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The New Look of Terrorism: Or, How So Many of Us Became Enemies

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Abstract

It has become known that the Bush administration, which claims to be engaging in a “war on terrorism,” is, in truth, encouraging terrorism and increasing the likelihood of terrorist events being visited upon the people of the US and elsewhere. It is further argued, here and elsewhere, that the Bush administration itself engages in terrorism. I examine this disturbing state of affairs in light of a social constructionist perspective, spelling out the means by which the current US presidential administration has reconstructed terrorism to its own ends. They do this through imagery (vast, cheering crowds aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln when Bush, wearing a flight suit, declared “Mission Accomplished”), secrecy (illustrated by the refusal to allow photographs of returning coffins carrying the remains of our war dead), inaccurate reports (saying that WMD exist when they do not), making false connections (Iraq with 9/11), fear indoctrination (for instance, orange alerts), repetition of key words and phrases (“democracy” and “freedom is on the march”), loyalty demanded of administration officials as fellow claims-makers, punishment of dissenters (protestors, dissenting members of the media, and others) and monetary and employment rewards for supporters (such as for political endorsements). Claims-making, one aspect of social construction, is aided by creating outgroups (“insurgents,” “enemy combatants,” and those who disagree with the claims-maker’s agenda). Another component of claims-making is a single, undiluted message.

Alternative claims are prohibited, as we see with the arrest and punishment of anti-war protestors and as we see even more clearly by the Bush administration's refusal to admit audience members who may disagree with the president at "public" meetings. This reconstruction of terrorism is false, deadly, costly, and ineffective in deflecting terrorism.

"The New Look of Terrorism: Or, How So Many of Us Became Enemies"

On September 20, 2001, George W. Bush stated to the world, "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." Such a statement necessarily widens the net of accused terrorists since it implies that "everyone [is] obliged to support all of his policies, that if you opposed him on anything you were aiding terrorists" (Krugman 2004a: 19).

We have come to this state of social being in the early years of the 21st century, at a time when the right has come to mean more than conservatism. The political right, ordinarily meaning the Republican party, has become influenced by corporate interests, the religious far right, and, generally, an agenda for unlimited control (Berry 2004a). To clarify, the Republican party is composed of many different interest groups, as is the Democratic party, and the interest groups of late have led the current administration (not the Republican party on the whole) to view the world in concrete, simplified, and imperialist ways.

What I will describe herein, enemy construction by the Bush administration under the auspices of the war on terrorism, is not necessarily representative of Republican ideology on the whole but does appear to be the ideology of this particular administration. To ease this new construction, the Bush administration has redefined, among other things, terrorism. This redefinition has a greater reach than one might initially think. The most obvious manner in which the redefinition has affected the US and the world is via the invasion of Iraq. Less obviously, redefinition of terrorism has removed rights from US and other citizens, worsened the US security situation, and altered reality as we know it by a unilateral political message dispensed by a coopted

media. As reported to Ron Suskind by a presidential aide, the Bush administration has created their own reality and continues to create new realities. The aide further told Suskind that this is possible since, “We’re an empire now” (2004, p. 50).

Countering this “reality” is the one retained by the merely-conservative right, moderates, and the left, who have resisted far-right agendas to destroy the separation of church and state, the Constitution, and the respectability of the US in world standing. Mobilizing challenges to the administration’s new “reality” is not without danger, for example, as we have seen in the punishment of dissenters labeled as aides to terrorism. And that is the focus of this paper. The current White House has had the opportunity, greatly aided by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, to enlarge the “terrorist” definition to include non-terrorists, to engage in claims-making about “terrorism” and “terrorists,” and to lay out remedies (such as the Patriot Act, unwarranted detentions, and preemptive war) for dealing with “terrorists.” And, as we will see, the government that is engaging in this social construction resembles closely the terrorists against whom they have declared war.

Several disparate literatures (scholarly treatments of social constructionism, works specifically focusing on terrorism, and news outlets) say roughly the same thing. This thing they say, in various forms, is that the Bush administration has constructed a war on terrorism which has little interest in reducing terror. Instead, as we find in all moral panics and moral entrepreneurship, false claims-making is abundant. It is my job to show how the Bush administration accomplishes this reconstruction.

Strategies for Enemy Creation

The Bush administration has increasingly placed whole societies (the “axis of evil” countries of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as well as those who did not go along with the US invasion, particularly France) as well as much of the US public in vague enemy categories, and has utilized religious justifications and fear as part of their claims-making. Religion and fear make their war-like

behavior seem necessary, legal, and appropriate, while enemy construction is generally an effective way to form strong dividing lines and to rally forces to a cause.

Religion. There are similarities across Islamic fundamentalists and the Bush administration in terms of their collective distaste for empiricism (Juergensmeyer 2000; Stern 2003; Berry 2004a; Berry 1999). One significant point to bear in mind is the far right's (be they the Taliban or the current administration) penchant for *beliefs* rather than knowable, measurable, and debatable phenomena. Religious beliefs are grounded in faith, in what its adherents *believe* to be true, whether or not the beliefs are true. Viewed in this light, we see that harsh and restrictive religious doctrine operates as a propellant for Islamic-based terrorism the same as it does for the Bush administration's fundamentalist-based "war on terror." In fact, fundamentalist Islamic beliefs and the Bush administration's fundamentalist Christian beliefs share common themes, among them a focus on their own fundamentalist religion as the *only* meaningful religion.

President Bush has a "messianic vision of himself" (Herbert 2003: 31), as emphasized by his statement that he had found his "life's mission" after 9/11, having "become convinced that God was calling him to engage the forces of evil in battle, with the US being the definer of evil as well as good" (Carver 2003). Regarding the invasion of Iraq, the president told journalist Bob Woodward that he was praying to be a "messenger" of the "Lord's will" (Woodward 2004). Bush has described his war mission as a "crusade," a "divine plan," and a set of occurrences guided by God (Lears 2003). Bush's call to arms is couched in theological language, with the phrases "axis of evil" and "war on terror" having the religious edge of a "spiritual battle," supported by American triumphalism and its apocalyptic implications (Ritsch 2003: 22). According to Carver (2003), the apocalyptic message put forward by evangelical Christians and by Bush supports a belief in the second coming of Christ, after a titanic battle in the Middle East which will be fought against an

anti-Christ — none other than Saddam Hussein. The resemblance between this Armageddon-type rationalization for the war on terror and Islamic calls to jihad is striking.

According to Jessica Stern (2003), religious terrorists view themselves as “God’s people” with their enemies being “God’s enemies.” Stern finds that Middle East right-wing terrorists as well as US terrorist organizations (such as the Army of God) share not only fundamentalist religion and terrorist ideals, but also a nostalgic need for simplicity, dichotomies, and absolutisms. The same has been said about the Bush administration, with their adherence to simplicity and concreteness.

Religious terrorists, Stern finds:

often long for a simpler time, when right and wrong were clear [if there ever were such a time].... It is about finding a clear purpose.... It is about purifying the world. ... It is about seeing the world in black and white. ... [It is about being] the chosen people (foreword).

Fundamentalist right-wing religious zealots across cultures re-name terrorist acts and beliefs as justifiable, legitimate, and honorable. The importance of this re-naming cannot be overstated. Religion provides the justification for beneficial practices like charity but also provide, in the case of religious-based terrorism, justifications for war (as well as more mundane mass-repression of women and other whole categories of people). Religion allows for an all-encompassing definition of infidels, sinners, and other “enemies.” These definitions of enemies, because they are not empirically-based, can fluctuate depending on the needs of the terrorism-definers to include those who are not in fact terrorists.

Because it is based on moral absolutisms, far-right religion permits an unverifiable rationale for war. As an illustration, even though the presence of WMD was one rationalization for the invasion, we now know that Iraq had no WMD. Yet the administration held tenaciously to the delusion that these weapons do exist, even after it became clear that they do not. According to a senior government official, “the view that Iraq possessed illicit weapons had been ‘treated *like a*

religion' within American intelligence agencies, with alternative views never given serious attention" (Jehl 2004: 6, emphasis added).

Sociology of the Enemy. The sociology of the enemy describes the social process of artificially constructing enemies, creating an "other" for socially advantageous purposes. The identification of a common enemy helps to mobilize one group against another, lending solidarity to the enemy-defining groups (Aho 1994). Developing identifiable adversaries is useful in the same way that defining "us" automatically entails defining "them," with "them" being the social opponents (Melucci 1996; Huntington 1996).

In the Bush administration's construction, "enemies" are variously determined to be "evil," "unpatriotic," or otherwise in opposition to the administration's ideals. Here we see that "enemies" can be created on the smallest of differences, such as peace activists and others who disagree politically with the administration but otherwise are demographically indistinguishable (white, US-born, etc.).

People who are part of the enemy-creating in-group can be turned into enemies if they stray ever so slightly, if they (for example) raise questions about the defining-group's beliefs and behaviors. In response to criticisms from Richard Clarke (formerly the chief counterterrorism expert) and from Paul O'Neill (former Treasury Secretary), both were publicly berated by the administration. When the Spanish public voted out their pro-war president and replaced him with an anti-war president who promised to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq, the Bush administration denounced them as wimps who had caved in to the "enemy." Examples such as these led Philip James (2004) to remark: "Bush's mantra to the international community during his inexorable march to war in 2002-2003 — you are either with us or against us — applies, with equal force, to all who serve him."

The terrorist events of 9/11 allowed for the naming of all those not supporting the war or other Bush administration policies as “unpatriotic” and as aiding enemy-terrorists. The Bush administration directs that anyone engaging in terrorist acts, no matter how loosely defined, can be labeled (by the commander in chief) as an “enemy combatant,” meaning someone with few rights under our Constitution. This is true even if that captive is an American citizen caught in the United States...[and] without certifying that the target is considered a foreign agent or *suspect of any kind* (Bronner 2004: 11, emphasis added).

The USA Patriot Act (aka United and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001), enacted quickly after 9/11, has been instrumental in this enemy-construction process.¹ The USA Patriot Act can be applied against domestic political protestors “with no link to international terrorism” (*New York Times* 2003: 20), and gives the government unprecedented powers to monitor citizens. The Act encourages libraries to track who borrows what books, bookstores to track who buys what books, businesses to “hand over electronic records on finances, telephone calls, emails, and other personal data,” and investigators to “subpoena private books, records, papers, documents, and other items” ... all in the name of anti-terrorism (Nieves 2003). None of this snooping on private citizens effectively prevents terrorism; but it does allow monitoring, with threatened punishment, of civil rights groups, anti-war groups, and other “dissident” organizations that do not support a neo-conservative agenda (Cole 2002).

Thousands of non-US citizens have been gathered and held without charges or are held on petty immigration charges and forgotten, according to David Cole (2003). The prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay have languished for years (September 2001 to date) without being charged, without access to legal representation, or without a judicial hearing. Finally, in late June of 2004, the US Supreme Court ruled that detained “enemy combatants” must be allowed to challenge their confinement through the US judicial system (Vicini 2004). In this Supreme Court ruling, it was

decided that terror suspects can use the US judicial system to challenge their confinement; in other words, terror suspects have the right to access to legal counsel.

Citing national security concerns, these rights-restricting policies are facilitated by the muzzling of the news media in the US and elsewhere. The desire of the Bush administration to keep things secret, Dudge (2004) finds, takes precedence over the exchange of information and the dispensing of news. Media suppression of this variety can be compared to similar practices in closed societies like Egypt, Benin, and Uganda.

The construction of enemies and the control of enemies are assisted by another powerful social force: fear.

Fear. Fear is a useful tool to control the masses. In the days since 9/11, the US public is given two messages regarding fear: (a) we should be fearful of terrorist attacks and (b) the Bush administration will protect us against terrorist attacks. These messages are contradictory in a way since, if we were protected, we needn't be afraid.

The Bush administration has striven for a curious blend of fear and reassurance while doing little to protect us and while making the prospects for terrorism much worse. The war-on-terrorism guidelines developed by Attorney General John Ashcroft, and as spelled out in the USA Patriot Act, concentrate heavily on controlling dissidence and are “virtually certain to *deflect* the attention of law enforcement *from stopping terrorist acts* toward policing lawful political activities” (Cole 2002: 23, emphasis added).

Claims-makers commonly use distraction to offset their true intentions and practices. Chemical plants, nuclear plants, and shipping ports remain unprotected from attack (Lipton 2005; *New York Times* 2005), while first responders (police, fire departments, emergency medical services) continue to be greatly underfunded (Krugman 2005). But our attention is drawn away from the absence of security measures to protect the US public and is instead drawn toward the

administration's campaign to revoke social services such as Social Security, housing, government-sponsored medical assistance. While we are focusing on this threat to human services and our retirements, "it's understandable, then, that critiques of the administration's national security policy have faded into the background"(Krugman 2005: 19).

Indeed, a study by the University of Maryland's Center for International and Security Studies shows that, since the war on terror, the US is not safer overall (Elsner 2004). Instead, the US invasion of Iraq has provoked our enemies (primarily al Qaeda) and badly undermined US international legitimacy. Conditions are worse than before the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in terms of security, with unsecured ports and shipping containers, with unsecured nuclear and chemical plants, misallocation of funds, and an absence of governmental coordination to develop clear policy goals (Drees 2004). We continue to have serious lapses in airport bag screening and passenger screening; and this is not due to lack of funds (if the wealthiest one percent and corporations paid their share of taxes) or due to a lack of technology. The technology exists: it is employed at the White House but not at our airports (Crawley 2004). In short, we are in fact less safe now than we were prior to 9/11, despite the restrictions on civil liberties, the war we have waged on Iraq, and the mostly-window-dressing efforts of the Homeland Security office (*New York Times* 2004; Berry 2004b).

Human rights repression, moreover, worsens the security situation. Human Rights Watch has reported that that the Bush administration's "tendency to ignore human rights in fighting terrorism is ... dangerously counterproductive" since it generates terrorist recruits (Associated Press 2003; see also *BBC* 2004). By violating human rights standards, the United States is "undermining its own war on terror" (Doyle 2003), conversely, cooperation among societies and across ideologies would go a long way toward reducing terrorism. A multilateral approach, highly disdained by the Bush administration, is essential to combating terrorism; or, as Heymann (2003) puts it, the more

cooperative relations are disparaged, the greater the actual hostility we will incur. This may be the administration's desired outcome.

Claims-Making and the Enlarged Definition of Terrorists.

Terrorism is not new. It is an old problem that has been reconceptualized since 9/11 as a problem "with a new conceptual lens and sense of urgency" (Jenness and Grattet 2004: 1). As with all claims-making, changing the definition of the problem (terrorism in this case) and implementing the social changes needed to remedy its effects, requires normative consensus (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Zucker 1987). In the immediate throes of 9/11 fear, the public conceded that we should be afraid of terrorism and that retaliation with violence was not an inappropriate response. Normative consensus dissipated, however, with the realization that the presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, linkages between Saddam Hussein and 9/11, and a promised worldwide reduction of terrorism via the US-initiated "war on terror" were all false claims.

Loseke (2003) and Loseke and Best (2003), like Jenness and Grattet, point out that successful claims-making entails demonstrating that a problem exists, is growing, is harmful, and is in need of an official reaction. To support the claim, statistics can be used not only to make the problem seem looming but also to support the claim that official reaction has been effective, at least until those statistics are found to be false and falsely reported. In June 2004, the US offered an official report showing that our "war on terrorism" has reduced terrorist acts, a finding the Bush administration had pointed to as evidence of its success in countering terror. Soon after, the State Department acknowledged that the report was incorrect in stating that terrorism declined worldwide in 2003; instead, "the number of incidents and the toll in victims increased sharply" (*New York Times* 2004: 8). The inaccuracy apparently stemmed from a "squishy definition" of terrorist acts, and was corrected when a "less squishy" definition of terrorism was applied (Krugman 2004b:

25).² The facts are coming home to us that the USA Patriot Act (described above), the preemptive war on Iraq, and preventive detention of legally-innocent citizens here and abroad have not reduced terrorism but rather have (in the latter two cases) increased recruitment of terrorists.

Specific claims-makers in the Bush administration have included the President himself, the Vice-President (both notorious for claiming that Saddam Hussein is responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attacks and that Iraq was harboring WMD), former Secretary of State Colin Powell (who claimed to the United Nations Security Council, prior to the US invasion of Iraq, that Iraq was harboring WMD), former Attorney General John Ashcroft (who claimed the necessity of detaining large numbers of people without due process and without any indication that they are indeed involved in terrorism), and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (who has claimed that Iraqis, Afghans, and US citizens detained in prison are known to be “enemy combatants” when there is no evidence that they are). The claims-makers in the White House are not all cut from the same cloth, however. For instance, Colin Powell, although he originally aided in the creation of the need to invade Iraq in his statements to the United Nations Security Council, had warned the Bush administration against invading Iraq and has since admitted to giving false information to the Security Council. He has admitted that the information he used was faulty and that the invasion was and is a mistake. Neo-conservatives of a more loyal stripe, such as Paul Wolfowitz, Condoleezza Rice, Richard Perle, and others, share (or seem to share) a staunch if misguided belief that the US can and ought to impose its policies on other societies, particularly societies in the Middle East.

Curiously, when the claims by these claims-makers are found to be unsupported, a common response is greater vehemence. When the 9/11 Commission discovered no links between Saddam Hussein and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, for example, the President and Vice President repeatedly insisted that such links do exist. Never mind that the 9/11 Commission’s report proved otherwise. The bipartisan 9/11 Commission Report found, among other things, we were indeed forewarned

about 9/11, that we did nothing to prevent it, and that (more hazardously) we remain woefully unprepared to prevent another attack.

The appeal to emotions, notably hate and revenge, in contrast to logic, is a major part of social construction and claims-making: “Claims encouraging audience members to *feel* in particular ways are less likely to be challenged” than appeals to *think* in particular ways (Loseke 2003: 76, emphasis added). Highly relevant to the Bush administration’s “war on terrorism,” claims-making stories can be characterized not only by inflated expression and strong emotionalism, but also by “heroic confrontation between good and evil, and the need to choose sides” (Loseke, p. 91). Relevant to the Bush administration generally, claims-making stories are rife with simplicity: In the process of claims-making, “much has been swept under the carpet” with successful claims being “effective precisely because they deny the complexity of the real world” (Loseke 2003:93). As illustrated throughout this analysis, this is exactly what happened in the wake of 9/11, and directly applies to the administration’s post-9/11 strategy.

The New “Terrorists.” The expanded numbers of US citizens labeled “terrorist” are hardly alone among the newly-enveloped. Since 9/11, broad nets are cast over Iraqis, Afghans, and other Middle Easterners as wholesale “terrorists,” and they have been murdered, wounded, deprived of property, incarcerated with no due process, and tortured. Occupying forces in Iraq and Afghanistan have targeted entire populations as “terrorists,” “insurgents,” and “enemy combatants” when, in fact, they are mainly ordinary people going about their ordinary, everyday tasks —people at wedding parties, people in search of food, people looking for work. It is estimated that the US invasion of Iraq has resulted in over 100,000 Iraqis deaths, mostly of civilians and not “enemies.”

The mislabeling and mistreatment of these probably-citizens-called-terrorists is far more tragic than that occurring against others of us so labeled and treated. However, among those falling in the newly-defined category of terrorists are social, environmental, economic, educational, military,

biological, and medical scientists now construed as dangerous enemies of the right. Scientists are not the targeted enemy of conservatives on the whole, but are targeted by the far-right faction of the Bush administration. This distrust of scientists and sciences has very much to do with claims-making since the best scientific evidence may be contrary to those put forward by the claims-makers. The very *empiricism* of science — versus “spin,” emotion, undocumented and undocumentable beliefs, and violent speech— is threatening to anti-intellectuals because scientists can (and must) offer cogent arguments for conclusions differing from those of anti-scientists. Thus, intellectuals are among those targeted for dismissal, disdain, and silence.³ The current presidential administration dismisses and, worse, punishes with funding cuts sciences of all stripes if these sciences provide empirically-founded information contrary to that which the administration wants (Broad 2004).

Educators and social activists have been labeled terrorists when they are in active political disagreement with the White House. Education professionals have been directly and dramatically named “terrorists,” as evidenced by Rod Paige’s comments about teachers. Mr. Paige, former Education Secretary and appointee of the Bush administration, widened the net of terrorists to include the National Education Association, a large teachers’ labor union, when he said that the union was like “a terrorist organization” because it resisted some of the provisions of Mr. Bush’s “school improvement law” as pushed through Congress at the behest of the Bush administration in 2001 (Pear 2004: 20). On another favorite topic of the Bush administration (women’s choice) and in keeping with Rod Paige’s labeling of dissenters as terrorists, Karen Hughes, a presidential advisor to George Bush, likened abortion-rights advocates to a “terror network” (Zabarenko 2004).

Non-terrorist grassroots organizations also defined as terrorists by right-wing power holders include environmental and animal rights groups (Barcott 2002), human rights groups (Associated Press 2003), and all manner of political activist groups (Cole 2002; 2003). Deeply opposed to environmental and wildlife protection, the Bush administration attempts to control

environmentalists through terrorist labeling (for example, “eco-terrorists”) and through criminal charges of terrorism. Some environmental and animal rights organizations (such as Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front) do engage in crime, usually trespassing and sometimes destruction of property, to accomplish their goals. But to define their activities as “terrorism” is misleading in its exaggeration. Likewise, human rights groups, whose goals and activities are clearly anti-war as well as anti-terrorist, have been compared to terrorists by the Bush administration. US citizens who served as human shields to Iraqi civilians, for instance, are subject to criminal conviction upon returning to the US. People who expose themselves to anti-war-on-terrorism materials are punished, as happened when a college student was harassed by law enforcement after having watched a documentary film critical of the USA Patriot Act (Sisario 2004).

Even anticipated disagreement is verboten. Imse (2005) has reported that people who are *presumed* to be unsupportive of the President’s agendas are turned away or physically removed from the President’s audiences. In the 2004 presidential campaign, prospective audience members were forced to sign a loyalty oath for admittance. This is clearly an administration that wants no questions or alternative claims to be made. In general, today, mainstream political activists, engaging in democratically- and Constitutionally-guaranteed activities like protest, are subject to FBI investigation, governmental intervention, and criminal punishment (Cole 2002).

Summary and Conclusion

Stern (2003) defines terrorism as “an act or threat of violence against noncombatants with the objective of exacting revenge, intimidation, or otherwise influencing an audience” (p. xx). She goes on to explain that “terrorists use violence for dramatic purpose: instilling fear in the target audience is often more important than the physical result. [Terrorism involves a] deliberate creation of dread” (p. xx).

So terrorism speaks to instilling a sense of fear and dread. By these lights, the war on terrorism as presented by the current White House is a form of terrorism. It is becoming clearer that the objectives of the Bush administration's war on terrorism are not security, either for US or other (notably Iraqi) populations. Rather, the objectives seem to be maintenance of public fear by repeated warnings of attack and to actually increase the likelihood of terrorism — in short, to terrorize.

I am not the first or the only person to reach this conclusion. John Le Carre (2003) unflinchingly refers to the US preemptive strike on Iraq as an act of terrorism. The American public was not only misled, he says, but has been “browbeaten and kept in a state of ignorance and fear.” Bronner (2004) compares al Qaeda to the Bush administration and finds that both infringe on our freedoms, create enemies, and endanger us. Kellner (2003) goes further to liken the Bush administration to terrorists, combining the administration with the Taliban, Osama bin Laden, and al Qaeda as “reactionary forces” (p. 22). The “Bush administration reactionaries and al Qaeda,” writes Kellner, “could be perceived as representing complementary poles of a reactionary right-wing conservatism and militarism” (p. 22). He finds that the Bush policy, as put forward in The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, “portends a militarist future and an era of perpetual war in which a new militarism could generate a cycle of unending violence and retribution” (p. 21).

Under this scenario, the US public would be the target of constant terrorism, either by the administration directly or by administration-generated external terrorism. By increasing the probability of terrorist attacks, the Bush administration *ensures* terrorism via external forces such as al Qaeda. This scenario begs the question of why the Bush administration would encourage terrorism. The benefits they would derive from additional terrorist attacks include: war profiteering (including Halliburton, a financial concern of the Vice President), distraction from domestic problems

(environmental damage, further removal of health insurance and retirement, the absence of jobs, the destruction of human rights, the erosion of the US Constitution, etc.), and the squelching of disagreement (Berry 2004a; 2004b). Thus is explained the administration's reluctance to impart effective prevention and control strategies to combat terrorism.

This analysis has described a process of net-widening that has included non-terrorists under a re-defined category of "terrorists" in the Bush administration's "war on terror." These new "terrorists" are subject to enemy labeling, monitoring, and punishment, not because they are terrorists by any measure, but because they have "enemy" traits; they are Iraqi and Afghani civilians, they are foreign-born and living in the US, or they oppose the administration's policies. "Insurgents" are those killed and imprisoned in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay when, in fact, it is entirely unknown if they really are enemy insurgents. US citizens are suspect by virtue of dissenting. Those of us who are not with the president are against him, worse, we are *the enemy* and potential targets of the war on terrorism.

As Howard Becker (1963) would have it, the re-defined "terrorists" became so because of official treatment. Becker is famous for saying that if a situation is defined as real, it is real in its consequences. Along with this proposition, he emphasized the relativity of deviance and specified that social groups create the rules whose violations constitute rule-breaking. The claims-making Bush administration has re-defined the rules such that we now live in a falsely-constructed world of "terrorism." Boundaries of acceptable behavior are always fluid, sometimes enlarging to include more and different kinds of people, as Kai Erickson (1966) pointed out in his treatise on early American witchhunts. Presently, we have a situation in which many more of us are potential "terrorists" than is usually considered to be the case.

The terrorist events that we experienced on 9/11 relocated boundaries, with the 9/11 attacks setting into motion reactions to terrorism, real and defined-as-real. Ordinarily, Erickson would

argue, in such boundary-fluctuating circumstances, the community (society) will pull together and cohere: societies usually react to puzzling events by reaffirming threatened boundaries, restoring solidarity, and clarifying social norms. The Bush administration did not respond in a socially functional manner, in a way that would effectively deal with terrorism, but instead used the opportunity to impose false designations and unwarranted punishments on legally innocent people in the US and abroad. Social cohesion in the US and between the US and other societies has been riven, leaving us all more vulnerable. Yet, true to Erickson's predictions, the US public has finally (in 2005) begun to question the Bush administration's war-on-terror strategies.

As public distaste has built over the failed war on terror, defined terrorism reality is becoming more influenced by the public than by the "moral" entrepreneurs. There is some evidence of local defiance, largely in the form of grassroots movements, to false enemy construction. Members of the public are increasingly derisive of the over-application of "terrorism" as a scare tactic to keep the public compliant, for example, when the term "terrorist" is applied to animal rights activists who release animals from fur farms (Berry 2004c). The public is growing reluctant to apply the "terrorist" label to progressive activists, and a number of US cities have passed ordinances outlawing voluntary compliance with the Patriot Act (Nieves 2003). Importantly, recent opinion polls show that the majority of the US public believe that the war in Iraq is not a good idea, that we should exit the war, that we were misled into the war, and that we are not safer than we were before the "war on terror."

In short, the US public is showing signs of being less distracted by the "war on terror" and more willing to reinstate democratic processes. The J-curve theory of revolution suggests that social movement activity is more likely to occur when progress, as we saw in the 1970s through 2000 on various movements, is suddenly threatened. When hopes of movement forward are dashed, when the movement suffers a political reversal, social movement activity may become more radical

(Barcott 2002; Garner 1996; Davies 1962). When bad things happen — when civil liberties are repressed, when one society invades and destroys another society, when hard-gained freedoms (for education, choice, equal opportunity, and so on) are endangered —we might expect a backlash by the proponents of democracy, equal rights, and freedom to protest. As Goldstone and Tilly point out in their discussion of threats to social movement activity, social movement organizations may “decide to risk protest, even if opportunities seem absent, if the costs of not acting seem too great” (2001: 183). In addition to the polls showing a marked change in US attitudes about the “war on terror,” we find a rebellion by the Democratic and Republican political parties against the “war” and its policies. It seems that the US society, after wallowing in the fear and confusion during the bottom (U-shaped) part of the “J”, in which we were subject to much personal invasion and trepidation about being labeled as “terrorists,” has begun the upslope of the “J” toward our former, more democratic society. The administration’s policies have been questioned and a societal rejection of those policies (a correction) has been initiated. This movement toward democracy is aided by the diversity of social movement groups that are participating in the questioning of the “war on terror,” groups as diverse as military families against the war, Vietnam veterans against the war, university students, human rights groups, and others.

True, the costs of protest are significant, particularly now when progressive activists are labeled “terrorists.” Yet, as Goldstone and Tilly advise us, the dangers of engaging in activism may predictably take a backseat to the damage from inaction and the further decay of rights. In other words, progressive activism can be predicted especially under the social conditions that we are presently experiencing.

End Notes

1. See Todd Gitlin (2003) for a detailed treatise on how the neo-conservatives in the Bush White House have attempted to utilize the “war on terror” as an empire-building tool. Essentially, the

removal of rights coupled with the repression of the masses (for example, the people's voice), aids greatly in locating power at the top. The USA Patriot Act, enacted under fear and false claims-making after 9/11, has gone a long way toward empire creation.

2. The terms “squishy” and “less squishy” were used by Alan Krueger (a Princeton economist) and David Laitin (a Stanford political scientist) to describe invalid, unrigorous measures of terrorism (Krugman 2004b)

3. Sociologists in particular have been, since the 20th century, engulfed in the enemy category by the hard right. This is hardly surprising since, in addition to being scientists, sociologists are ordinarily humanist, relativist, liberal, tolerance-embracing, and peace-oriented (Aho 1994; Coates 1995; Berry 1999).

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