

³ Merryn Ekberg, "The Parameters of the Risk Society A Review and Exploration", *Current Sociology*, Vol.55, No.3, 2007, p.347.

⁴ Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society Towards a New Modernity*, London, Sage Publications, 1992; Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998; Ulrich Beck, "Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernization", U. Beck, A. Giddens and S. Lash (Eds.), *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1994, p.1-55.

⁵ Beck, "Reinvention of Politics", p.2.

⁶ Ulrich Beck, "Risk Society and the Provident State", S. Lash, B. Szczyński and B. Wynne (Eds.), *Risk Environment and Modernity: Towards a New Ecology*, London, Sage, 1996, p.28.

ments.⁷ Three types of global threats constitute the backdrop of Beck's thesis of risk society: "wealth-driven ecological destruction and technological-industrial dangers (e.g. climate change and those risks related to generic manipulation); poverty-related ecological destruction (e.g. the endangerment of the rainforests); and weapons of mass destruction."⁸ These risks share some similarities that differentiate them from the risks of previous societies.

Firstly, these risks are the by-products of modernity, which result from accumulation, and a distribution of the "bads" that are tied up with the production of the "goods".⁹ They are unintentional, unanticipated and uncontrollable risks, which were not dealt with before. They are directly or indirectly man-made risks –not natural threats and disasters like earthquakes, floods, drought, or famine. Secondly, the risks of reflexive modernity are unprecedented in terms of their spatial and temporal reach; in other words, they are not territory-based and time-limited –the geographical and temporal consequences of their catastrophic effects are unknown. Moreover, their point of origin may not, and most of the time do not, correspond with their points of impact.¹⁰

Ecological and financial risks fit very well in the model of modernity's self-ending endangerment.¹¹ Beck compares the risks of the second modernity with the radioactivity that eludes human perceptive abilities, toxins and pollutants in the air, the water and foodstuffs, and the short-term and long-term effects on plants, animals, and people that cause irreversible and scientifically incalculable harm.¹² Throughout his work on the risk society and reflexive modernity theses, Beck dwells upon examples of ecological risks such as climate change, as well as risks resulting from the use of nuclear power and chemicals, air pollution, and interference with natural methods of food production, which has resulted in and financial crises and new diseases like "mad cow disease".¹³ He points out how heavily wooded countries like the Scandinavian countries have been affected by the global and implicit consequences of industrialization despite these countries hardly having their own pollutant-intensive industries, how the financial crises of a country become global crises and pull people into depressions regardless of their geographic origin, and how the incalculable consequences of atomic accidents unlimitedly affect regions for generations.¹⁴

However, it is not only the material existence of the risks that brought the world risk society into being. Since these risks do not have immediate visible consequences most

⁷ Beck, *Risk Society*, p.19.

⁸ Shlomo Griner, "Living in a World Risk Society: A Reply to Mikkel V. Rasmussen", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 2002, Vol.31, No.1, p.150.

⁹ Ulrich Beck, "The Terrorist Threat: World Risk Society Revisited", *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol.19, No.4, p.44.

¹⁰ Simon Cottle, "Ulrich Beck, 'Risk Society' and the Media: A Catastrophic View?", *European Journal of Communication*, Vol.13, No.1, p.8; Ekberg, "The Parameters of the Risk Society", p.352.

¹¹ Beck, "The Terrorist Threat", p.43-4.

¹² Beck, *Risk Society*, p.22-23.

¹³ M. J. Williams, "(In)Security Studies, Reflexive Modernization and the Risk Society", *Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association*, Vol.43, No.1, p.60.

¹⁴ Beck, *Risk Society*; Beck, "The Terrorist Threat".

of the time, they last for generations, they are uncontrollable and incalculable, and their political and social structures play a vital role in the formation of risk societies. According to Beck, since these risks remain invisible and are based on causal interpretations, their existence depends on our knowledge about them. Risks are open to social definition and construction within which they can be changed, magnified, dramatized, or minimized.¹⁵ In other words, social and political definitions and constructions make the invisible, unpredictable, and unanticipated risks socially visible. These risks are socially and politically constructed; which makes them discourse dependent and culturally relative. The concept of risk comprises both the unreal and the real by combining "the discursive construction of risk and the materiality of threats."¹⁶ For instance, the risk of running an industrial plant includes the threat of acid rain as an unintended consequence that lasts for generations and cannot be controlled. Discursive construction of this risk arises from our knowledge—scientific and anti-scientific discourse and culture dependence—that we have about the threat of acid rain and its destructive effects.¹⁷ This social construction also feeds awareness of the uncontrollable threat in a risk society and generates the desire to control the uncontrollable in the near future.

The social structure of risks in reflexive modernity is closely related to awareness of the risks. Accordingly, this epoch is identified by an awareness of living in a society, which is perceived as being increasingly vulnerable to unpredictable, unanticipated and unknown risks produced by modern science and technology.¹⁸ The knowledge of threats that feed the perception of risk does not only consist of scientific and objective knowledge; there is a lot of room for imagination and belief besides scientific knowledge in the construction of knowledge about risks. While this situation breaks the monopoly of science over risk definitions, it brings a variety of political and social actors that contest risk definitions in a specific cultural context.¹⁹ The media and political institutions play particular roles among other actors in the reconstruction of risks and their definitions. The way in which risks are constructed gains crucial importance in the formation of risk awareness since these risks are also perceived risks rather than just actual risks. Thus, it means that risks may be real or imaginary, but people believe that they are real, independent of whether or not they actually exist.²⁰

In reflexive modernity, there stands the issue of how to secure the individual and the society. Beck argues that a gulf has been produced in modernity between "the world of quantifiable risks in which we think and act and the world of unquantifiable insecurities that we are creating".²¹ Globalization and the individualization of modern society have increased individuals' vulnerability to the unknown and uncontrollable risks of a risk

¹⁵ Beck, *Risk Society*, p.22.

¹⁶ Griner, "Living in a World", p.151.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ekberg, "The Parameters of the Risk Society", p. 345.

¹⁹ Beck, *World Risk Society*, p.149.

²⁰ Ekberg, "The Parameters of the Risk Society", p.350-1.

²¹ Beck, "The Terrorist Threat", p.41.

society. On the one hand, globalization has challenged the sovereignty and territoriality of the state, unlimitedly increased the power of mobile capital and reduced the role of the welfare state, whereas on the other hand, individualization resulting from changing social relations and the breaking down of traditional family ties and gender roles has increased individuals' vulnerability to new risks.²² The basic institutions and actors of first modernity such as the state, the military, science and the expert system – which were responsible for calculating and controlling the uncertainties of modernity – have become inefficient in controlling and preventing the risks of a risk society; they have even become counter-productive.²³ Beck argues that the “institutions of industrial society become the producers and legitimators of threats which they cannot control.”²⁴ In other words, the traditional ways of dealing with the new risks do not lead to their annihilation but instead contribute to legitimizing their existence.²⁵

Global Terror as a Risk in the Global Risk Society

According to Beck, global terrorism forms one aspect of the risks of risk society. It shares similarities with ecological and financial risks on the one hand, but also has some features that differentiate it from the rest of the risks of risk society on the other hand. Like the ecological and financial axes of the world risk society, global terrorism is also a product of reflexive modernization. It is the risk of “unnatural, human-made, manufactured” uncertainty and hazards beyond state boundaries and controls, which are unpredictable before they occur. It is both de-territorialized and de-nationalized. The terrorist attacks on 11 September were directed against the twin towers in New York, but they were perceived and represented to be global risks which extended beyond the borders of the United States and whose origin may not be identified.

However, the characteristics of chance and accident, plus the unintended and unplanned accumulation of the “bads” as by-products of the “goods”, are not present in the terror risk. The risk of terrorist attack is neither ruled by the unintended accumulation of the by-products of modernity, nor by accident or chance. Instead, there is the intentional exploitation of modern society's vulnerability to the uncontrollable risk of terrorism.²⁶

The principle of the social and political construction of risks in the reflexive modernity underlies the risk of terrorism. Although the experience with global terror risk was the 9/11 attacks, the perception and definition of the risk of global terrorism in the post-Cold War period grasped much more than the actual experience. It is not a neutral, objective risk defined by calculable hazards; but is more a mixture of real and unreal threats, imagined and actual risks, arising from the 9/11 experience and

²² Jarvis, “Risk, Globalisation and the State”, p.26-7; Beck, *Risk Society*.

²³ Beck, “Living in the World Risk Society”, p.338.

²⁴ Beck, “Reinvention of Politics”, p.5.

²⁵ Beck, *Risk Society*, p.22.

²⁶ Beck, “Living in the World Risk Society”, p.329.

the awareness of the vulnerability of modern society to unknown and uncontrollable risks. Invisible, unpredictable and unknown risks of global terrorism are made visible, along with their social and political structure, by a variety of scientific and anti-scientific factors. Like in the construction of the other risks in a risk society, political and social actors, as well as the media, play a vital role in the construction and definition of the risk of terrorism.

States tend to define the risk of terrorism and point out its origin(s) in order to fight and overcome it. However, the vocabularies and concepts borrowed from the discourse on national security and sovereignty do not perfectly correspond the perceived and imagined risk of terrorism. Beck evaluates the 9/11 terrorist attacks as “the complete collapse of language”; since then the world is living, thinking and acting by using concepts that are incompetent to capture what happened.²⁷ Based on their past experience with calculable and controllable risks, states tend to follow similar strategies, such as limiting civil rights and liberties to increase public surveillance to address de-territorialized and de-nationalized risks whose origins are unknown; even they do not know whether the risks exist or not. In this context, Beck’s argument of dealing with risks in the traditional terms that contribute to their legitimacy can easily be considered for use in evaluating the terrorist threat.²⁸ This situation creates a circle where the war against terrorism actually creates and compounds the conditions and anxieties that it purports to address.²⁹ While Beck points how traditional ways of dealing with terrorism serve its existence, he explains states’ failure to overcome terror risk with an analogy he made in an interview. According to Beck, the risks of a risk society –namely ecological, financial and terrorist– are boundless threats that need to be dealt with at a transnational level. Fighting these threats at national level by locking up national territory is like “raising the garden fence to avoid the smog in town.”³⁰ Therefore, regardless of the quantity and quality of security measures taken to fight terrorism, the terrorism risk, the fear and the feeling of insecurity continue to exist at the end of the day.

Construction of Terror Risk and the Security Measures in the United States

The United States, particularly under the administration of President Bush, is an appropriate case study for global terror risk as explained by Ulrich Beck within the concept of the “world risk society”. President Bush openly declared war against terrorists in his address to a joint session of Congress and the American people on 20 September 2001, where he also asked for the support and collaboration of the international community against the global terror risk with the motto of “you are either with us or against us”. He stated

²⁷ Beck, “The Terrorist Threat”, p.39.

²⁸ Beck, *Risk Society towards a New Modernity*, p.22.

²⁹ Keith Spence, “World Risk Society and the War against Terror”, *Political Studies*, Vol. 53, 2005, p. 284-302: 285.

³⁰ Jeffrey Wimmer and Torsten Quandt, “Living in the Risk Society, An interview with Ulrich Beck”, *Journalism Studies*, Vol.7, No.2, 2006, p.342.

that although the terror began with Al Qaeda, it did not end there; it would end when every terrorist group in the world was found, stopped and defeated.³¹ Despite President Bush stressed that Al Qaeda was not the only terrorist group that the United States was fighting, he could not define saliently who the other terrorist groups were. Moreover, he accepted that the war against terrorism would be different from the other wars the United States had experienced before, either on its own territory or in far-away regions. President Bush pointed out that the course of the conflict was unknown but the United States would fight with every means of diplomacy, intelligence, law enforcement, financial influence and weapon of war to defeat them.³²

It was accepted in the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, which was published on 17 September 2002 and has been periodically revised in the years since, that the risk of terrorism is radically different from previous risks faced. In the text, particular attention was paid to the risk of the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by terrorists and the fact that the risk of possible terrorist attacks inherently holds uncertainty in terms of the time, place and origin of such attacks. In order to fight the unknown, unpredictable and unanticipated terror threat, the United States has gathered all means of soft and hard power, not only against terrorist groups and individuals, but also the countries that harbor them.³³

After the 9/11 attacks, a complex and multi-layered structure of terror risk and who the terrorists are was compiled. Political and military actors, opinion leaders, NGOs, philanthropic foundations, journalists, columnists, academics and scholars directly or indirectly, wittingly or unwittingly, contributed to the construction of the risk of terrorism, identification of terrorists and maintenance of the feeling of insecurity and fear. Al Qaeda's undertaking of the attacks speeded up the development of Islamophobia in the United States and facilitated defining an origin for the terrorism risk. The report on Islamophobia, prepared by Center for American Progress in August 2011, showed how fear, Islamophobia in particular, had progressed in ten years – by whom, including different segments of society such as politicians, academics, activists, and non-governmental organizations, and how much money has been allocated by which donors.³⁴ According to the report, \$42.6 million had been spent, by only seven donors, for the Islamophobic activities of different groups of society between 2001 and 2009. By creating an awareness of a threat whose existence cannot be known and anticipated,

³¹ Bush's address to a joint session of congress and the American people September 20, 2001. <http://www.sodahead.com/united-states/simple-president-bush-speech-after-91101-and-obamas-speech-after-the-failed-christmas-terrorists/question-848057/>, (Accessed on 5 September 2011).

³² Ibid.

³³ National Security Strategy of the United States, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf, (Accessed on 17 September 2002).

³⁴ For details about donors and actors of the construction of Islamophobia, see Ali Wajahat *et al.*, *Fear, Inc. The Roots of Islamophobia Network in America*, Center for American Progress, <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/08/pdf/islamophobia.pdf>, (Accessed on 15 August 2011).

this "false response" paradoxically has served to keep the fear high and the feeling of insecurity alive.³⁵

While more than \$42 million has been spent by donors to stoke Islamophobia and the high level of insecurity and fear from terror risk correspondingly maintained in the American society, the US government has spent billions of dollars to reduce the risk of terrorism and make Americans feel secure. After the 9/11 attacks, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States was established as an independent, bipartisan commission by Congressional legislation and stayed active until August 2004.³⁶ The mission of the commission was to prepare a report of the complete circumstances surrounding the attacks, the preparedness for and the immediate response to the attacks, and also to make recommendations to guard against future attacks.³⁷

At the end of a thorough examination of the commission report, the recommendations were put into effect under the authority of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which was created in March 2003 to protect Americans from terror and other threats.³⁸ In line with the report's recommendations, a variety of new security measures were implemented and existing measures were strengthened against terror risk. Accordingly, among the most salient measures taken, lie strengthened and expanded information-sharing between the federal government and state, local, tribal, territorial and private sector partners; creation of an expanded information and communication networks which included individuals with public campaigns by raising awareness of the indicators of terrorism and crime; multi-layered security measures at airports and harbors for passengers and cargo; strengthened national and international intelligence networks; and the establishment of a National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center to enhance the security of critical physical and cybernetic works. Additionally, visa applications were tightened and more collaboration was established with the airport security authorities abroad to prevent the infiltration of terrorists into the United States.

With these security measures and many others taken, US homeland security spending reached \$69.1 billion, which was more than double the spending in 2001. These numbers become much more meaningful when "spending in all areas other than national defense increased by one-third over the same period" is considered.³⁹ Dancs compares homeland

³⁵ Peter Marcuse makes a distinction between legitimate and false response to terrorist threat. Accordingly, legitimate response includes measures that effectively and efficiently reduce the likelihood of a terrorist act, while false response includes everything from broadcasting orange and red alerts in the media, politicians' speeches to awareness increasing activities that do not affect the likelihood of a terrorist act. For details, Peter Marcuse, "Security or Safety in Cities? The Threat of Terrorism after 9/11," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol.30, No.4, December 2006, p.920.

³⁶ <http://www.9-11commission.gov> (Accessed on 7 September 2011).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ US Department of Homeland Security, "Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Progress Report 2011" p.3, <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/implementing-9-11-commission-report-progress-2011.pdf>, (Accessed on 7 September 2011).

³⁹ Anita Dancs, "Homeland Security Spending since 9/11", <http://costsofwar.org/sites/default/files/>

security spending during the 1990s and the 2000s; which presents the spending designed to prevent a further terrorist act. Accordingly, the average yearly increase in federal spending for homeland security during the 1990s was 3 percent. If the increase in homeland security spending had continued at the same level, the amount reached by 2011 would have been \$23 billion instead of \$69.1 billion. Total homeland security spending to address possible terrorist risk during the ten years after the 9/11 attacks cost \$648.6 billion, which was estimated to be \$201.9 billion to address lack of measures against the risk of terrorism.⁴⁰

All this spending and these added measures lead to the main question of whether the US government could eliminate the risk of terrorism and make Americans feel secure in their country. The first half of the question was answered by Department of Homeland Security in its progress report in 2011, where it was stated that while the United States has become stronger and resilient with the actions taken, “threats from terrorism persist and continue to evolve.”⁴¹ The second half of the question will be answered by using several public opinion surveys conducted in the United States by various institutions since 9/11.

A Pinch of Safety but not Security

Before analyzing people’s opinions about their security against the risk of terrorism, it is meaningful to differentiate security from safety. Safety is defined as “protection from danger,” while security is specified as “the perceived protection from danger” and insecurity, accordingly, is defined as the “anxiety about perceived lack of protection against danger.”⁴² While there can be a positive correlation between safety and security, there can even be a negative correlation between them. For instance, according to Marcuse, false responses to the risk of terrorism such as orange and red alerts in the media, facial profiling, or publicized arrests of suspects provide a small measure of safety but they increase the feeling of insecurity significantly.⁴³

After the 9/11 attacks, safety in public places such as airports and harbors was increased with the security measures taken by the US government. However, it neither helped eliminate the risk of terrorism, nor increased people’s feeling of being secure, which is more than an issue of security; in other words, it is a perceived protection, rather than safety. People’s thoughts about being secure and terror risk are explored in this study around three main questions:

- Does the American public think that their country is more safe or less safe today than it was before 9/11 attacks?
- How much confidence do the Americans have in their government to prevent further terrorist attacks?

articles/23/attachments/Dancs%20Homeland%20Security.pdf, 6/13/2011, (Accessed on 5 September 2011).

⁴⁰ For annual homeland security spending see Dancs, “Homeland Security Spending”.

⁴¹ US Department of Homeland Security, “Implementing the 9/11 Commission”, p.7.

⁴² Marcuse, “Security or Safety in”, p.924.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 919-20.

- Do the Americans think that security measures taken by the state are effective in preventing further terrorist attacks?

Several public opinion surveys conducted in the United States since September 2011 are used to answer these questions. The first and second questions were asked directly in the surveys. However, some other relevant questions were also drawn from the surveys for more comprehensive analysis. The third question was not directly asked, thus other questions that aim to explore the thinking of Americans about the effectiveness of particular security measures taken against further acts of terrorism are used.

Is the US Safer Today?

The question of whether Americans think the US is more safe or less safe today than it was before the 9/11 attacks has been asked in different public surveys. Table 1 displays the descriptive analysis of answers given to this question in the surveys of the ABC News/Washington Post Poll (ABC News/WPP) and the FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll. The data represents a period from September 2003 to September 2010. Accordingly, the table shows that there has not been any important increase in the number of people who think the US is safer today than it was before 9/11 attacks. Interestingly enough, the highest percentage of “safer” answers (67%) was given in 2003 and 2004, while the lowest percentage of “safer” answers (48%) was given in 2005, 2007 and 2010. On average, three of every ten Americans think that their country is less safe than it was before the 9/11 attacks.

Table 1. Do you think the US is safer or less safe than before 9/11?

	Dates	Safer	Less safe	No difference (vol.)	Unsure	Sample Group
		%	%	%	%	
ABC News/WPP	9/4-7/03	67	27	4	2	N=1,004
ABC News/WPP	1/15-18/04	67	24	8	1	N= 1,036
FOX /ODP	3/3-4/04	58	23	15	4	N= 900
FOX /ODP	8/3-4/04	52	28	15	5	N= 900
FOX /ODP	7/12-13/05	48	34	14	4	N= 900
ABC News/WPP	8/18-21/05	49	38	11	2	N= 1,002
ABC News/WPP	1/23-26/06	64	30	6	-	N= 1,002
ABC News/WPP	3/2-5/06	56	35	8	1	N= 1,000
ABC News/WPP	6/22-25/06	59	33	7	1	N= 1,000
ABC News/WPP	10/5-8/06	50	42	7	1	N= 1,204
FOX /ODP	8/21-22/07	48	33	15	4	N= 900
ABC News/WPP	9/4-7/07	60	29	11	1	N= 1,002
ABC News/WPP	9/5-7/08	62	29	7	2	N= 1,133
ABC News/WPP	8/30 - 9/2/10	48	42	8	2	N=1,002
FOX /ODP	9/1-2/10	53	30	14	3	N= 900

The data is gathered from www.pollingreport.com

Confidence in the US Government to Prevent Further Attacks

With the security measures taken and the resulting increased safety, it was expected that Americans' confidence in their government's ability to prevent further attacks would also increase. However, the data does not indicate that. Interestingly, Americans had the highest level of confidence in their government immediately after the attacks. Just a few days after the 9/11 attacks, more than half of the survey participants declared a high level of confidence in their governments; 35% of them expressed "a great deal" and 31% percent expressed "a good amount" of confidence in their government's ability to prevent further terrorist attacks. Only 3% of the survey participants declared that they did not trust the government at all to prevent further attacks in the United States.

In less than two months' time, people's confidence in their government dramatically decreased. Only 17% of Americans declared "a great deal" of confidence in their governments to prevent further terrorist acts while the amount of distrusting people increased to 7%. In the following years, security measures taken by the US governments could not change people's confidence in their government's ability to fight terrorism. The number of Americans who had "a great deal" of confidence stayed below 20%. The number of people who stated that they had "only a fair amount" of confidence in their governments stayed above 40% except the surveys conducted in 2002 and 2006.

Table 2. How much confidence do you have in the ability of the U.S. Government to prevent further terrorist attacks against Americans in this country: a great deal, a good amount, only a fair amount or none at all?

	Dates	A great deal	A good amount	Only a fair amount	None at all	Unsure	Sample Group
		%	%	%	%	%	
WPP	9/25-27/2001	35	31	30	3	1	N= 1,215
ABC News/WPP	11/5-6/01	17	35	40	7	1	N= 756
ABC News/WPP	1/24-27/2002	18	40	37	6	1	N= 1,507
ABC News/WPP	3/7-10/2002	18	38	39	5	-	N= 1,008
ABC News/WPP	5/18-19/2002	17	29	42	10	2	N= 803
ABC News/WPP	6/7-9/2002	14	30	44	11	-	N= 1,004
ABC News/WPP	7/11-15/2002	13	33	45	9	-	N= 1,512
ABC News/WPP	9/5-8/2002	12	38	43	6	-	N= 1,011
ABC News/WPP	09, 2003	14	31	48	7	1	N= 1,104
ABC News/WPP	8/18-21/05	14	28	43	15	-	N= 1,002
ABC News/WPP	9/8-11/05	14	27	41	18	-	N= 1,201
ABC News/WPP	1/23-26/06	19	31	39	11	-	N= 1,002
ABC News/WPP	9/5-7/06	15	31	43	10	1	N= 1,003
ABC News/WPP	9/4-7/07	15	34	40	10	1	N= 1,002
ABC News/WPP	8/30 - 9/2/10	12	32	45	11	-	N= 1,002

The data is gathered from www.pollingreport.com

Another question that also gives clues about people's confidence in their governments to prevent further attacks was asked in the CBS News surveys. They asked whether people thought the United States was prepared to deal with another terrorist attack or not. In March 2003, 64% of Americans thought that their country was prepared enough to deal with another terrorist attack. However, the years passed after the 9/11 attacks and the security measures taken, did not change people's views for the better. Instead, the number of people who saw their country prepared well enough to deal with another terrorist act decreased. In 2007, only 39% of the survey participants thought the US was adequately prepared to deal with another attack, while 56% of them saw their country as not being ready to face another terrorist act.

Table 3. In general do you think the United States is adequately prepared to deal with another terrorist attack, or not?

	Date	Is	Is Not	Unsure	Sample Group
		%	%	%	
CBS News	3/20-24/03	64	29	7	N= 1,495
CBS News	8/17-21/06	49	44	7	N= 1,206
CBS News	9/4-9/07	39	56	5	N= 1,263
CBS News	9/5-7/08	52	39	9	N= 738
CBS News	8/27-31/09	50	44	6	N= 1,097

The data is gathered from www.pollingreport.com

People's confidence in the US government's ability to prevent further attacks was asked in a different way in the survey research of the CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll and the CNN/Opinion Research Corporate Poll. They asked whether the US government could prevent major terrorist attacks if it worked hard or if terrorists would always find a way to launch an attack no matter what the US government did. Almost one year after the attacks, 37% of Americans stated that all major attacks could be prevented. In 2006 and 2007, this amount increased to 41% and 40%, respectively, and in 2010, 39% of Americans expressed the view that all major attacks could be prevented. In 2002, 60% of survey participants did not believe that terrorist attacks could be prevented with the measures taken; they expressed the view that terrorists would always find a way to attack. In 2006 and 2007, 57% of the Americans declared the same point of view and in 2010 with an increase of 3%, that amount reached 60% in total.

Table 4. Which comes closer to your view? The terrorists will always find a way to launch major attacks no matter what the US government does. OR, the U.S. government can eventually prevent all major attacks if it works hard enough at it.

	Dates	Terrorists will find a way	All Major attacks can be prevented	Unsure	Sample Group
		%	%	%	
CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll	9/2-4/2002	60	37	3	N=1,003
CNN/ORCP	8/30 - 9/2/06	57	41	2	N=1,004
CNN/ORCP	9/7-9/07	57	40	3	N= 1,017
CNN/ORCP	1/8-10/10	60	39	1	N= 1,021

The data is gathered from www.pollingreport.com

How Effective are Security Measures Against Further Attacks?

People's perception and views about the effectiveness of the measures taken since the 9/11 attacks to prevent further attacks are important to understand whether they feel secure or not. In December 2002, the FOX/Opinion Dynamics Poll asked Americans their views about the Department of Homeland Security which was created after the 9/11 attacks. Of those responding, 30% stated that the department would make the US safer while 39% believed this department would mostly increase the bureaucracy. A Newsweek Poll addressed a very similar question to Americans in September 2005 to explore their views about the Department of Homeland Security. Accordingly, 45% of the participants expressed the view that the department had made Americans safer and 49% stated that it had not brought safety.

Table 5. Do you think recently created Department of Homeland Security will make the United States safer from terrorism or will it mostly increase Washington bureaucracy?

	Date	Make the U.S. safer	Mostly increase bureaucracy	Some of both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Not sure	Sample Group
		%	%	%	%	%	
FOX/ODP	12/3-4/02	30	39	13	3	15	N= 900

The data is gathered from www.pollingreport.com

Table 6. Do you think the creation of the Department of Homeland Security has made Americans safer, or not?

	Date	Safer	Not Safer	Unsure	Sample Group
		%	%	%	
Newsweek Poll	9/29-30/05	45	49	6	N= 1,004

The data is gathered from www.pollingreport.com

Another security measure which was asked in different polls by the FOX/Opinion Dynamics poll was the terror alert system. Accordingly, FOX/ODP asked Americans whether they thought the terror alert system had prevented any acts of terrorism from happening. 48% of the survey participants stated that the system had prevented acts of terrorism from happening, whereas 39%, on the other hand, expressed the view that they did not think the system had prevented any.

Table 7. Do you think that the terror-alert system has prevented any acts of terrorism from happening?

		Yes	No	Not Sure	Sample Group
		%	%	%	
FOX/ODP	6-7/2003	48	39	13	N= 900

The data is gathered from www.pollingreport.com

The FOX/Opinion Dynamics Poll asked another question about the terror alert system to explore whether people took the alerts seriously or not. This question gives clues about the effectiveness of the alert system since the more people believe the system to be effective, the more they take the alerts seriously. In November 2002, 37% of the Americans thought that most people took the terror alerts seriously while 50% believed they are mostly ignored by people. The numbers did not change much in the coming year. In February 2003, 48% of Americans stated that the alerts were taken seriously by most people and in July 43% declared the same opinion. Survey participants who believed that the alerts were ignored by most people were 42% and 49% in February and July, respectively.

Table 8. Do you think most people take these terror alerts seriously or do they ignore them?

	Dates	Take Seriously	Ignore	Not Sure	Sample Group
		%	%	%	
FOX/ODP	11/ 19-20/ 2002	37	50	13	N= 900
FOX/ODP	2/ 11-12/ 2003	48	42	10	N= 900
FOX/ODP	6-7/ 2003	43	49	8	N= 900

The data is gathered from www.pollingreport.com

Along with American thoughts about the effectiveness of security measures taken by their governments, their views about the likelihood of occurrence of further terrorist attacks in their countries are important to understand their feeling of being secure. The USA/Gallup Poll and the CNN/Opinion Research Corporate Poll periodically asked in their surveys about the likelihood of a terrorist act in the US in the very near future. The data covers a period from September 2002 to May 2011. It is not possible to say that there has been a significant increase in the number of people who think there is a less likelihood for the occurrence of further acts of terrorism over the next several weeks. One year after the 9/11 attacks, 56% of Americans thought the probability of occurrence of a terrorist attack in the United States over the next few weeks was high; 12% saw it very likely to happen and 44% thought it was somewhat likely to happen. Only 10% of the survey participants gave a zero probability for a further terrorist attack in the coming weeks and 31% thought it was not too likely to happen. Distribution of percentages in the subsequent years did not change significantly. The majority of Americans preferred to leave an open door for a further terrorist attack to happen over the next several weeks. Except for the research of 2008, 2009, and January 2007, Americans who foresaw the occurrence of a terrorist attack during the next few weeks were always over 30%. Only in 2003 and 2011 was the percentage of people who did not give any chance for a terrorist act to occur in the coming couple of weeks less than 10%. The lowest percentage of Americans who gave a higher probability to the occurrence of a terrorist act in the next few coming weeks was 34%. This means that even at that time, at least three of every ten people thought that a terrorist act was "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to happen over the next few weeks.

Table 9. How likely is it that there will be further acts of terrorism in the United States over the next several weeks: very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

	Dates	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Not too Likely	Not at All Likely	Unsure	Sample Group
		%	%	%	%	%	
USA/Gallup	9/13-16/02	12	44	31	10	3	N= 803
USA/Gallup	02/03	16	50	23	9	2	N= 1,002
USA/Gallup	08/03	10	44	35	10	1	N= 1,003
USA/Gallup	1/9-11/04	7	39	36	16	2	N= 1,003
USA/Gallup	7/19-21/04	12	39	34	11	4	N= 506
USA/Gallup	1/7-9/05	8	31	44	15	2	N= 528
USA/Gallup	7/22-24/05	12	45	32	10	1	N= 1,006
USA/Gallup	1/20-22/06	14	35	38	11	2	N= 1,006
USA/Gallup	7/21-23/06	10	36	42	10	2	N= 1,005
CNN/ORCP	8/18-20/06	16	38	31	13	2	N= 1,033

CNN/ORCP	1/19-21/07	9	29	41	18	3	N= 1,008
CNN/ORCP	8/6-8/07	9	32	42	17	-	N= 1,029
CNN/ORCP	6/26-29/08	8	27	45	20	1	N= 1,026
CNN/ORCP	12/1-2/08	9	27	45	17	1	N= 1,096
CNN/ORCP	8/28-31/09	9	25	42	22	1	N= 1,010
USA/Gallup	11/20-22/09	10	29	36	21	3	N= 1,017
CNN/ORCP	5/21-23/10	14	41	31	12	1	N= 499
CNN/ORCP	10/5-7/10	14	35	33	15	3	N= 1,008
CNN/ORCP	05/02/11	26	42	23	6	2	N= 700

The data is gathered from www.pollingreport.com

Conclusion

This study shows the relationship between security measures taken by the US government since the 9/11 attacks and Americans' feeling of being secure from further terrorist attacks within the perspective of the "world risk society". Interestingly, while billions of dollars have been spent to create a feeling of insecurity by feeding Islamophobia, much more than this amount has been spent by the US government to increase security.

It is argued in this paper that neither the elimination of the risk of terrorism nor the creation of a feeling of security can be provided only from state-based security measures. This argument has been verified by several public opinion surveys conducted in the United States since the 9/11 attacks. The survey data shows that the US government could not have been successful in increasing the feeling of security since the terrorist attacks in 2001. The statistical analysis exposes the fact that despite the "safety" of particular public places, such as the airports and harbors, which have been increased with state-based measures, there has not been a significant change in the number of Americans who think that the US is safer today.

The main reason for the failure of the US government to increase people's feeling of being secure from further acts of terrorism derives from the particular characteristics of the non-state- and non-territory-based risk of terrorism, which are entirely different from the characteristics of state-based risks and threats. This situation causes a gap between tangible measures taken and the intangible risk of terrorism perceived and has contributed to the continuation of the risk of terrorism within American society. Surveys conducted in the US show that Americans, in significant numbers, continue to believe further acts of terrorism are not preventable. Accordingly, there has not been any important change either in the number of Americans who declared confidence in the US government to prevent further terrorist attacks or in the number of people who thought the US was prepared to deal with another attack. A high number of Americans declared high levels of likeliness for the occurrence of further terrorist attacks in the United States over the next several weeks. In the same vein, the measures taken did not bring any significant decrease in the number of Americans who thought the terrorists would always find a way to launch a major attack.

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