

Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism, National Security, and Human rights

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SBS for National Security Summit

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Topic Outline

- Perceived risk of terrorist attacks
- Economic impacts of these risk perceptions
- Risk communication strategies for increasing resilience after a terrorist attack
- A proposed strategy for deterring unstoppable terrorist attacks
- Do humanitarian values collapse when they conflict with national security objectives?

Questions Addressed in Risk Perception Studies

1. How do people think about risk?
2. What factors determine the perception of risk and the acceptance of risk?
3. What role do emotion and reason play in risk perception?
4. What are some of the social and economic implications of risk perceptions?

Some Questions about Terrorism

- How do perceptions of terrorism risks compare to other disasters and accidents?
- How do different types of terrorist acts compare?
- How can we use perceptions to forecast impacts?
- Can risk communication strategies reduce harmful social, political, and economic overreactions to terrorist attacks?

Predicting and Modelling Public Response to a Terrorist Strike

William J. Burns and Paul Slovic

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to examine factors pivotal to understanding public reaction to a terrorist strike. To this end a survey addressing perceptions of different types of events is discussed. We also describe a system dynamics model that represents the important feedback mechanisms that probably drive a community's response. Following a terrorist attack, emergency response systems, information and communication channels, and social support organizations are likely to interact in a non-linear fashion to produce a wide range of physical, social and economic impacts (Kasperson et al, 1988; Maani and Cavana, 2000). This model simulates impacts (e.g. diffusion of fear) over a six-month period for different types of terrorist and accidental events.

Hypothetical Damage Scenarios: Factors Investigated

- **Domain:** Non-Terrorism vs. Terrorism
- **Mechanism:** Explosions vs. Infectious Disease
- **Motive:**
 - Terrorism: Demand Release of Prisoners vs. Solely to Spread Fear
 - Non-Terrorism: Non-Intentional vs. Intentional
- **Victim:** Govt. Officials vs. Tourists
- -----
- **Non-Negligence/Suicide vs. Negligence/Suicide**
- **Casualties:** 0 - 15 - 495
- **Public Response Measures:** Risk; Trust; Communicating with family, friends, public officials; Attention to various news media, Avoiding Public Places, Contacting Emergency Services

Terrorism Bomb Blast (terrorism, explosion, fear as motive, suicide involved, tourists as victims, 495 casualties)

- Reports are now coming out that a powerful **bomb** has gone off at a local theme park during unusually high attendance by tourists. An international **terrorist** group is claiming responsibility and promising to **strike fear** in the hearts of all Americans. It appears that a terrorist bent on **suicide** exploded the deadly bomb near a crowd of **tourists**. A large number of tourists have serious injuries and at least **495** have died.

Terrorism Anthrax Release (terrorism, infectious disease, release of prisoners as motive, no suicide, government officials as victims, no fatalities)

- Reports are now coming out that **Anthrax** was released 16 days ago at a local theme park during a tour by over a thousand **government officials** from around the state. An international **terrorist** group is claiming responsibility and demanding the **release of several of its members who are in prison**. It appears that a terrorist released the deadly infectious disease near the group of officials. A number of officials may have been exposed but **no one has died**.

Questionnaire: Risk and Trust

1. To what degree do you *trust “first responders”* (police, firefighters and so forth) to quickly *reduce any danger* resulting from an event like this?

Low Trust 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 High Trust

2. To what degree do you trust “government officials” (President, Governor, Mayor and so forth) to help quickly reduce any danger resulting from an event like this?

Low Trust 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 High Trust

3. To what degree do you feel you could protect yourself from an event like this?

Can't Protect 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Can Protect

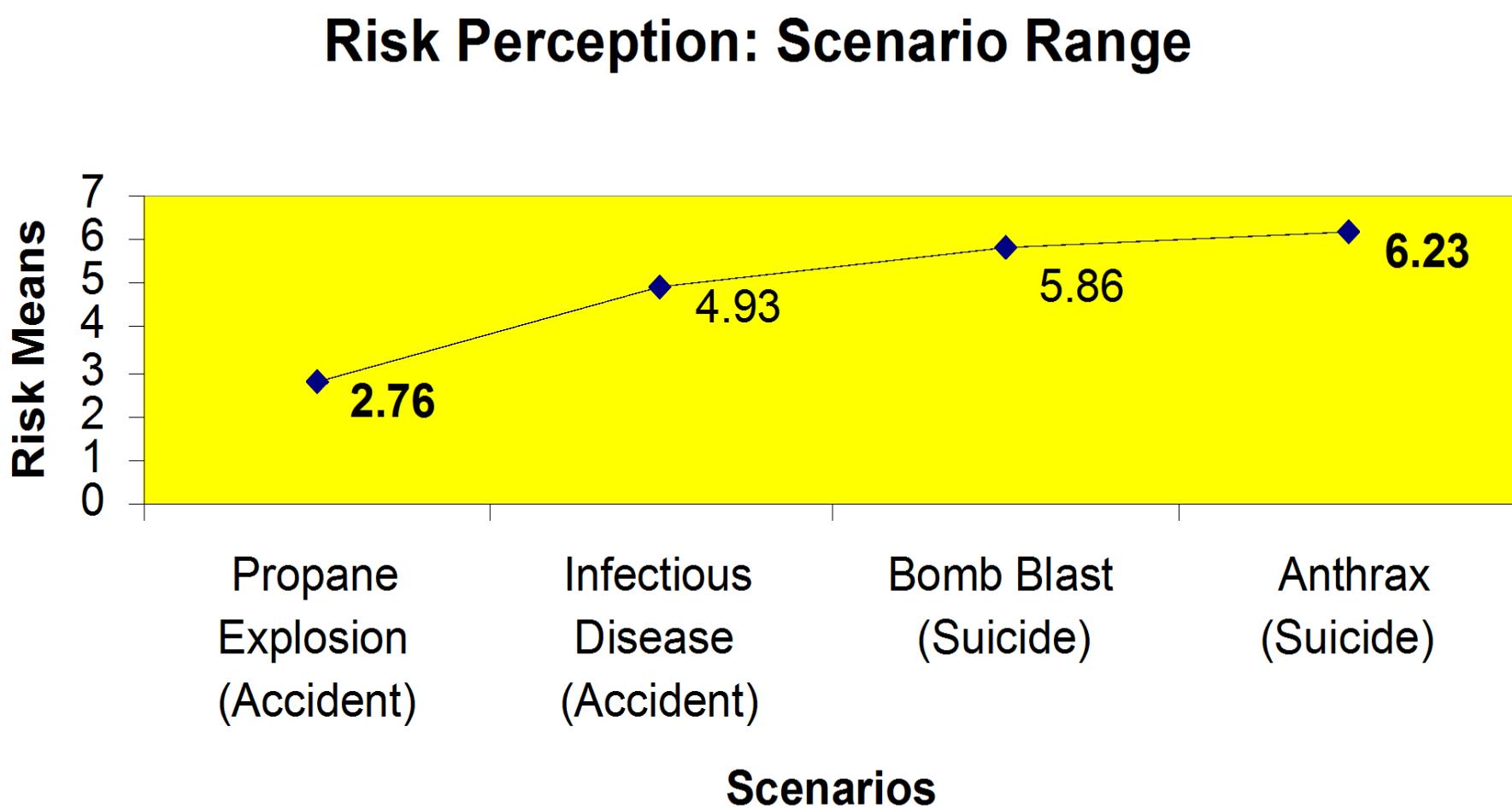
4. To what degree would you *feel at risk* after learning of this event?

Little Risk 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Great Risk

Questionnaire-Behaviors

- To what degree would you feel the need to *avoid public places* until this event was resolved?
 - Would *not* avoid any public places
 - Would avoid “*theme parks*” only
 - Would avoid places like *shopping malls, supermarkets, public transportation*, as well as “*theme parks*”
 - Would avoid *almost all public places but would continue to go to my job*
 - Would avoid almost all public places *including not going to my job*

Risk Perception: Examples Threat Scenarios (Range 1-9)



Terrorism

vs. non-terrorism

Terrorism is associated with

- greater Perception of Risk
- less trust in first responders
- greater trust in government officials
- less ability to protect self
- more attention to news media
- greater need to contact friends and family
- greater worry about safety throughout the day
- greater avoidance of public places
- greater need to leave the area

Terrorism

Anthrax vs. bomb

Anthrax is associated with

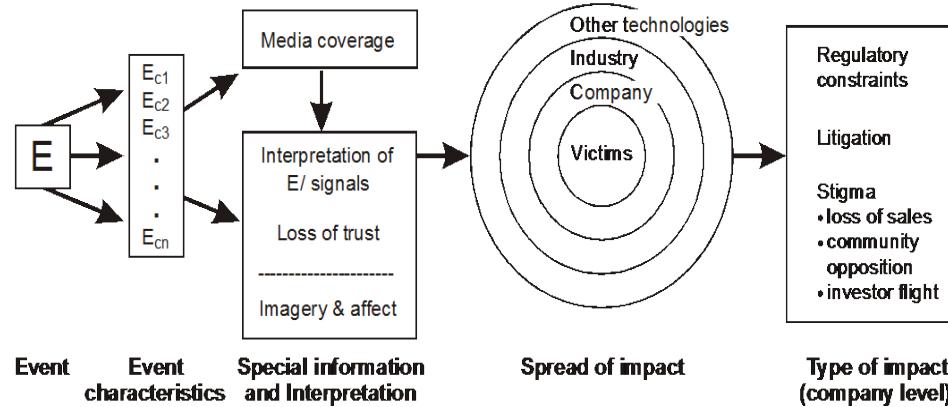
- greater perceived risk
- less trust in first responders
- less trust in government officials
- less ability to protect self
- greater worry about safety
- greater avoidance of public places
- greater need to leave the area

Risk Perceptions Have Impacts

Risk perceptions drive behaviors that can have enormous social, economic, and political impacts in the aftermath of a terrorist attack



The Social Amplification of Risk



A preliminary model of social amplification of risk and stigma impacts. Development of the model will require knowledge of how the characteristics (E_c) associated with a hazard event interact to determine the media coverage and the interpretation or message drawn from that event. The nature of the media coverage and the interpretation is presumed to determine the type and magnitude of ripple effects.

Source: Kasperson et al. (1988).

Assessment of the Regional Economic Impacts of Catastrophic Events: CGE Analysis of Resource Loss and Behavioral Effects of an RDD Attack Scenario

J. A. Giesecke,^{1,*} W. J. Burns,² A. Barrett,³ E. Bayrak,⁴ A. Rose,⁴ P. Slovic,² and M. Suher⁵

We investigate the regional economic consequences of a hypothetical catastrophic event—attack via radiological dispersal device (RDD)—centered on the downtown Los Angeles area. We distinguish two routes via which such an event might affect regional economic activity: (i) reduction in effective resource supply (the resource loss effect) and (ii) shifts in the perceptions of economic agents (the behavioral effect). The resource loss effect relates to the physical destructiveness of the event, while the behavioral effect relates to changes in fear and risk perception. Both affect the size of the regional economy. RDD detonation causes little capital damage and few casualties, but generates substantial short-run resource loss via business interruption. Changes in fear and risk perception increase the supply cost of resources to the affected region, while simultaneously reducing demand for goods produced in the region. We use results from a nationwide survey, tailored to our RDD scenario, to inform our model values for behavioral effects. Survey results, supplemented by findings from previous research on stigmatized asset values, suggest that in the region affected by the RDD, households may require higher wages, investors may require higher returns, and customers may require price discounts. We show that because behavioral effects may have lingering long-term deleterious impacts on both the supply-cost of resources to a region and willingness to pay for regional output, they can generate changes in regional gross domestic product (GDP) much greater than those generated by resource loss effects. Implications for policies that have the potential to mitigate these effects are discussed.

KEY WORDS: Economic impact; radiological dispersal; risk perception; terrorism

An Event as it is Occurring.

Dirty Bomb Rocks Financial District of Los Angeles!

180 Dead and Hundreds Potentially Exposed to Radiation as Mayor Requests Downtown to Seek Shelter for Hours

(An approximately 500 word scenario description followed together with an audio recording of the LA mayor-dramatization.)

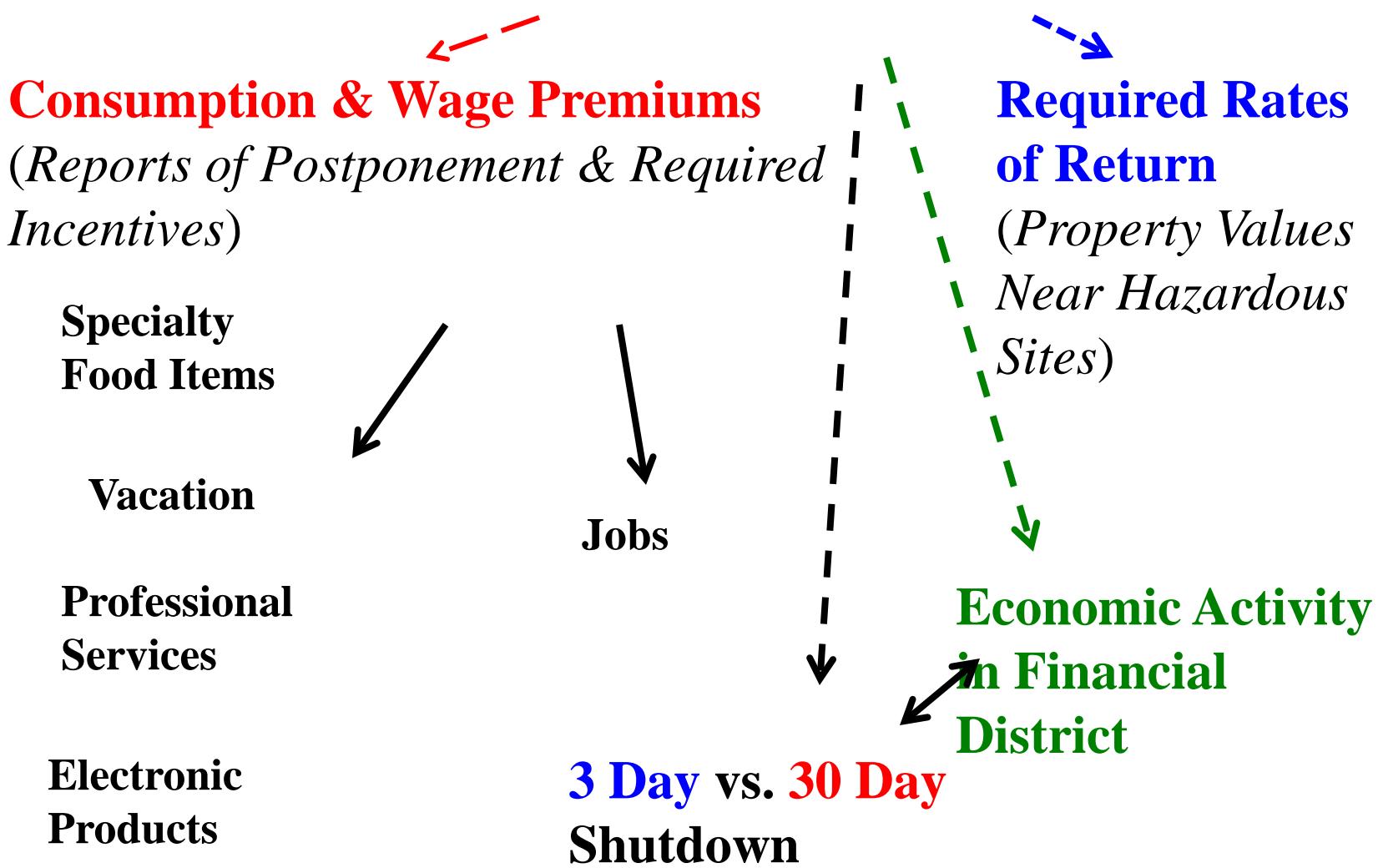
The Aftermath of the Event: One Month Later

Radiation Levels Throughout Los Angeles Pose Little Threat says Panel of Health Officials!

Today the Mayor Received a Reassuring Report from a Team of Radiation Experts Regarding Long-term Health Risks. The Downtown to Re-Open.

(An approximately 200 word scenario description followed together with an audio recording of the LA mayor-dramatization.)

Measures Used for Economic Estimates



- Indirect costs, driven by behavioral reactions due to fear and stigmatization, are far greater than direct costs due to physical damages.

RDD Impacts to Los Angeles GDP (CGE Estimates)

Impact	Category	
(1) Short-run	Direct business interruption (BI). (GDP loss, \$m.) (a)	-\$817
(2) Short-run	Indirect business interruption (BI). (GDP loss, \$m.)	-\$214
(3) Short-run	Other resource loss. (GDP loss, \$m.) (<i>casualties, property</i>)	-\$27
(4) Short-run	Behavioral effects. (GDP loss, \$m.)	-\$889
(5) Short-run	Total short-run. (GDP loss, \$m.)	-\$1,947
(6) Long-run	One-Year Behavioral. (GDP loss, \$m.)	-\$2,628
(7) Long-run	Total Ten-Year Behavioral. (GDP loss, \$m.) (b)	-\$15,808
(8) Total (1)+(2)+(3)+(7)	Total Costs (Resource Loss/Behavioral Effects-GDP loss \$m)	-\$16,866
(9) Ratio = (7)/[(1)+(2)+(3)]	Total Ten-Year Behavioral/Ordinary Loss	14.9

- Can risk communication dampen overreaction in the aftermath of an attack?

Using an inoculation message approach to promote public confidence in protective agencies

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ABSTRACT

This investigation tested the effectiveness of inoculation as a pre-crisis strategy in combating the effects of politically motivated violent acts. A four-phase experiment was conducted involving 355 national consumer panel participants. The findings indicate that inoculation can be an effective pre-crisis message strategy as it was successful in enhancing public beliefs in the ability of government agencies to prevent, and minimize the effects of, violent acts. This strategy also created a 'blanket of protection' that extended beyond the focal politically motivated attack event as it enhanced the confidence in government agencies to manage national crises in general. Inoculation was also effective in lowering the intensity of experienced fear evoked by the threat of violent attacks and it enhanced the ability of individuals to cope with the aftermath of a crisis.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

Inoculation; terrorism; public confidence; risk and crisis; message strategy

Longitudinal Study Investigating the Impact of a Pre-Crisis Risk Communication Message

- To what extent can a risk message, guided by inoculation theory, delivered prior to a terrorist attack impact the following after an attack?
 - Restore confidence in DHS
 - to prevent future terrorist attacks
 - to respond effectively to minimize the harm from a terrorist attack
 - to in general handle national crises
 - Mitigate emotions like anger and fear
- To what extent can a pre-crisis risk message reduce losses in airline revenues and GDP following an attack?

Inoculation Theory: Conferring Resistance to Persuasion

- **Goal: Increase Individuals' Resistance to Attitudinal or Behavioral Changes^{b,c}.**
 - Analogous to medical model of vaccines
- **As a Risk Communication Strategy^{d,e}**
 - **Pre-Crisis:** Alert individuals' that their attitude (e.g. it's safe to go to public events) is vulnerable to challenges (media stories, announcements from political groups)
 - This **threat** to attitude together with provided counterarguments motivates individuals' to develop their own counterarguments ("psychological antibodies")
 - Attitudinal resistance is increased

b: Banas, J. A., & Rains, S. (2010); c: Compton, J. (2013); d: Ivanov (2016), e: Farchi & Gidron (2010)

Inoculation Messaging

- **Identify Focal Belief or Attitude to Protect**
 - It's safe to attend public events and use public transportation (DHS, local officials,)
- **Forewarn Target Group** That Their Beliefs Could be Challenged and Offer Examples
 - "You may hear media stories claiming terrorist groups can strike at will in the U.S. and we have limited ability to stop them. These stories may also be echoed by some of our political leaders"
- **Offer a Balanced Counterargument**
 - "Terrorists attacks may happen occasionally even here in the U.S for the foreseeable future. However, we should remember DHS and FBI have thwarted many attacks and are increasingly getting better at responding to such attacks. Like other national challenges in the past we will come through this one as well"
- **Call to Action Letting Individuals Think and Decide**
 - "The goal of terrorists is to generate fear and doubt so don't let them manipulate you! *Make up your mind about what to think and do.* Take reasonable precautions for disasters. **Think sensibly about the risks.**"

Analogous to a Vaccine

- **Forewarn** a recipient they could be exposed to a **threatening** information to a focal belief or attitude we wish to protect
- Provide a **counterargument** to the threat
 - (e.g. *DHS can respond effectively to terrorist attack*)

A Risk Communication Experiment

Nationwide Panel tracked for 6 months¹

Survey 1	Baseline measures of perceived risk, emotion and confidence in DHS.	n= 445	Day 0
Survey 2	Randomly assigned to view four minute risk message video or not. Questions	n = 415	Day 6
Survey 3	All respondents view a 1 minute video of simulated newscast of an attack on an aircraft. Questions	n = 405	Day 10
Survey 4	Follow up survey questions (recovery)	n = 391	Day 22
Survey 5	Follow up survey questions (recovery) <i>followed by three new attack scenarios (checkpoint, bus, train).</i>	n = 335	Day 45
Survey 6	Follow up survey questions (recovery) followed by questions about the <i>Boston marathon attack.</i>	n = 325	Day 77
Survey 7	Follow up questions (recovery)	n = 304	Day 91
Survey 8	Follow up questions (recovery)	n = 293	Day 170

1:Decision Research nationwide online quota sample: Female (57%), Mean age (44yrs.), Some college (65%), states (all but Delaware), Panelists are at least 18 yrs. and have been recruited online (e.g. Google ads) and are paid \$15/hr.

Example Questions from a Number of Topic Categories

Category	Question	Surveys
Confidence in DHS	The Department of Homeland Security is effective in Preventing Terrorist Attacks. A 7-point scale from <i>Strongly disagree</i> to <i>Strongly agree</i> .	1–8
Likelihood of an attack	How likely do you believe the U.S. is to experience a damaging terrorist attack on a commercial airline in the next 12 months? A sliding scale from 0% to 100%.	1–4
Emotional reaction	How angry do you feel about the terrorist threats facing our country now? A 5-point scale from <i>Not at all angry</i> to <i>Very angry</i> .	1–4
Future risk	How great is the risk posed to your future quality of life from each of the following? A 7-point scale from <i>No risk</i> to <i>Extremely high risk</i> .	1–8
Travel decisions	[In response to the attack scenario] How long would you wait before flying for reasons of business or job? A sliding scale from 1 week to 104 or more weeks.	3–4

Results

- Those exposed to inoculation messaging showed more moderate reaction to a simulated attack on an airliner
- Greater confidence in DHS, TSA
- Less fear
- Less avoidance behavior
- Effects lasted over time and generalized to the Boston Marathon bombings that occurred mid-study

References to Economic Impacts and Inoculation

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g. Rose et al. (in press). "The role of behavioral responses in the total economic consequences of terrorist attacks on U.S. air travel targets" *Risk Analysis*.

New Modes of Terrorism are Unstoppable by Traditional Interventions

Can psychological insights reduce
the threat?

Terrorists Once Used Truck Bombs. In Nice, the Truck Itself Was the Weapon.



From France to Israel, Islamist militants are realizing that empty vehicles crashed into crowds can kill as many civilians as cars or trucks packed full of explosives.

BY PAUL MCLEARY

JULY 15, 2016

PAUL.MCLEARY

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Large trucks packed with explosives have become a grim trademark of modern terrorism, killing 241 U.S. service personnel in Beirut in 1983 and ripping through the United Nations compound in Baghdad in 2003, killing 22, including the world body's top diplomat in Iraq, Sérgio Vieira de Mello.

But as militants from groups like the Islamic State and al Qaeda look to kill as many civilians in as many places as possible, they're skipping the cost, expense, and risk of obtaining explosives and instead simply using normal trucks as more mundane — and cheaper — weapons of war. And as the carnage in Nice, France, has made clear, trucks that aren't used as bombs can kill as many people as those that are.

“The uncomfortable reality is that few counterterrorism laws or measures can address the weaponization of everyday life due to the unrelenting call to terror.”

Pseudoinefficacy: Negative feelings from children who cannot be helped reduce warm glow for children who can be helped

Daniel Västfjäll, Paul Slovic and Marcus Mayorga

Abstract

In a great many situations where we are asked to aid persons whose lives are endangered, we are not able to help everyone. What are the emotional and motivational consequences of “not helping all”? In a series of experiments, we demonstrate that negative affect arising from children that could not be helped decreases the warm glow of positive feeling associated with aiding the children who can be helped. This demotivation from the children outside of our reach may be a form of “pseudoinefficacy” that is nonrational. We should not be deterred from helping whomever we can because there are others we are not able to help.

Can Pseudoinefficacy Demotivate Terrorism?

- “Beliefs of personal efficacy constitute the key factor of human agency. If people believe (or feel) they have no power to produce results, they will not attempt to make things happen”

Albert Bandura

- Non-relevant sources of negative feelings can create an illusion of inefficacy that demotivates people who actually are capable.

Drop in the bucket inefficacy

Donating money to save statistical and identified lives

- Statistical Lives

- Food shortages in Malawi are affecting more than 3 million children
- In Zambia, severe rainfall deficits have resulted in a 42 percent drop in maize production from 2000. As a result, an estimated 3 million Zambians face hunger

Donations to Rokia drop by more than 40% when the statistics are presented.

- Identifiable Lives

Any money that you donate will go to Rokia, a 7-year-old girl from Mali, Africa. Rokia is desperately poor, and faces a threat of severe hunger or even starvation.



Her life will be changed for the better as a result of your financial gift. With your support, and the support of other caring sponsors, Save the Children will work with Rokia's family and other members of the community to help feed her, provide her with education, as well as basic medical care and hygiene education.

Source: Small, Loewenstein, & Slovic (2007)

Infiltration of non-relevant negative affect



Nelson

How much would you be willing to donate to help Nelson?

How good would you feel about helping Nelson (warm glow)?

You can
help



Nelson

Children for whom aid may not be available



Sueva

Moussa

Mutaka

Jallo

Maluf

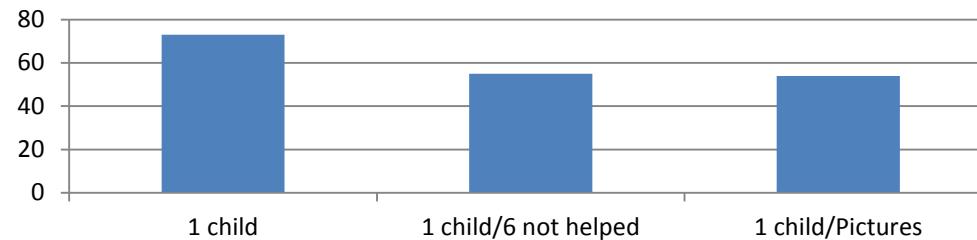
Okeke



Nelson



Mean warm-glow ratings in the picture study



Some Suggested First Steps to Create an Illusion of Inefficacy

- 1) More generally, increase the perception of the difficulty of perpetrating a “successful” act.
- 2) Ramp up security theater. Retain and publicize the air marshals program.
- 3) Reduce or eliminate expedited screening or other signals of less intensive screening.
- 4) Publicize that screening begins when you book your ticket.
Contributes to perceived difficulty. Out of your control.
- 5) Use dogs at security checkpoints at high risk facilities-both because they may detect something but also because they are perceived as good detectors.
And they may have cultural significance as well.
- 6) More generally, develop ways to play down the rewards or efficacy of harmful actions.
- 7) Characterize harmful consequences as “a drop in the bucket”,
unlikely to have important lasting effects on the nation.
- 8) Characterize terrorism as merely crime and terrorists as criminals.
Don’t publicize the names/photos of the perpetrators. Don’t glamourize terrorism.
- 9) Have Islamic leaders teach that the afterlife will not reward these criminals,
as their deeds go against Islamic tenets.

Final Topic

Do strong humanitarian values
collapse when they conflict with
national security objectives?

Never Again? No. Again and Again.

- Genocides and mass atrocities are all too common
- They create an immense toll of suffering and death
- Often with little notice or resistance from the outside world
- They threaten global security

The More Who Die the Less We Care

Why is a man punished when he kills another man, yet the killing of a million is a lesser crime than the killing of an individual?

Raphael Lemkin

Creator of the word genocide

Why do we underreact to genocide, mass atrocities, and other human and environmental catastrophes?

Psychological research offers three answers based on a flawed" arithmetic of compassion":

1) Psychic Numbing

2) Pseudoinefficacy

3)The Prominence Bias in decision making

High expressed values for lifesaving

In a talk at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, President Obama declared the following:

It's a bitter truth—too often, the world has failed to prevent the killing of innocents on a massive scale. And we are haunted by the atrocities that we did not stop and the lives we did not save. . . .

Three years ago today,... I said that we had to do “everything we can to prevent and end atrocities.”

I made it clear that “preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a ... core moral responsibility of the United States of America.”

Since February,2003 the Sudanese government, working through the Janjaweed Militia has destroyed hundreds of villages in Darfur,murdered as many as 400,000 people from those villages and has driven some 2.5 million into IDP and refugee camps where their survival is precarious.

The world has done little in response!

WHY?

Richard Just(2008) observes”:

“We are awash in information about Darfur. This gives Darfur a morbid sort of distinction. No genocide has ever been so thoroughly documented while it was taking place. But the genocide continues. We document what we do not stop. The truth does not set anybody free.

How could we have known so much and done so little”?

The New Republic,August,27,2008

February 2012

Why the world isn't intervening in Syria

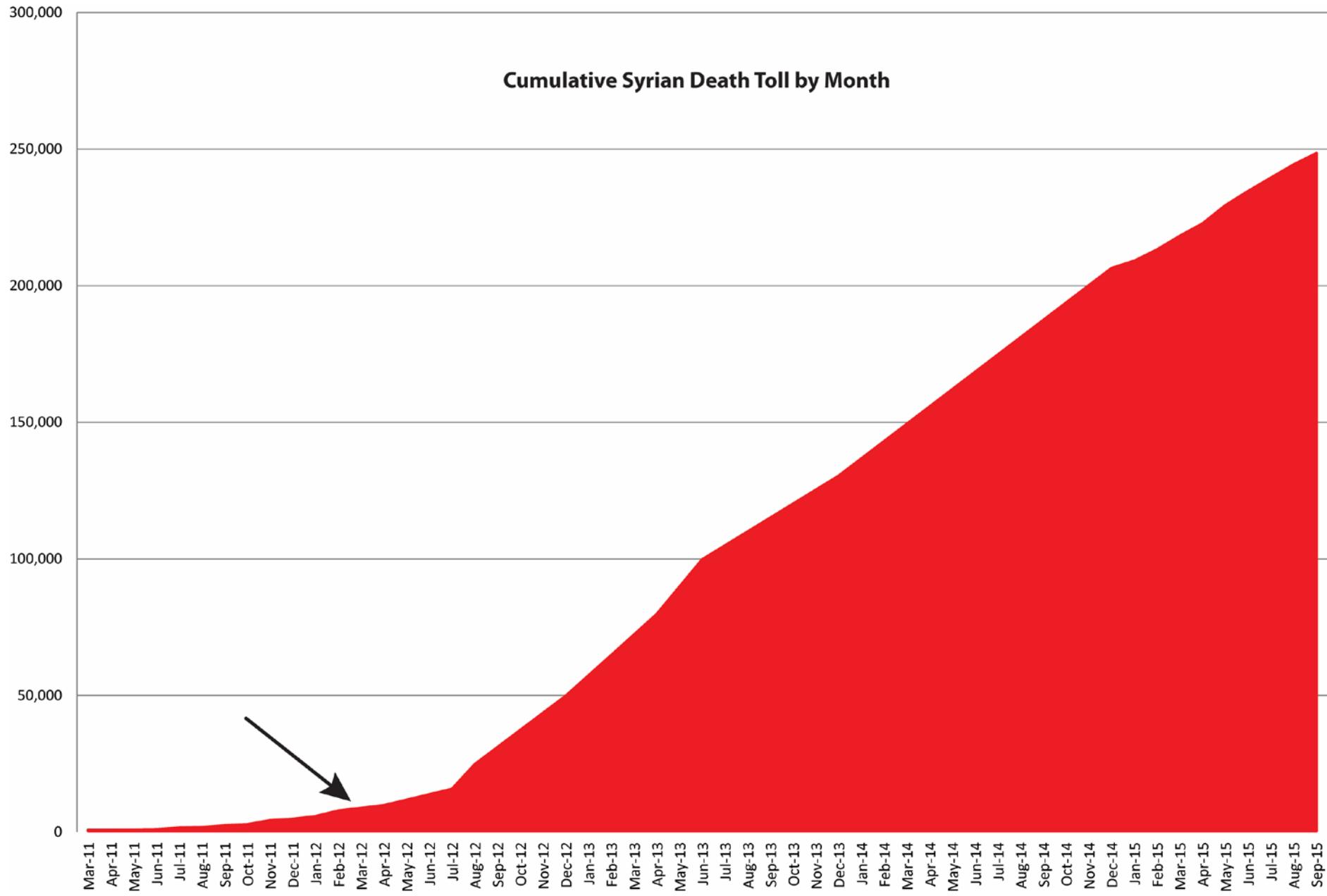
February 23, 2012 | By Kyle Almond, CNN



As the death toll grows in Syria, so do the desperate pleas for help.

"What is the world waiting for?" asked one Syrian woman this week while holed up in a makeshift bomb shelter with her sick son. "For us to die of hunger and fear?"

Cumulative Syrian Death Toll by Month





Nilüfer Demir's photograph of Aylan Kurdi, the drowned Kurdish-Syrian three-year-old boy who washed up on a Turkish beach.



Omran Daqneesh August 18, 2016





WHEN (IN)ACTION SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS: CONFRONTING THE COLLAPSE OF HUMANITARIAN VALUES IN FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS

Paul Slovic

“Why do good people and their governments repeatedly turn away from intervention that could halt genocides and other mass abuses of human beings?”

“What devaluation of human lives could possibly allow this?”

I began to examine such questions when I became aware of the indifference toward the vast scale of atrocities being perpetrated in Darfur, Sudan. I saw a connection between earlier research I had published with David Fetherstonhaugh and colleagues in 1997¹ and subsequent research with Deborah Small and George Loewenstein.² Specifically, this work documented the insensitivity to large numbers of lives at risk that we labeled psychophysical numbing, consistent with the general nonlinear model of valuation proposed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (1979) in their landmark paper on prospect theory.³ Subsequent studies uncovered additional evidence of insensitivity described as compassion fade and, in some cases, compassion collapse, where valuation actually decreases and may even collapse to zero as the number of lives at stake increases.⁴ All of this helps explain why many who care greatly about individual lives lose their enthusiasm and compassion when the numbers get large. Slovic, Zions, Woods, Goodman, and Jinks proposed some

Beyond Numbing and Pseudoinefficacy

- Top decision makers, well informed and not numbed, still decide not to intervene in mass atrocities, even when the actual or potential loss of life is enormous!
- Something more than numbing is going on.

In addition to psychic numbing and pseudoinefficacy, biased decision making further contributes to the tolerance of genocide and mass atrocities.

The Prominence Effect

- Choices or decisions value prominent dimensions extremely highly because of the need to **justify or defend** such actions.
- Expressed (stated) values do not require such justification.
- As a result there may be a disconnect between our stated values and the values revealed by our actions.

The Prominence Hypothesis

For governments national security is the most Prominent (ie, defensible) value in today's world

- Strongly held humanitarian values (ie, **stated preferences**) tend to decline or even collapse when they are pitted in decision making against security objectives (**revealed preferences**).

History of the Idea Behind Prominence

*Journal of Experimental Psychology:
Human Perception and Performance*
1975, Vol. 1, No. 3, 280-287

Choice Between Equally Valued Alternatives

Paul Slovic
Oregon Research Institute

Subjects in four experiments were asked to choose between pairs of alternatives that they had previously equated in value. Within each pair, one alternative was superior on an important dimension but so inferior on a lesser dimension that this disadvantage canceled its advantage. The majority of subjects resolved these choices by consistently selecting the alternative that was superior on the more important dimension. This result supports the contention that choices are determined by mechanisms that are easy to explain and justify to oneself and to others. Some practical implications of this contention are discussed.

Data first collected in 1961

Example: two gift packages

- Package **A** gives \$30 cash and a certificate worth \$15 at a department store
- Package **B** gives a lesser cash amount, \$20, but a much greater store certificate such that you believe the two gifts are equal in overall value.
- Which of these **equal** gift packages would you choose?
- People do not flip a coin. The choice is systematic and predictable. Most people choose **A** based on the “more important dimension”, cash.

Choice Between Equally Valued Alternatives

Slovic, 1975

The present results support Tversky's (1972) contention that people follow choice mechanisms that are easy to explain and justify in terms of a priority ordering on the aspects. Reliance on the more important attribute provides such a mechanism.

In other words, reliance on easily justifiable aspects to the neglect of other important factors could lead one to reject alternatives whose overall utilities (assessed outside the choice context) are superior to those of the chosen alternative.

Choice Between Equally Valued Alternatives

(Continued)

Another speculation based on the present results bears mentioning. Imagine the situation in which a foreign government must decide between two possible alliances – one of which offers superior trade opportunities and the other of which offers a better position with respect to national defense. Suppose further that delay or other signs of indecisiveness imply that the choice is a difficult one with both options rather equally valued. Assume further, other things being equal, national defense is viewed as a more important attribute than trade. The more important dimension hypothesis suggests that one could predict that the decision will eventually be resolved in favor of the alternative offering superior defense advantages.

1988 Paper introducing the prominence effect

Psychological Review
1988, Vol. 95, No. 3, 371-384

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0033-295X/88/\$00.75

Contingent Weighting in Judgment and Choice

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Preference can be inferred from direct choice between options or from a matching procedure in which the decision maker adjusts one option to match another. Studies of preferences between two-dimensional options (e.g., public policies, job applicants, benefit plans) show that the more prominent dimension looms larger in choice than in matching. Thus, choice is more lexicographic than matching. This finding is viewed as an instance of a general principle of compatibility: The weighting of inputs is enhanced by their compatibility with the output. To account for such effects, we develop a hierarchy of models in which the trade-off between attributes is contingent on the nature of the response. The simplest theory of this type, called the contingent weighting model, is applied to the analysis of various compatibility effects, including the choice-matching discrepancy and the preference-reversal phenomenon. These results raise both conceptual and practical questions concerning the nature, the meaning and the assessment of preference.

The Prominence Effect

- Choices or decisions value prominent dimensions extremely highly because of the need to **justify or defend** such actions.
- Expressed values do not require such justification.

Risk, Decision Making and Security

How do we value conflicting objectives and properly weight them in decisions?

Security (physical, economic, person, etc.) is one of the most **prominent** objectives In today's world.

What are the implications of “security prominence”?

Bush: President's priority is preventing attack



January 14, 2009

The commander in chief's priority is preventing another terrorist attack in the United States, President Bush told CNN's "Larry King Live" Tuesday.

"The most important job I have had -- and the most important job the next president is going to have -- is to protect the American people from another attack," Bush said.

Security Prominence

I have a solemn responsibility to keep the American people safe. That's my most important obligation as President and Commander in Chief.

Barack Obama



Fred Hiatt
Editorial Page Editor

Obama's turn inward poses risk for U.S. interests abroad

The conflict: America's security vs. Humanitarian interests

While acknowledging “very real and legitimate” humanitarian interests in Syria—some 80,000 people have been killed, and millions have lost their homes—Obama recently said his “bottom line” has to be “what’s in the best interest of America’s security.”

Obama's Worst Mistake

Nicholas Kristof

New York Times AUG. 11, 2016

... even as the Syrian and Russian governments commit war crimes, bombing hospitals and starving civilians, President Obama and the world seem to shrug.

... allowing Syria's civil war and suffering to drag on unchallenged has been his worst mistake, casting a shadow over his legacy. It is also a stain on all of us, analogous to the indifference toward Jewish refugees in the 1930s, to the eyes averted from Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s, and to Darfur in the 2000s.

This is a crisis that cries out for American leadership, and Obama hasn't shown enough.

MIDDLE EAST

51 U.S. Diplomats Urge Strikes Against Assad in Syria

By MARK LANDLER JUNE 16, 2016



WASHINGTON — More than 50 State Department diplomats have signed an internal memo sharply critical of the Obama administration's policy in [Syria](#), urging the United States to carry out military strikes against the government of President [Bashar al-Assad](#) to stop its persistent violations of a cease-fire in the country's five-year-old civil war.

The memo, a draft of which was provided to The New York Times by a State Department official, says American policy has been "overwhelmed" by the unrelenting violence in Syria. It calls for "a judicious use of stand-off and air weapons, which would undergird and drive a more focused and hard-nosed U.S.-led diplomatic process."

The Dissent Document of June 26, 2016

The dissenting document implored the Obama administration to use military force to compel the Syrian regime to cease its attacks on civilians and negotiate a political solution to a crisis that has left “... over 400,000 people dead, hundreds of thousands still at risk from regime sieges, and 12 million people from a population of 23 million displaced from their homes” (US Department of State, 2016). The dissenters concluded that, “**the moral rationale for taking steps to end the deaths and suffering in Syria, after five years of brutal war, is evident and unquestionable**”.



UNITED STATES MISSION *to the* UNITED NATIONS

September 25, 2016

Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on Syria

Ambassador Samantha Power

U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations

U.S. Mission to the United Nations

We have convened the Security Council today because the Russian Federation and the Assad regime have launched an all-out air and ground offensive against eastern Aleppo and its 275,000 civilians. Russia and Assad have reportedly launched more than 150 airstrikes over the last 72 hours, killing at least 139 people and injuring hundreds more, laying waste to what is left of an iconic Middle Eastern city.

These are people who have suffered horribly in the five and a half years of war, yet they call the attacks from the air “unprecedented in quantity and quality.” The Assad regime is explicit: it believes only in a military solution. It says it is going to conquer militarily every last square inch of Syria. And it does not care what’s left of Syria in pursuing that military solution.

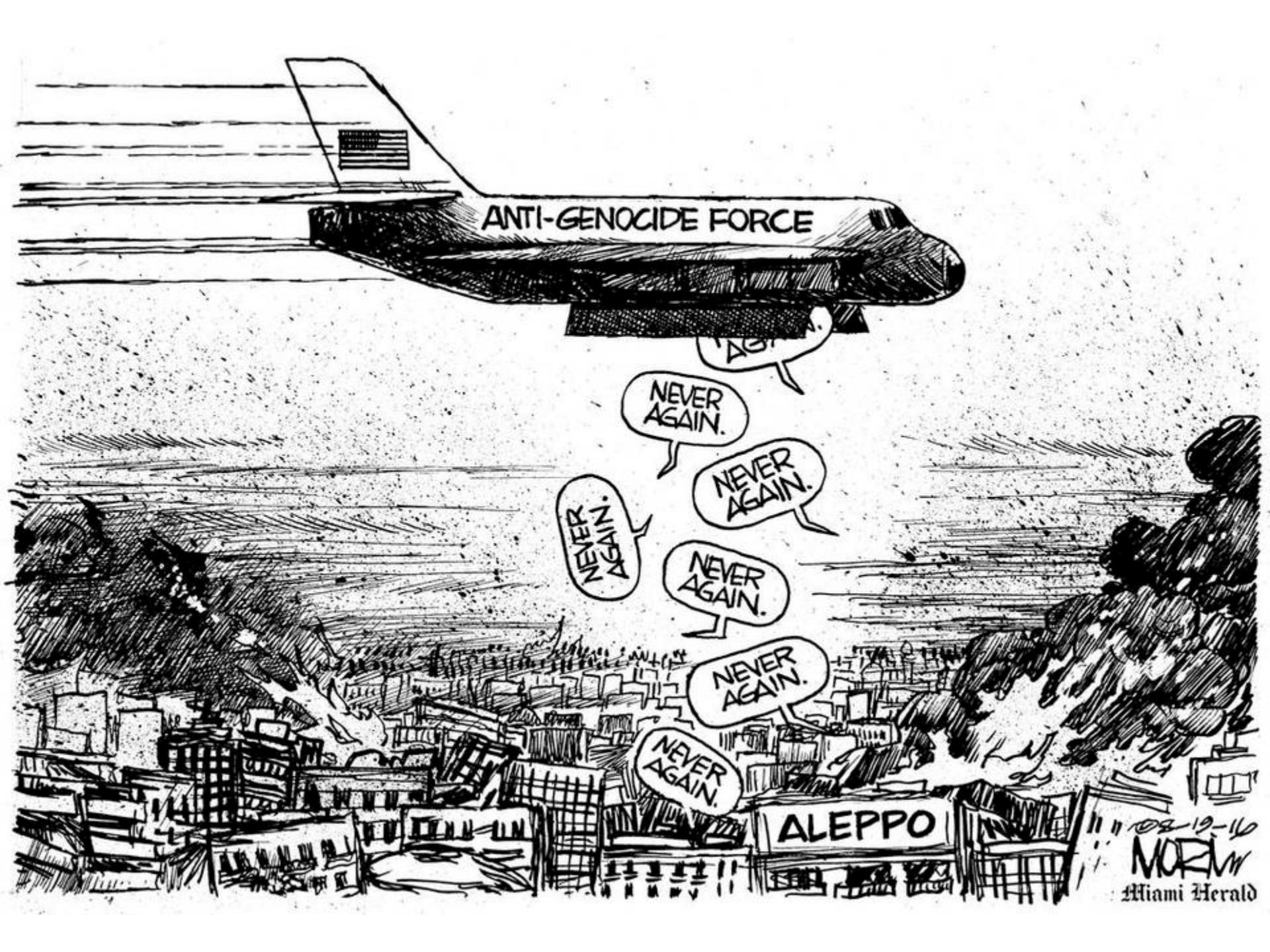
Instead of pursuing peace, Russia and Assad make war. Instead of helping get life-saving aid to civilians, Russia and Assad are bombing the humanitarian convoys, hospitals, and first responders who are trying desperately to keep people alive.

Let me conclude. On Friday, footage emerged of the aftermath of one of the many recent airstrikes in eastern Aleppo. In the video, first responders dig through the rubble of what was once a building, throwing aside chunks of concrete. And then, suddenly, one hears on the video the piercing scream of a child. A child literally submerged in concrete and rubble. The first responders then began to dig more frantically, until the head and blue and white shirt of the little girl emerges. A girl crying out in pain and in terror. Eventually, tenderly, the first responders remove the rubble from around her, and pull that girl – five-year-old Rawan Alowsh – from the wreckage, her body covered in white dust. It feels like a miracle, watching her come out alive.

And yet, everyone else in Rawan’s immediate family was reportedly killed in that airstrike. Her mother. Her father. Her four siblings. All killed. What chance does Rawan have in this world – what chance does she have with no family, but also with not even a single sign that her attackers have a shred of empathy in them?

When violent attacks against civilians are surging; when norms of civilized behavior that we have spent more than 70 years trying to build are being trampled; when there is complete impunity for targeting aid convoys, civilian, residential neighborhoods, children, hospitals – impunity – what chance does Rawan or any of us have?

One first responder said of the relentless assault of the last few days: “People don’t know what to do or where to go. There is no escape. It feels like the end of the world.” The end of the world. It is apocalyptic what is being done to eastern Aleppo. Surely, for Rawan – who, at five years old, has lost her entire family – **this Council can at the very least have the courage to say who is responsible for this. And, in a single voice, tell Russia to stop.** Thank you.



10/19/16
MORT
Miami Herald

Audio Reveals What John Kerry Told Syrians Behind Closed Doors

By ANNE BARNARD SEPT. 30, 2016

Secretary of State John Kerry was clearly exasperated, not least at his own government.

...

His frustrations and dissent within the Obama administration have hardly been a secret, but in the recorded conversation, Mr. Kerry . . . expressed disagreement with some of Mr. Obama's policy decisions and said Congress would never agree to use force.

...

One, a civil engineer named Mustafa Alsyofi, said Mr. Kerry had effectively told the Syrian opposition, "You have to fight for us, but we will not fight for you."

"How can this be accepted by anyone?" Mr. Alsyofi asked. "It's unbelievable."

Audio Reveals What John Kerry Told Syrians Behind Closed Doors

By ANNE BARNARD SEPT. 30, 2016

One woman, Marcell Shehwaro, demanded “the bottom line,” asking “how many Syrians” had to be killed to prompt serious action.

...

At another point, Mr. Kerry spelled out in stark terms distinctions the United States was making between combatants, which have upset the Syrian opposition: The United States wants the rebels to help it fight the Islamic State and Al Qaeda because, as he put it, “both have basically declared war on us.” But Washington will not join the same rebels in fighting Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite militia allied with Mr. Assad, even though the United States lists Hezbollah as a terrorist group like the others.

“Hezbollah,” Mr. Kerry explained, “is not plotting against us.” ([Security prominence?](#))

We Need to Improve the Decision Making Process

- *“Simply put, the US government does not have an established, coherent policy for preventing and responding to genocide and mass atrocities”* (Albright & Cohen, 2008; p.3)

Decisions with Multiple Objectives

Preferences and
Value Tradeoffs

Ralph L. Keeney
Howard Raiffa



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“The best book I know on how to make a decision.”
—Roger Fisher, coauthor of the bestseller *Getting to Yes*

Smart Choices

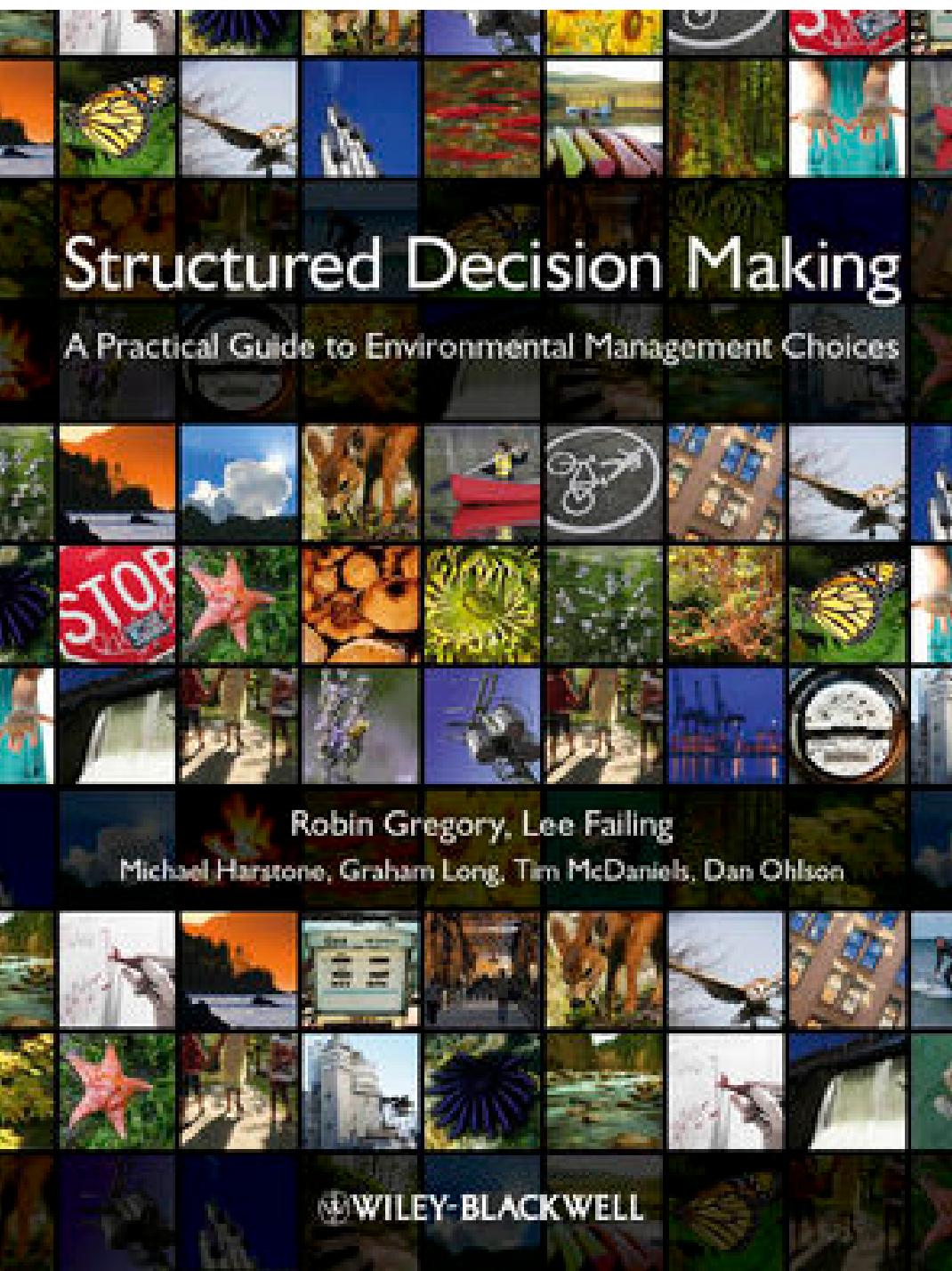
A PRACTICAL GUIDE
TO MAKING
BETTER LIFE DECISIONS

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Structured Decision Making

A Practical Guide to Environmental Management Choices

Robin Gregory, Lee Failing

Michael Harstone, Graham Long, Tim McDaniels, Dan Ohlson

WILEY-BLACKWELL

Conclusion

There are many ways that the psychological study of risk and decision making address today's challenges regarding terrorism, national (and international) security and human rights.

Thank you!

Thanks also to support from the NSF Decision, Risk, and Management Science Program and from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through the National Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE)

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