

Towards a Theory of Fear Management in the Counterterrorism Domain: A Stocktaking Approach

**Prof. Dr. Edwin Bakker and
Prof. Dr. Beatrice de Graaf**

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Since 9/11, the state of the art in counter-terrorism (CT) research, CT measures and CT impacts has taken off. Nevertheless, countering terrorism as a branch of fear management is still a discipline to be developed. In this ICCT Research Paper, authors Prof. Dr. Edwin Bakker and Prof. Dr. Beatrice de Graaf attempt to lessen this gap. The Paper identifies and analyses governmental approaches to managing fear in relation to terrorist incidents. It is a stocktaking approach, offering a preliminary oversight of some central aspects and pointers on the way forward when constructing and testing such a theory.

About the Authors

Prof. Dr. Edwin Bakker is Professor of (Counter-)Terrorism Studies at Leiden University, Director of the Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism (CTC) of that same university, and Fellow at ICCT. He studied Economic Geography (Netherlands) and Political Geography (Netherlands and Germany). In 1997, he defended his PhD thesis on minority conflicts in Slovakia and Hungary. He taught classes in international policies on preventing and managing separatism and intra-state war in the Balkans at the Centre for International Conflict Analysis and Management (CICAM), Nijmegen University. Between 2003 and 2010 he was a fellow at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' where he headed the Clingendael Security and Conflict Programme (since 2007). His research interests at Leiden University and the ICCT are, amongst others, radicalisation processes, jihadi terrorism, unconventional threats to security and crisis impact management.

Prof. Dr. Beatrice de Graaf is Professor of Conflict and Security in Historical Perspective at the Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism (CTC) of Campus The Hague - Leiden University, and a Research Fellow at the International Centre for Counter Terrorism – The Hague. She is a member of the editorial board of Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Perspectives on Terrorism, Journal of European Intelligence Studies; and the Zeitschrift für Auswärtige und Sicherheitspolitik. De Graaf initiated a research theme group on the topic of 'Terrorism Trials', which deals with the wider social and political causes and consequences of terrorism trials in the West

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Contact

ICCT – The Hague
Koningin Julianaplein 10
P.O. Box 13228
2501 EE, The Hague
The Netherlands

T +31 (0)70 800 9531

E info@icct.nl

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1. Introduction

Since 9/11, the state of the art in counter-terrorism (CT) research, CT measures and CT impacts has taken off. Nevertheless, countering terrorism as a branch of fear management is still a discipline to be developed. Responsible crisis communication prior, during and after terrorist attacks and strengthening public resilience against terrorism are among the fifty un- and under researched topics in the field of (counter-) terrorism studies, as identified by Alex Schmid.¹

This paper is an attempt to lessen this gap. It identifies and analyses governmental approaches to managing fear in relation to terrorist incidents. It is a stocktaking approach, as it does not develop a fully-fledged theory here, offering a preliminary oversight of some central aspects and pointers on the way forward constructing and testing such a theory.

The definition of management is “the process of dealing with or controlling things or people”.² In relation to business/staff management it can be understood as a manipulation of human capital (or staff) of a business to contribute to the success of that business. The latter has a helpful application with regard to CT. “Success”, in this domain, could be divided into four distinct stages: successful preparation, prevention, response and recovery – pertaining to the physical (infrastructural, personal), social, economic and socio-psychological environment. “Fear management” implies a form of manipulation of the human capital in society. It could contribute to the success of CT efforts during all four stages, mainly pertaining to the social and socio-psychological environment, but within the frame of, and conditioned by the state of, CT efforts in the physical and economic domain.

The conceptual difficulty with managing fear is the diffuse and vast meaning of the term. Fear points to an individual, psychological state of mind, to a socio-cultural sentiment in society, to political claims and rhetoric, and to neuro-biologically induced behaviour.³ This makes it almost impossible to estimate or claim success. Is fear management successful if the majority of society does not feel afraid anymore? Is eliminating fear in society the end goal? Fear in itself is an evolutionary tool to deal with imminent threat and danger, and therefore not a bad thing as such. The “fight or flight” impulse, induced by fear, helps us to survive.⁴ Hence, rather than trying to develop a general theory of fear management, we would argue to restrict the concept here. We define it as *the efforts, undertaken by governmental institutions, prior, during and after situations of emergency and recovery, relating to a terrorist threat or attack, to manipulate the human capital in society in order to improve the positive, collective coping mechanisms of that society.*

As a working definition, we understand fear as *a sentiment of anxiety caused by the perception or presence of danger.* We will focus mainly on the collective sentiments of fear in society, and conceptually tie them to the analytical category of coping mechanisms, as developed in psychological and social scientist research.

This study first of all looks into the essence and mechanisms of spreading fear: when and how do people become frightened? It also focuses on common coping mechanisms in dealing with (the threat of) terrorism and terrorist attacks. We will see how coping mechanisms individually and collectively affect citizens. Next, the authors will discuss some existing handbooks and strategies that have been adopted to mitigate the terrorist scare and to build resilience within society. These documents are based on experiences in terrorism-related incidents in the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and the Netherlands. Some of the key findings and main recommendations regarding the improvement of fear management will be presented. Subsequently, we will try to arrive at a (incipient) theory of governmental fear management in the CT domain.

¹ A. Schmid, “50 Un- and Under-researched Topics in the Field of (Counter-) Terrorism Studies”. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 1 (2011), pp.76-78, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/schmid-under-researched-topics/html>.

² Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/management>.

³ We are not providing a full oversight on “fear literature” here. For our purposes, we deal with fear from a political, and social scientist perspective. See for example C. Robin, *Fear. The History of a Political Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴ See W. Cannon, *Wisdom of the Body* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1960).

This paper builds upon the ICCT Expert Meeting ‘Freedom from Fear: Answering Terrorism with Public Resilience’ and the corresponding paper authored by ICCT Fellows Edwin Bakker and Tinka Veldhuis.⁵ It also draws from the research project by Beatrice de Graaf into the “performative power” of CT activities.⁶

2. The essence of terrorism: Fear

What is terrorism and what is the essence of this phenomenon? Even after more than fifty years of research into terrorism, there is no generally accepted answer to this question. Nonetheless, many scholars, as well as practitioners, would probably agree that terrorism is an instrument that – by way of threats and attacks – aims to create fear and anxiety and wants to intimidate people in order to achieve certain political goals. Most definitions of terrorism include direct and indirect goals that relate to the spread of fear. Already in 1988, Alex Schmid and Berto Jongman constructed an academic consensus definition based on over one hundred descriptions by experts. This definition contains 22 core elements of which the first words are as follows: “Terrorism is an anxiety-inspired method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons”.⁷

This key element of any form of terrorist activity – the spreading of fear – also features in official definitions adopted by governmental organisations. The EU, for instance, defines terrorism in Article 1 of its *Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism* (2002) by looking at the nature of the act. It stipulates that terrorist offences are against persons and property that “given their nature or context, may seriously damage a country or an international organisation where committed with the aim of: seriously intimidating a population; or unduly compelling a Government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act; or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation”.⁸

Both the mentioned academic and governmental definitions thus identify the phenomenon of terrorism with respect to the creation and dissemination of fear, anxiety and intimidation of a government or population. These definitions echo the insight of Brian Jenkins, who argued in 1975 that “[t]errorism is theatre” – “Terrorists like to see a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead”.⁹ This maxim still rings true today. Peter Waldmann added to these observations that most terrorists explicitly want this theatre of fear, since they are bent on provoking state power.¹⁰ In other words, terrorism aims to provoke reactions to certain threats and attacks by third parties: the general public, politicians, opposing groups or the media.

This leads us to the premise of this paper: the level of fear does not merely depend on the terrorists and the size and shape of their use of violence. The impact of any terrorist activity is the product of the perception, imagination and vulnerability of targeted audiences or otherwise involved parties.

As has already been stated, fear should not be considered merely as a negative reaction to threats and attacks. In fact, fear of danger is a very natural and useful emotion. Fear is a survival mechanism. Fear of terrorism can encourage people to take the necessary precautions and actions. But if this fear of terrorism is not proportionate to the actual threat, it can have many unnecessary and unwanted consequences. As described by Bakker and Veldhuis, “fear of terrorism causes a shift towards dogmatic reasoning which is characterised by ‘us

⁵ E. Bakker and T. Veldhuis, “A Fear Management Approach To Counter-Terrorism”, *ICCT Discussion Paper*, (The Hague: February 2012).

⁶ B. de Graaf, *Evaluating Counterterrorist Performance: A Comparative Study* (London/New York: Routledge, 2011).

⁷ A. P. Schmid, A. J. Jongman et al., *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988), pp. 5-6.

⁸ Council of the European Union, “Council Framework Decision of 13 June 2002 on Combating Terrorism”, 2002/475/JHA. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:2002F0475:20081209:EN:PDF>

⁹ B. M. Jenkins, *International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict*. in: D. Carlton and C. Schaerf (eds.), *International Terrorism and World Security* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), p. 16.

¹⁰ Cf. P. Waldmann, *Terrorismus: Provokation der Macht* (Hamburg: Murmann Verlag, 2005).

versus them' thinking, stereotyping, discrimination and a lack of nuance that contributes to harsh, system-defending reactions that might do more harm than they do good".¹¹ Nacos and Torres-Reyna demonstrated that the news media's portrayal of Muslims and their religion grew more negative, unfair and stereotypical two years after 9/11 (following a remarkable short-lived increase in more thematic and reflective reporting during the immediate post 9/11 months).¹² Terrorist attacks thus do not only contribute to fear in society at the time of the incident, they also – via the media – succeed in changing public attitudes for a longer period of time.¹³

A principal consequence of a prevailing fear of terrorism is that it can make society more vulnerable to emotional, political and administrative overreactions. For instance, it often leads to a preference for action-oriented leaders with simple and sensational explanations for terrorism and calls for immediate action. Among many similar examples, the Ethiopian Anti-Terrorism Proclamation of 2009 (Nr. 652/2009) seems to be a point in case.¹⁴ Under this legislation, an exceptionally broad definition of terrorism allowed the government to crack down heavily on all kinds of political dissent and opposition.¹⁵ Such developments could lead to increased tensions within society, a rise in polarisation and radicalisation and hence a higher risk of violent confrontations between different groups or fractions – such as broke out in Ethiopia, after severe counterinsurgency campaigns against Ogaden rebels. In other words, fear of terrorism can lead to radicalisation on both sides, and even towards more terrorism.¹⁶

This last remark ties in with Ulrich Beck's concept of the risk society.¹⁷ Many authors have studied the way and extent to which western societies have become more psychologically vulnerable to accidents, disasters or violent incidents – including terrorism.¹⁸ A number of terrorism scholars have argued that terrorists play into these vulnerabilities by way of (threatening with) spectacular attacks.¹⁹

In referring to the situation in the US and UK, sociologist Frank Furedi makes the claim that western societies are nowadays paralysed by a "culture of fear" and are caught in a so called "vulnerability paradigm".²⁰ He emphasises the importance of the manner in which societies handle terrorism. Furedi also underwrites the notion that terrorism does not only point to the attack itself but is equally defined by the way a society responds to it. According to Furedi, "societies that understand who they are [...and...] that have a sense of solidarity [...] usually handle an act of terror much better than societies where things are confusing, where there is no story about who they are".²¹

¹¹ E. Bakker and T. Veldhuis, "A Fear Management Approach To Counter-Terrorism" (2012), p. 4.

¹² B. L. Nacos and O. Torres-Reyna, *Fuelling Our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), p. 101.

¹³ G. Weimann, "The Theatre of Terror: Effects of Press Coverage", in *Journal of Communication* no. 1, vol. 33 (Winter 1983), pp. 38-45.

¹⁴ Anti-Terrorism Proclamation Nr. 652/2009, August 2009 <http://www.mfa.gov.et/docs/Anti-Terrorism%20Proclamation.pdf>.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, Ethiopia's Draft Anti-Terrorism Law, 30 June 2009. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/06/30/analysis-ethiopia-s-draft-anti-terrorism-law>.

¹⁶ E. Bakker, "Naar meer weerbaarheid en veerkracht in contraterrorismebeleid", Leiden: oratie, p. 6.

¹⁷ U. Beck, *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1986); Idem, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999); Idem, "The Terrorist Threat: World Risk Society Revisited" in *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, no. 4(2002), pp. 39-55; B. Adam, U. Beck and J. van Loon (eds.) *The Risk Society and Beyond: Critical Issues for Social Theory* (London: Sage, 2000); G. Mythen and S. Walklate (eds.), *Beyond the Risk Society* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2006).

¹⁸ B. de Graaf, "Het temmen van de toekomst. Van een veiligheids- naar een risicocultuur", *Tijdschrift over Cultuur & Criminaliteit* 3, no.2 (2013), pp.155-172; M. Valverde and M. Mopas, "Insecurity and the Dream of Targeted Governance", in W. Larner and W. Walters (eds.), *Global Governmentality: Governing International Spaces* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 232-250; A. Klinke and O. Renn, "A new approach to risk evaluation and management: Risk-based, precaution-based, and discourse-based strategies", *Risk Analysis* 22, no. 6 (2002), pp. 1071-1094; O. Renn, *Risk Governance: Coping with Uncertainty in a Complex World* (London: Earthscan, 2008); M.B.A. van Asselt and L. van Bree, L. "Uncertainty, precaution and risk governance" (eds.), *Journal of Risk Research* 14, no. 4 (2006) , pp. 401-408; L. Amoore and M. de Goede "Introduction: governing by risk in the War on Terror" In L. Amoore & M. de Goede (Eds.), *Risk and the war on terror* (London: Routledge; M. Schuilenburg, 2008) pp. 5-19., "De securisering van de samenleving: Over de relatie tussen veiligheidszorg, bestuur en quasistrafrecht" in *Krisis* 3 (2009), pp. 6-22.

¹⁹ D. D. Porta, *Social movements, political violence and the state* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); P. Waldmann, *Terrorismus, ein Provokation der Macht* (Hamburg: Murmann, 2005).

²⁰ F. Furedi, *Invitation to Terror: The Expanding Empire of the Unknown* (London/ New York: Continuum Press, 2007).

²¹ F. Furedi, "Invitation to terror: Lone wolves and the culture of fear", lecture at Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, sound recording, <http://studium.hosting.rug.nl/en/Archief/Jaar-2012/Series-jaar-2012/Invitation-to-Terror.html>.

With this assumption, Furedi points to the underlying message that is implied in common reactions to terrorism: that terrorism is an almost apocalyptic threat that is hardly possible to counter. This underlying message conforms to a so called cultural script – “a powerful new technique for articulating cultural norms, values, and practices in terms which are clear, precise, and accessible to cultural insiders and to cultural outsiders alike”.²² In western societies, according to Furedi, contemporary cultural script presents terrorism as a looming threat, similar to natural catastrophes. The consequence of this presentation is highly ambivalent and paradoxical. On the one hand, this fatalistic attitude spreads a sense of powerlessness; on the other, it suggests that only massive displays of force and a gigantic input of resources can perhaps roll back the purported apocalyptic threat. In the end, this only gives the terrorists what they were after in the first place. For Furedi, the West is thus offering the terrorists an “invitation to terror”.²³ Since the western culture appears to feed off a diet of terror, it inadvertently offers its enemies an invitation to terrorise.²⁴ Although Furedi has sparked of heated debates and has received much criticisms for his cultural pessimism, there is some merit in this two pronged analysis of the consequences of this cultural fear – the combination of fatalism and overreaction. In the years after 9/11, when the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) obscured and confounded any exact analysis of the threat that countries faced, it was hard to counter overriding fears and threat descriptions with thorough analysis of the purported efficiency of all the announced antiterrorism programs.²⁵ However, since GWOT has given way to other, more sophisticated CT approaches, it is time to identify and assess these policies and programs that rather than feeding fears in society, try to contribute to a mitigation of fear and anxiety.²⁶ In particular those, directed at augmenting the so-called “resilience” in society.

3. Resilience

In recent times, one of the most prominent concepts that has been put forward in the debate on the impact of terrorism on politics and society is ‘resilience’. The concept of resilience has its roots in civil engineering, psychology and ecology. In short, it indicates *the capacity of materials, persons or biotopes to resist sudden changes or stress, as well as the capacity to recover and return to the situation as before*. From the perspective of CT policymaking, resistance and resilience may be important capacities to deal with the negative impact of (fear of) terrorism by individuals and societies as a whole. A resilient society is able to (more efficiently) cope with and to recover from a terrorist attack. Terrorists who attack a resilient society will find it more difficult to have an impact and achieve their goals. In a way, the idea behind resilient societies can be regarded as the antithesis of the vulnerability paradigm as defined by Furedi and laid down above.

Research into the importance and possible role of resilience in relation to (counter-) terrorism has been limited. Of the few studies that have been conducted, most look at the impact of terrorism on public opinion and the role of the media and crisis communication. A good example of this is the “Domestic Management of Terrorist Attacks Project” by Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman of King’s College London and the outcome of the related 2003 conference “Communicating the War on Terror”. This project aimed to formulate a number of recommendations for risk and crisis communication in relation to terrorism.

²² Cf. C. Goddard and A. Wierzbicka, “Cultural scripts: What are they and what are they good for?” In *Intercultural Pragmatics* 1-2 (2004), pp. 153–166.

²³ F. Furedi, *Invitation to Terror*, (2007), p. 25.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10. It should be noted that the term “Global War on Terror” has not been used officially since March 2009. “‘Global War on Terror’ is given new name”. The Washington Post, (25 March 2009)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/24/AR2009032402818.html>.

²⁶ Cf. B. de Graaf and B. de Graaff, “Bringing Politics Back In: The Introduction of ‘The Performative Power’ of Counter-Terrorism”, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3, no. 2 (August 2010), pp. 263–277; J. Mueller, *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

If we take the abovementioned definition of successful fear management – efforts undertaken by governmental institutions prior, during, and after situations of emergency and recovery regarding a terrorist threat/attack, to manipulate the human capital in society in order to improve the positive, collective coping mechanisms of that society – we might then conclude that improving resilience is one of the foremost tasks of governmental crisis and fear policies. As pointed out, resilience within society is more a psychological than a physical phenomenon. This concept thus connects to the notion of psychological coping mechanisms that need to be improved in order to enhance resilience.

4. Fear management: coping mechanisms

Terrorist attacks, and even terrorist threats, can be considered traumatic events. Such events are defined in the “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV” (DSM) as an event in which the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others. Consequently, the person’s response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror, whereas with children, this may be expressed instead by disorganised or agitated behaviour.²⁷ In a recent ICCT paper,²⁸ De Graaf et al. showed that the Breivik attacks caused a self-reported trauma, the psychological consequences of a traumatic event, in 24% of the 246 people surveyed in the streets of Oslo just before and after the court’s final verdict on 24 August 2012 (13 months after the attacks). This percentage hovers around the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) one month after a traumatic event, which ranges from 23% among survivors of the Oklahoma City bombing²⁹ to 29% among survivors of the 1991 mass-shooting episode in Killeen, Texas.³⁰ This data suggests that geographical or otherwise perceived proximity to the attacks had a significant influence on traumatisation in the survey. This relationship was also found in other studies on traumatic incidents, for instance in the high prevalence of PTSD among people involved in recovery, rescue and cleaning efforts. For example, 22.5% and 20% of disaster workers were found to suffer from PTSD at two weeks and 10-15 months respectively, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US.³¹ In the Breivik case, other predictors of higher stress responses concerned a non-Nordic ethnic background, a higher age and female gender.³²

Overall, the majority of people generally show great resilience to the impact of a traumatic event, as the above percentages demonstrate. The extent to which people are able to cope with the upsetting experience can explain why some people fare better than others when they are confronted with a traumatic event. Coping can be defined as *thoughts and behaviours that people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful*. As coping responses are initiated in an emotional environment, often one of the first coping tasks is to down-regulate negative emotions that are stressful and that may be interfering with adequate ways of coping.³³

²⁷ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed. (Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994), p. 256.

²⁸ B.A. Graaf de, E.J. van der Heide, S. Wanmakers and D.J. Weggemans, *The Anders Behring Breivik Trial: Performing Justice, Defending Democracy*, ICCT Research Paper (ICCT: The Hague, 2013), pp. 1-22.

²⁹ C.S. North, L. Tivis, J.C. McMillen, B. Pfefferbaum, E.L. Spitznagel, J. Cox, S. Nixon, K.P. Bunch, E.M. Smith, “Psychiatric disorders in rescue workers after the Oklahoma City bombing”, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, no. 159 (2002), pp. 857-859.

³⁰ C.S. North, E.M. Smith & E.L. Spitznagel, “Posttraumatic stress disorder in survivors of a mass shooting”, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, no. 151 (1994), pp. 82-8.

³¹ C.S. Fullerton, R.J. Ursano, J. Reeves, J. Shigemura & T. Grieger, “Perceived safety in disaster workers following 9/11”, *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, no. 161 (2006), pp. 61-3; and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Mental health status of World Trade Center rescue and recovery workers and volunteers July 2002-August 2004”, *MMWR Weekly* 53, no. 35. (2004), <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5335a2.htm>.

³² S. Thoresen et al. “The day Norway cried: Proximity and distress in Norwegian citizens following the 22nd July 2011 terrorist attacks in Oslo and on Utøya Island”, *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, no. 3. (2012).

³³ S. Folkman & J.T. Moskowitz, “Coping: Pitfalls and promise”, *Annual Review of Psychology*, no. 55 (2004), pp. 745-74.

Few studies have focused on coping mechanisms after terrorism attacks so far. To our knowledge, the ICCT paper on the Breivik-trial is the first study specifically looking at the influence of a trial on coping. It became clear in this paper, as it did in related studies such as the one by Schuster et al.,³⁴ that positive coping mechanisms were reinforced by instances of “pulling together”, either through religious gatherings, commemorations, demonstrations or talking and exchanging sentiments and worries with other people.

This ties in with the findings of Fullerton et al.³⁵ Contrary to common perception, trauma has the potential to bring out the best character strengths in some people. Examples include gratitude, hope, kindness, leadership, love, spirituality, and teamwork. This reaction held true both immediately following the 9/11 attacks and 10 months later.

However, the Fullerton et al. study demonstrated that negative coping mechanisms also prevail. People who are anxious about potential future attacks are more likely to change their behaviour. According to Fullerton, people who have become more anxious exhibited behavioural changes such as evading of crowds, avoidance of flying, and increased watching of programmes related to world politics in general (the latter effect might even be considered positive). But most importantly, on a personal security level, people who had become more anxious and depressed were more likely to increase their consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana. Negative coping mechanisms were also identified amongst first line responders during the 9/11 attacks. Mental health professionals, social workers, and medical professionals assisting victims of the attacks and disaster workers at Ground Zero experienced increased levels of emotional exhaustion, anxiety, depression, and psychological distress.³⁶

The question thus is whether and how governmental agencies in times of crises, attacks or imminent threats, can manage fear by neutralising negative, and improving positive, coping mechanisms.

5. Fear management: a discussion

Before answering the above question, some limitations relating to the idea of governmental management of fear need to be stressed. First of all, coping mechanisms are individual mechanisms, mainly operating through personal psychological functions. There are different gender responses to terrorist attacks. Women report more psychological distress, but at the same time develop also more positive coping mechanisms than men. Second, people may first seek support from family and friends rather than health professionals or other governmental employees.³⁷ Both immediately and in the months following the 9/11 attacks, a majority of the people reported that they did not seek help from counselling services but rather found support by talking to family and friends – a finding that matches the above insights in the way positive coping mechanisms work.³⁸

However, even given this rather private and personal dimension of coping with terrorism, Schmid has also argued that the degree to which an individual or group is affected by fear of terrorism depends on a number of other, more “objective” factors:

³⁴ M.A. Schuster, B.D. Stein, L.H. Jaycox, et al., “A national survey of stress reactions after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks”, *New England Journal of Medicine*, no. 20 (2001), pp. 1507-12.

³⁵ C.S. Fullerton, R.J. Ursano, J. Reeves, J. Shigemura and T. Grieger, “Perceived safety in disaster workers following 9/11”, *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, no. 161 (2006), pp. 61-3.

³⁶ S. Maguen, Anthony Papa & Brett T. Litz, “Coping with the threat of terrorism: A Review”, *Anxiety, Stress & Coping: An International Journal* 21, no. 1 (2008), pp. 15-35.

³⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Mental health status of World Trade Center rescue and recovery workers and volunteers July 2002-August 2004.”, *MMWR Weekly* 53, no. 35 (10 September 2004), <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5335a2.htm>.

³⁸ M.A Schuster et al. “A national survey of stress reactions after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks”, (2001), pp. 1507-12.

1. The source of terror;
2. The likelihood that a terror-inducing event is going to occur again;
3. The object of primary victimisation (e.g. a family or group member) and one's relationship to it;
4. The phasing of the terror-producing event; and
5. One's (in-) ability to avoid, prevent and combat situations that are terror-prone in the future.³⁹

For example, the likelihood of developing PTSD after the 9/11 attacks was influenced by direct exposure, knowing someone who perished in the attacks, number of hours of watching television, and prior mental illness, as already highlighted in the above paragraph. Some of these factors are certainly mouldable by official security instruments. Efficient CT policies can aim to reduce the likelihood of terror-inducing events and improve the ability to avoid, prevent and combat situations that are terror-prone. As such, the management of fear should be taken into account when designing and implementing CT policies in general, whether it relates to judicial prosecution, intelligence gathering or preventive measures.

However, certain elements specific to (counter-) terrorism will continue to challenge governmental efforts to manage fear. For example, as Reynolds and Seeger in "Psychological Responses to Terrorism" point out, the public will likely have a stronger reaction and risk perception following terrorist incidents than other types of crisis events.⁴⁰ This is due to the intentionality and uncertainty that accompanies such events. The intense media coverage of international terrorist attacks and frequent governments and politicians' warnings of future attacks provide continuous and incessant exposure to anxiety and fear.

Governments may not be the providers of the imagery, but they can affect the social impact of terrorist attacks all the same.⁴¹ It is not new to state that terrorism is communication. Alex Schmid and Janny de Graaf, in their seminal work "Violence as Communication" in 1982, argue that terrorist violence distinguishes itself from ordinary violence because of its communicative character.⁴² This article continues this line of thinking by stating that, first of all, CT reactions are also a means of communication and identification, and secondly, that these reactions to a large extent determine the social impact of terrorist actions, especially if we consider this in the broader socio-political context and over a longer period of time.

As Schmid, Waldmann and others have abundantly made clear, social impact is not something that governments can fully engineer, let alone all by themselves. On the contrary, social impact in the 21st century is first and foremost a question of media coverage. Public opinion is mostly influenced by the media and the gripping images of dramatic terrorist attacks that they disseminate. As Altheide puts it, the modern "entertainment format, the use of visuals, emerging icons of fear, slogans, and especially the emphasis on the fear frame and 'evil' provide many examples of how these attacks [of 9/11] contributed to the expansion of the discourse of fear into more attempts at social control".⁴³

Notwithstanding this limited room for manoeuvre, governments may not be the providers of the imagery, but they can affect the social impact of terrorist attacks all the same.⁴⁴ Governments still have a monopoly on the use of violence and are the actor citizens turn to in times of national crises. Moreover, they often fuel these crises and use them to further their own political and military agendas.⁴⁵ They amplify the "moral panic" in society with military metaphors ("we are at war") or, on the contrary, exert a moderating influence by emphasising and

³⁹ A. Schmid, "Terrorism as Psychological Warfare", *Democracy and Security* (2005), pp. 137-46.

⁴⁰ B. Reynolds and M. Seeger, *Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication: 2012 Edition*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Atlanta, GA (2012).

⁴¹ Cf. F. Furedi, *Invitation to Terror*, (2007).

⁴² A.P. Schmid and J. de Graaf, *Violence as Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media*, (London: SAGE, 1982), p. 175.

⁴³ D. Altheide, *Creating Fear: News and the Construction of Crisis* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 2002), pp. ix-x.

⁴⁴ Cf. Furedi, *Invitation to terror: The Expanding Empire of the Unknown* (London/ New York: Continuum, 2007).

⁴⁵ Cf. D. Altheide, *Terror Post 9/11 and the Media* (New York: Peter Land Publishing, 2009), especially chapter 7, "Terrorism Programming".

appealing to the social resilience in a society. Recall how, immediately after the London bombings of 7 July 2005, British Prime Minister Tony Blair did exactly this: “Terror will not win, we will not be intimidated”.⁴⁶

Ronald Crelinsten is another analyst that underlines the importance of CT as communication. He introduced a division of CT strategies into five models: coercive, proactive, persuasive, defensive and the long-term approaches. This paper’s approach overlaps in part with Crelinsten’s fourth model of persuasive CT, in the sense that CT measures have a communicative element and have to deal with audiences and their perceptions.⁴⁷ However, Crelinsten narrows the communicative aspect down to the tools of propaganda, deterrence and “psy-ops”. These tools are explicitly developed to address the terrorists and their audiences and to affect their behaviour. This paper argues instead that official CT measures have a communicative effect that goes beyond these explicit and intentional instruments. Communication not only succeeds when intended: every CT action, even when carried out at a local street level, can have a bearing on the “war of influence” between the terrorists and the state. Utterances and speeches can have a profound effect as well, conveying to society or even the world “what we stand for”.

Terrorists are often more aware of this notion than governments. For example, in advance of US President Barack Obama’s visit to Egypt, Osama bin Laden warned the Arabic world via Al Jazeera that the US was still demonizing Muslims. With this message, al Qaeda’s leader tried to neutralise the (from his perspective) threatening effects of the dialogue and cooperation that Obama was going to offer the ‘Muslim World’.⁴⁸ After all, with his offer, the US President undermined the efforts the jihadists were undertaking to mobilise their supporters. In this influence warfare, both the terrorists and western democracies are waging a battle to convince and persuade the different target audiences to rally behind them.

It is this “performative power”⁴⁹ of the whole range of explicit, implicit, wittingly and unwittingly initiated CT actions and communications by the authorities that have an impact on societal resilience and on positive and negative coping mechanisms. Hence, a fear management approach starts with taking a good look in the mirror. Fear management needs to be part and parcel of CT policies, from the design phase to their actual implementation, given the inherent communicative aspect of CT, the interrelation of terrorist actions and counterterrorist reactions, and the social drama and/or cultural trauma generated or mitigated by them.

A preliminary conclusion based on the findings discussed above suggests that the role of governments in “marketing” CT policies, in constructing social reality, and affecting the social impact of terrorism should receive far more scrutiny. As Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern and Sundelius have pointed out, “sense making” and “meaning making” are amongst the most important tools for managing crises. Next to physical measures (search, rescue, extinguish, secure, etc.), communicational efforts to inform the public on the content and extent of the crisis, what is going on, what might or might not happen next, what the unfolding events could look like and how the threat is defined, are paramount to improving positive coping mechanisms.⁵⁰

How have governments adapted these insights into their crisis manuals so far? Are governments aware of these fear management techniques at all? Next, several insights derived from official CT policies as well as fear and crisis management and communications handbooks and manuals will be presented – a non-exhaustive list meant as a first stocktaking.

⁴⁶ “Blair says ‘Terror will not win’”, BBC News, 7 July 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4659933.stm.

⁴⁷ R. Crelinsten, *Counterterrorism*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), Ch. 4.

⁴⁸ “Osama bin Laden rains on Obama’s Parade”, New York Daily News, 4 June 2009, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/osama-bin-laden-rains-president-obama-parade-article-1.372556>.

⁴⁹ A term coined by De Graaf, indicating the extent to which counter-terrorism measures wittingly or unwittingly mobilise multiple audiences around the fear for terrorism. See: B. de Graaf, *Evaluating Counterterrorism Performance. A Comparative Study* (London/New York: Routledge, 2011).

⁵⁰ A. Boin et al. *The politics of crisis management: Public leadership under pressure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

6. Handbook findings

In this section we will look into existing handbooks and strategies that have been adopted to mitigate fear of terrorism and to build resilience to this phenomenon. First, it should be stressed that not many strategies specifically relate to the management of fear of terrorism. There is, however, a larger body of documents and practices in the field of crisis communication that can be very useful in case of terrorist incidents. Most of this literature has a US background, where crisis management has received a huge impulse through the creation of the Homeland Security Department in 2002, in terms of investments in structures and procedures to deal with possible threats. A survey among more than one hundred American public relations practitioners found that three-quarters of the organisations they work for had written crisis communication plans and were reasonably prepared to engage in crisis communications.⁵¹ In the Netherlands, a similar level of preparedness exists, with both authors having contributed their modest share to official crisis manuals. Most of the lessons summarised here are of a US, UK or Dutch origin, presented in a chronological order.

1. 2006: Report of the 7th July Review Committee (UK)

An important study that partly focuses on the challenges of managing fear is the report of the 7th July Review Committee.⁵² This committee, chaired by Richard Barnes, was tasked by the London Assembly with identifying the lessons to be learnt from the events and aftermath of the London 7/7 bombings in 2005. It identified successes and failings of the response to the bombings with the aim to improve future crises management. The report devotes two chapters to communication with the wider public. It makes a distinction between the preparatory phase, the immediate aftermath, the rest of the day and the long-term aftermath of a terrorist attacks.

Strikingly, the report stresses the lack of and the need for communication, both during the preparation stage, the immediate aftermath and the period thereafter.

Regarding the *preparation stage*, the report recommends to involve the media as fully as possible in emergency planning processes and exercises and to include senior representatives from the media as participants rather than simply as observers.⁵³

With respect to the *immediate aftermath* of an attack, the committee stresses the importance of direct communication with the media during the first half-hour following a major incident. Accurate and timely advisory messages regarding safety and security relations should be passed on to the public, and credible factual information about what has happened and what is being done in response could be conveyed.⁵⁴

On 7 July 2005, during the first two hours following the bombings, the committee identified a clear gap between what the media knew and what the police was prepared to confirm publicly. A tension arose between the desire of the media to obtain information as quickly as possible and the need for the emergency services to establish all the facts before making public announcements. According to the committee, such a gap could result in a loss of credibility on the part of the emergency services, as they will be regarded unnecessarily secretive.⁵⁵ The committee thus recommended (recommendation 35):

[...] that the Metropolitan Police Service, in consultation with the London Media Emergency Forum, revise its plans to provide basic advice, as opposed to detailed information, for the public within an hour of a major incident if at all possible. The committee recommends that in the event of a major incident in London, the Metropolitan Police Service should appoint a senior officer, with appropriate skills, to act as

⁵¹ R. Cloudman and K. Hallahan, "Crisis communications preparedness among U.S. organizations: Activities and assessments by public relations practitioners". *Public Relations Review* 32 (2006), pp. 367–376.

⁵² London Assembly, *Report of the 7th July Review Committee*, (London: Greater London Authority, 2006), <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/archives/assembly-reports-7july-report.pdf>.

⁵³ Report of the 7th July Review Committee, Recommendation 34.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

the police spokesperson throughout the day.⁵⁶

Furthermore, it suggested that “[t]hat person’s primary responsibility would be to communicate with the public, via the media, to pass on accurate and timely advice and information” (recommendation 36).⁵⁷

The observations and advice regarding communication after a terrorist incident during the *rest of the day* mainly focused on the need for advisory messages for the general public. The committee recommended that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) should establish a process whereby advisory messages are explicitly time-limited, and updated on an hourly basis, even if there was no change in the basic advice.⁵⁸ It also recommended that the MPS should liaise with the Media Emergency Forum. This Forum brings together, on a voluntary basis, senior editorial figures from the media, and representatives of central and local government and the emergency services and utilities. Together, the Forum and the MPS should establish a protocol for communicating publicly the time limited nature of news statements during the response to a major incident.⁵⁹

Furthermore, the committee stressed that in the future, the MPS has be the lead agency for communicating with the media, even though its messages tend to focus on police-related issues. Because of the prominence ascribed to their messages, the MPS are also well placed to communicate authoritative messages to the public regarding non-policing issues, such as advice on the use of mobile telephones and information relating to broader issues. The MPS, in consultation with other partners that could increase resilience, should develop a standard list of issues to be covered in early news conferences in the event of a major incident and produce a guidance document on the establishment and running of an effective media centre.⁶⁰ This idea of a standard communication package was repeated with regard to communicating with local businesses, in order to build consistency across London. Other actors, such as the London Resilience Forum, should take the lead in developing a standard communications package for use by local authorities, including the internet, pager alerting systems, “buddying” schemes and possibly conference call facilities.⁶¹

For the *long-term aftermath*, the committee concluded that all the relevant organisations had their emergency plans in place and that these plans had been tested and refined.

The principal conclusion of the Report – and the thread that links all recommendations together – was the committee’s insight that when faced with a terrorist attack, all governmental agencies were highly inward looking. They conducted their service-specific activities in a correct fashion, meeting their official requirements and task descriptions, but lacked an outward focus that took into account the needs of their client groups. In other words, they were not communicating, or engaging with, their client audiences, but narrowly performing their organisational task. According to the committee’s chairman, Richard Barnes, “the one achievement of the Assembly’s 7 July Review is to add an outward focus to emergency planning - to underscore the fact that responders are dealing with individuals not an ‘incident’”.⁶²

This lack of “communicational empathy” was visible in the complaints of the survivors and the bereaved. In fact, one of the most striking failures in the response to the 7 July attacks was the lack of planning to care for people who survived and were traumatised by the attacks and left to wander off from the scene of the incident. Moreover, victims’ relatives had to wait for days before learning about the fate of their beloved.⁶³ In sum, the committee clearly reported a lack of engagement with individual coping mechanisms, and paid a huge tribute to elements such as direct care, information sharing and real time communication, which could positively influence the way people deal with trauma and shock.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Recommendation 35.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Recommendation 36.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Recommendation 41.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Recommendation 42.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Recommendations 43 and 44.

⁶¹ Ibid., Recommendation 45.

⁶² Ibid., pp. IV and 120.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 120.

2. 2011: The Dutch National Counterterrorism Strategy 2011-2015

A document that incorporates many of the experiences – both good and bad practices – regarding communication, fear management and fostering social resilience is the Dutch “National Counterterrorism Strategy 2011-2015” of the National Coordinator for Security and Counter-Terrorism (NCTV). This strategy comprises measures designed to assess the terrorist threat, to disrupt it, and measures intended to prevent or avert violent extremism. The strategy also specifically focuses on limiting fear of terrorism and the impact of terrorist attacks and argues that countering terrorism also involves preparing for the consequences of a possible attack. To further these aims, the strategy differentiates between the following focal areas:

1. Crisis decision-making;
2. Strengthening resilience;
3. Contending with consequences; and
4. Communication after an attack.

With regard to *crisis decision-making*, the strategy stresses the need of efficient coordination of crisis decision making after an attack. It should be clear to all participants involved in managing the crisis what their roles and responsibilities are in the event of an attack. If the government responds adequately, the damage caused by an attack can be limited. This might also increase the capacity for resilience in such a situation, according to the strategy.

Resilience is an important concept in this document. It argues that in order to prevent overreactions following an attack, social resilience has to be increased as much as possible. In line with the UK Report, the strategy also stresses the importance of transparency, of immediately informing the public about existing risks, while at the same time staying calm and realistic. Offering concrete, operational perspectives to the population might also reduce the chance of overreactions in the event of an actual attack. According to the strategy, this assumption is backed up by experiences abroad, such as the “If you see something, say something” campaign in the US. The document also contains an important warning: “It is crucial to exercise caution when ‘mobilising the population’ in the fight against terrorism”.⁶⁴ Scaremongering should be avoided at all times. In fact, the strategy states that the government should explain to the public that too much attention plays into terrorists’ hands:

“The balance [between providing and restricting information] is a precarious one. The point of departure is constantly that increasing resilience and providing operational perspectives to citizens also increases the population’s capacity to estimate threats and this, in turn, causes the chance of excesses to decrease. It is the government’s task to make objective information available in measured proportions.”⁶⁵

Combating the *consequences* of a (imminent) terrorist crisis – ranging from fear and uncertainty to physical destruction and the loss of lives – requires close cooperation between all agencies involved. With regard to fear management, communication and social resilience, the strategy expresses the need to prevent social unrest and if necessary to de-escalate tensions. The strategy explicitly refers to the arson attacks and other violent reactions after the murder of Islam-critic Theo van Gogh in 2004 by the a young jihadist.

On the important issue of *communication after an attack*, the strategy defines the main goal as the normalisation of society, and the organisation and retention of social and individual resilience. To achieve this, context communication is regarded a key instrument. “Besides passing on facts, such communication also involves retaining or (re-) gaining trust and take account of the fears, questions and concerns of the public.”⁶⁶ Not

⁶⁴ NCTV, *National Counterterrorism Strategy 2011-2015* (The Hague: NCTV), p. 97. See <https://english.nctv.nl>.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 98.

the agency's perspective, but the interests of the recipients should be the starting point for all communication efforts. Communication following a terrorist attack includes informing the public about the negative consequences of attacks, in order to limit these consequences. As mentioned in other handbooks, reports and scholarly literature, responses and statements during and in the immediate aftermath of the crisis are decisive in setting the tone for the period thereafter. Possibly inspired by recent anti-Muslim statements and publications, the NCTV strategy stresses the need to also take into account "stakeholders" abroad, such as key figures in the countries of origin of ethnic minorities with an Islamic background living in the Netherlands.

Finally, the strategy considers frequent *practice* sessions on crisis management the only way the government can prepare adequately for the consequences of possible attacks. This idea is built on examples from the UK. According to the NCTV, the rapid response following the London July 2005 attacks was in part the result of frequent trainings and simulations amongst the UK services.

In sum, this strategy goes to great lengths to underscore the importance of social resilience, and, although without identifying specific positive coping mechanisms, also reflects upon its own communicational effects and possibilities during a crisis.

3. 2012: Manual Crisis Emergency & Risk Communication

A fine example of a handbook specifically aimed at dealing with (the aftermath of) terrorism-related incidents is the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's manual, authored by Barbara Reynolds and Matthew Seeger, a key scholar in the crisis communication domain. In this document, entitled "Crisis Emergency & Risk Communication, 2012 edition", a special chapter is dedicated to terrorism and bioterrorism. It stresses the unique challenges that terrorism produces for communicators and contains a number of recommendations.

The manual describes terrorism as a potential threat not only to national security, but also to social stability. It warns communicators that terrorist incidents might cause stronger reactions and risk perceptions than other types of crises. The manual subsequently lists the typical "do's" and "don'ts" in crisis communication, which are cited below since they derive from one of the most often quoted set of best practices for crisis communication in an earlier publication by Matthew Seeger. These practices result from his work with expert panels and constitute a form of grounded theory for process improvement:

1. Communication strategies should be integrated into the decision-making process;
2. Communication strategies should be part of pre-event planning;
3. Form partnerships with the public;
4. Listen to the public's concerns;
5. Be honest, frank and open;
6. Collaborate and coordinate;
7. Meet the needs of media and remain accessible;
8. Communicate with compassion, concern and empathy;
9. Provide self-efficacy: Advise the public on how to protect themselves; and
10. Accept uncertainty and ambiguity.⁶⁷

In sum, without engaging too much in psychological literature on coping mechanisms, fear management or post-traumatic stress disorders, Seeger also points towards the importance of organising some sort of "governmental empathy" and to improve and enable exchange of public sentiments, complaints and needs.

⁶⁷ M.W. Seeger, "Best Practices in Crisis Communication: An Expert Panel Process", *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 34, No. 3 (2006), pp. 232-244.

4. AIVD study into limiting impact terrorism and extreme violence

Fortunately, few western countries have been confronted with terrorist attacks on the scale of the London bombings, let alone the 9/11 attacks. However, even smaller attacks in terms of the number of casualties have had a significant impact on society with regard to public anxiety and (collective) feelings of trauma and polarisation. Partly motivated by the impact of smaller terrorist-related incidents and political murders, the Netherlands General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) commissioned a research project that addressed the issue of managing fear after terrorism-related incidents.

This study, conducted by the Institute for Security and Crisis Management (COT) and Leiden University's Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism (CTC) at which the authors are based, looked into the communication strategy of all the stakeholders involved in the aftermath of terrorist incidents.

This study was based on the concept of “performative power”, coined by Beatrice de Graaf in 2011. Based on studies of CT measures in different countries in the 1970s and 1980s, five central rhetorical and communicative aspects were identified that increase the level of social mobilisation pertaining to incidents of terrorism. These aspects are linked to five questions that provide answers about the level of mobilisation:

1. Is the issue being politicised?
2. Is it framed as a national security or even national identity issue?
3. Is the threat extended to a broader circle of perpetrators and sympathisers?
4. Is the threat linked to existing fears or historical experiences?
5. Does the discourse contain inflammatory or securitising aspects?⁶⁸

Positive answers to these particular questions enhance the “performativity” of counter-terrorism strategies. In other words, the degree to which these strategies serve to mobilise and capture public and political attention and thus provide for conditions that affect the state of national anxiety and fear about the issue.⁶⁹

Based on this concept, de Graaf and others conducted the study commissioned by the AIVD by looking into a number of incidents – threats, attacks, arrests – and the way in which they were communicated by the authorities and picked up by the media. It argues that besides traditional ways of crisis communication, such as press conferences and press statements, public appearances of politicians, policymakers and operational measures resulted in implicit messages as well.⁷⁰ Actions such as large scale evacuations, helicopter deployments, the visual presence of sharpshooters, or the mayor taking the metro one day after the 2005 London bombings speak louder than words. Although many of these concrete measures and performances are inevitable from a physical security or safety perspective, they do have a socio-psychological effect as well. The research aimed to raise awareness of the impact of these measures on social resilience and collective fear and produced a number of recommendations for policymakers to help them reduce the fear surrounding or after terrorism-related incidents. The recommendations were divided in three categories:

1. Communication;
2. Content; and
3. Organisation.

With regard to *communication*, the study stresses the importance of the so-called “golden hour”, the first hour after an incident in which the authorities should be able to come up with a first statement that confirms or

⁶⁸ Cf. B. de Graaf, *Evaluating Counterterrorism Performance*, pp. 130-133.

⁶⁹ B. de Graaf, *Why Communication and Performance are Key in Countering Terrorism*, ICCT Research Paper, (International Centre for Counter-Terrorism: The Hague, 2011), pp. 1-9.

⁷⁰ E. Bakker et al., *Onderzoek naar maatschappelijke effecten van bestuurlijk optreden bij terreurdreiging en extreem geweld: Bevindingen uit vier casusstudies* (AIVD/CTC/COT: The Hague, June 2012).

denies what is going on and explains what is happening. During this hour and in later phases it is important to coordinate information sharing and public announcements. Ideally, the various authorities that are involved in dealing with the crisis formulate a clear and concise message and one consistent tone. The study also recommends governments to continue communicating with the public, even if there is no news (“no news is still news”). A lack of communication and information can lead to speculation by the media and the public (“rumour unanswered within 24 hours becomes true”).⁷¹ In addition, government agencies are advised to publically acknowledge possible mistakes (“stealing thunder”).⁷² Citizens understand that the authorities can make mistakes in crisis situations – not acknowledging them often hurts the credibility of authorities more than owning up to errors does. Moreover, governments are advised to explain (wrong) decisions and measures. Apologies towards the public may be useful and will often be appreciated. The authorities should not try to cover up mistakes and to move into the direction of reputation management and reputation communication. Finally, the report stresses the importance of monitoring what is going on in the media, on the internet and in social media.

On the *content* of communication, the study warns against the use of unnecessary rhetoric and alarmist words such as “enemy”, “war”, etc. Moreover, as long as one is not absolutely sure about the background of the perpetrators and their intentions, authorities should not refer to specific characteristics such as religion or ethnicity. It is important to show empathy and understanding of collective emotions, and canalise these emotions to initiate resilience. Following a period of grief, people should be motivated to go back to business as usual. In addition, it is essential for governments to pay attention to sentiments in society such as collective feelings of stress and insecurity. Aftercare is also very important: the authorities need to act as a so-called *caring government*, which pays attention to human suffering and shows piety and places importance on commemorations and collective mourning.

Finally, with regard to the *organisation* of limiting the impact of terrorism and extreme violence, the study advises governments to invest in relations with representatives and spokespersons of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities. Agreements should be made in relation to their possible contributions to deal with public unrest and tensions during times of hardship. It is also important to monitor reactions in society relating to the general performance and specific (emergency) measures of the authorities. As mentioned earlier, the authorities should make sure someone is responsible for paying attention to the new media including social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, internet forums, etc. The same monitoring need applies to individuals, parties or groups that contribute to polarisation, politicisation and the spread of fear and animosity. The study also stresses the need to pay attention to the foreign press, the foreign public and certain political, ethnic or religious groups abroad.

7. Concluding remarks: towards a theory of fear management

This paper has attempted to flesh out some aspects of what a theory of fear management in CT policy could look like. The novelty here is that official governmental crisis management needs to be combined with insights in psychological coping mechanisms. As the London Report stated, “responders are dealing with individuals not an ‘incident’”.⁷³ Indeed, if we place importance on the concept of resilience, crisis management agencies, police, judicial authorities and every other bureaucracy involved should not just focus on their service specific task, but should also ask themselves how their specific service can help to improve coping mechanisms of the citizens and clients they need to serve.

Based on the findings and summaries from the handbooks and manuals above, it is clear that most of the best practices and lessons learned pertain to practical crisis management rather than to a more sophisticated

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 20.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ London Assembly, *Report of the 7th July Review Committee* (London: Greater London Authority, 2006), p. 1.

meta-approach of socio-psychological fear management. Although the recognition and acknowledgment of such concepts as resilience and self-efficacy are widespread, it is still a challenge to transform these concepts and best practices into a more comprehensive theory of fear management. However, if we consider fear management as comprising *the efforts, undertaken by governmental institutions, prior, during and after situations of emergency and recovery regarding a terrorist threat/attack, to manipulate the human capital in society in order to improve the positive, collective coping mechanisms of that society*, three important elements stand out in all the above strategies and manuals:

- Do not reinforce negative coping mechanisms;
- Influence positive coping mechanisms; and
- Provide self-efficacy.

As was argued in the report commissioned by the AIVD, CT efforts might unwittingly reinforce *negative coping mechanisms* by mobilising the public around images of fear, by rhetorically extending the spectre of terrorism, to blow up the threat and project a warlike situation in society. Such an exaggeration of the crisis might increase feelings of helplessness, fear, and anger and fuels polarisation around ethnic, religious or cultural lines within society.⁷⁴

On the other hand, *positive coping mechanisms* (positive ways of adapting behaviour and attitudes to minimise stress) can be influenced through:

- Direct information and assistance to the victims and the victims' relatives: this is necessary for the need for closure felt by individuals dealing with crises or trauma.
- Sense and meaning making: the manner and extent to which government officials provide the public with a clear image of what is going on, make "sense" out of the incident and give "meaning" to it in a positive way, increases individuals problem solving capacities and might reduce stress and feelings of trauma.
- Organisation of positive meaningful events, such as gatherings, ceremonies, (religious) services: directly after a trauma, "social sharings", are linked to positive emotion because they reaffirm one's values and help to focus on those values while coping with the on-going (impact of a) stressful event.
- The organisation of visible acts of justice: as a form of psychological education and sense making, this figures positively in many psychological interventions for trauma.⁷⁵ For example, a fair and transparent trial can play a significant role in helping people to cope with a terrible crime.

In the introduction of this paper, it has been argued that, given the indirect and long-term costs of fear of terrorism, it is imminently important to focus on communication and resilience as integral components of CT policies. The overall goal of communication should be to limit the impact of an incident, to acknowledge and pay tribute to the victims and their relatives, and to try to restore normal order. In other words, back to business as usual as soon as possible, while paying attention to after care and sentiments in society such as collective feelings of stress and insecurity.

Here, the authorities can only do so much. One of the most important recommendations of the various manuals described in this paper is therefore the need to facilitate self-efficacy. People do not want to be mere victims or bystanders, but generally express a desire to be able and willing to do something, or at least to do the right thing and not to play into the hands of the perpetrators. Triggering these positive coping mechanisms will increase a population's resilience and can further help to reduce the chance of excessive fear, overreactions and tensions in the event of a terrorist attack.

⁷⁴ Bakker et al., "Onderzoek naar maatschappelijke effecten", (2012).

⁷⁵ D.W. Smith et al. "Post terrorism services for victims and surviving family members: lessons from pan am 103", *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 9, (2002), pp. 280-286.

The need to provide the general public with advisory measures applies to both the immediate aftermath of an incident as well as to the later stages of a crisis. For those later stages, monitoring the indirect victims and stakeholders is as important as caring for the direct ones, in order to prevent the possibility that individuals, parties or groups contribute to polarisation, politicisation and the spread of fear and animosity. These second order consequences of terrorism might be limited by including representatives and spokespersons of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities in fear management efforts, making them a stakeholder in dealing with public unrest and tensions.

The abovementioned recommendations and lessons learned can be of great value to limiting the possibility of terrorists getting what they want: seriously intimidating a population and destabilising the fundamental structures of a country. As these are some of the main instruments to achieve the goals of terrorists, fear management should be an important part of CT policies, obviously next to the many efforts to reduce the likelihood of a terrorist attack and limit its physical impact. Fortunately, in recent years, increased attention has been paid to the organisation and practice of crisis communication as well as to improving resilience. However, we have still some way to go to arrive at a sound theory of fear management in relation to (counter-) terrorism. The above aspects will serve to point in the right direction, but most of the assumptions need further, rigid testing. To be sure, a theory of fear management can only do so much in times of severe crisis, large-scale attacks and deep social trauma. But studying ways and means of becoming more resilient is the most efficient way forward to avoid succumbing to the attempts of others to control us by fear.

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