

**The Threat of Terrorism, Presidential Approval,
and the 2004 Election**

Darren W. Davis
davisda@msu.edu

and

Brian D. Silver
bsilver@msu.edu

**Department of Political Science
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824**

**Prepared for Delivery at the Annual Meeting of the
American Political Science Association
Chicago, Illinois
September 2-5, 2004**

**V8.2
August 11, 2004**

Acknowledgments: The surveys upon which this study is based were conducted by the Office for Survey Research of the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR) at Michigan State University (MSU). We thank Karen Clark and Larry Hembroff for their expert work in helping to design and manage the surveys and Kathy Cusick for managing the interviewing operations. We are also grateful to Valentina Bali, Eric Chang, and Michael Colaresi for valuable collegial advice. Funding for the Civil Liberties Survey was provided by the National Science Foundation, the Russell Sage Foundation, and the College of Social Science at MSU. Funding for the State of the State Survey was provided by IPPSR, the College of Social Science, and the Program on Public Opinion and Political Participation (PPOPP) in the Department of Political Science at MSU. None of these individuals or organizations is responsible for any errors of fact or interpretation in this paper.

Abstract

This paper tests the conventional wisdom about the effect of the threat of terrorism on voting decisions in the 2004 election. We draw on two national surveys and a series of surveys in the state of Michigan conducted between late Fall 2001 and mid-June 2004. As a first step, we examine trends in popular perceptions of the terrorist threat since late 2001. We track these perceptions using a core indicator of “sociotropic threat” that is common to both the national and Michigan surveys. We also examine whether major post-9/11 events and terror warnings (“Orange Alerts”) have affected people’s sense of threat. Those warnings do generally raise people’s concern about another attack; but they have no impact on presidential approval.

We then examine the relationship between perceptions of threat and approval of George Bush’s performance as President. We show that this relationship changed fundamentally between the immediate post-9/11 period and the middle of 2004. While shortly after 9/11 those who expressed greater concern about terrorism were more likely to approve of Bush’s presidential performance, by April-June 2004 this relationship had reversed: those who were more concerned about terrorism were less likely to approve of Bush’s performance.

Finally, we examine the relationship between perceptions of threat and the voters’ choice between Bush and Kerry, based on a statewide survey conducted in Michigan in late Spring 2004. We test whether perceived threat matters after we take into account the voters’ foreign policy and economic views as well as their ideological and partisan orientations. We show that the sense of threat does matter, and that it works against the re-election of George Bush.

The Threat of Terrorism, Presidential Approval, and the 2004 Election

Political analysts say almost any renewed discussion of terrorism benefits President George W. Bush because the public – even as it questions Bush’s leadership on Iraq and the economy – still regards him as best able to deal with that threat. – Ken Fireman, *Newsday*, May 31, 2004

Mr. Bush’s campaign advisers have made clear that every reminder of a threat from abroad is also a reminder for voters of what they like about Mr. Bush and stirs what polls have shown to be one of voters’ biggest reservations about Mr. Kerry. Going into the Democratic convention, polling showed voters were much more likely to trust the nation’s security to Mr. Bush than Mr. Kerry. – Adam Nagourney and David M. Halbfinger, *New York Times*, August 2, 2004

As the 2004 presidential campaign moved into high season after John Kerry became the expected Democratic Party nominee, one major question was whether the campaign would be run and won on the basis of the economy or foreign policy. Of course, other issues are being raised, including health care, education, and what both campaigns speak of as “values.” These include social issues such as gay marriage and opposition to abortion (which, among other issues such as gun control and school prayer, the Republicans tend to put under the “values” heading) as well as the environment, civil liberties, civil rights, and telling the truth (which the Democrats put under this heading) (Grier and Marlantes 2004).

But an important question in the immediate post-9/11 era is how *personal security*, or the perceived threat of terrorism, plays into the voters’ decisions on election day – independently of economic insecurity and foreign policy perceptions generally. Furthermore, the decision to go to war in Iraq, the revelation that no WMD had been found in Iraq, the prisoner abuse scandal, and the continuing battle deaths and high war costs after victory was declared may cause many people to rethink their view of the President’s leadership.

By August 2004, the threat of terrorism and the effectiveness of antiterrorist policies and practices became virtual everyday topics in both the Bush and Kerry campaigns. The two quotations at the top of this paper endorse the conventional interpretation that the more threatened Americans feel, the more likely they are to support the incumbent because of his decisive leadership against an external threat. Indeed, with only one major exception, the national polls through July 2004 consistently showed that Bush was viewed as better able to pursue the campaign against terrorism than Kerry. That one exception, an ABCNews/*Washington Post* poll in June, 2004, was hailed in the headline, “Bush Loses Advantage in War on Terrorism” (Morin and Baltz 2004). A month later, however, Kerry’s advantage had proved to be only temporary. But immediately after the Democratic National Convention, another ABCNews/*Washington Post* poll reported on August 2 indicated that Kerry had once again closed the gap on Bush in the perception of who was better able to handle the campaign against terrorism.¹

Against the conventional wisdom, beginning in July Senator Kerry actively pressed the case that his anti-terrorist policies would be more effective and make the country more safe than those of President Bush. In making his case, he seemed to assume that reminding Americans of their insecurity would favor his own candidacy, not the incumbent’s. As one commentator put it in describing Kerry’s “striking departure” from the conventional approach of staying away from an electoral opponent’s strongest issue: “[T]he Democratic presidential nominee has begun a full-throated campaign not to change the subject, but to win the argument” (Harris 2004). And in a poll taken immediately after the

¹ The question was “Who do you trust to do a better job of handling the U.S. campaign against terrorism?” In the June poll, reported on June 22nd, Kerry led Bush 48 percent to 47 percent on this question (Morin and Balz 2004a). The figure for June was later revised in the *Post’s* reported cumulative data to a Bush 48 to 47 lead over Kerry. At virtually the same time, a poll reported in *USA Today* on June 25th found that Bush led Kerry by a margin of 54 percent to 40 percent on a question about their ability to “handle terrorism” (Page 2004). By July 11th in another ABCNews/*Washington Post* poll, Bush led Kerry 51 to 43 in being better able to handle the U.S. campaign on terrorism; and by July 25th Bush led 55 to 37. Just a week later, however, immediately after the Democratic National Convention, Bush’s margin on this issue had shrunk to 48 to 45 (Morin and Balz 2004b), while the margin in the *USA Today* poll remained virtually unchanged from June (see <http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/elections/nation/polls/usatodaypolls.htm>).

Democratic National Convention, Kerry had once again closed the gap with President Bush in the perception of who could better handle the U.S. campaign against terrorism (Morin and Balz 2004b). Polls by the AP and FoxNews showed a similar narrowing of the gap in early August on related questions.²

This paper draws on a series of surveys to test the conventional wisdom about the effect of the threat of terrorism on voting decisions in the 2004 election. We draw on two national surveys and a series of surveys in the state of Michigan conducted between late Fall 2001 and mid-June 2004. As a first step toward testing for the effects of perceived threat on Bush approval and the Bush vs. Kerry electoral choice, we examine trends in popular perceptions of the terrorist threat since late 2001. We track these perceptions using a core indicator of “sociotropic threat” that is common to both the national and Michigan surveys. We also examine how major post-9/11 events and official terror warnings (“Orange Alerts”) have affected people’s sense of threat. We find that those warnings do generally raise people’s concerns about another attack; but they have *no* impact on presidential approval.

We then examine the relationship between perceptions of threat and approval of George Bush’s performance as President. We show that this relationship changed fundamentally between the immediate post-9/11 period and the middle of 2004. While shortly after 9/11 those who expressed greater concern about terrorism were more likely to approve of Bush’s presidential performance, by April-June 2004 this relationship had reversed: those who were more concerned about terrorism were less likely to approve of Bush’s performance.

Finally, we examine the relationship between perceptions of threat and the voters’ choice between Bush and Kerry, based on a statewide survey conducted in Michigan in late Spring 2004. We

² An AP Poll conducted August 2-5, 2004, also showed a sharp narrowing of the “security issue gap” since March (Lester 2004). A FoxNews poll conducted August 3-4 showed Bush leading on “doing a better job in the war on terror” 44 percent to 38 percent, a reduction in margin from 50 percent vs. 35 percent a month earlier and from a two-to-one margins in April and May 2004 (FoxNews 2004).

test whether perceived threat matters after we take into account the voters' foreign policy and economic views as well as their ideological and partisan orientations. We show that a sense of threat does matter, and that it works against the re-election of George Bush.

Theoretical Issues

Determining the role of insecurity on the popular evaluation of George W. Bush is important because it has been argued that ever since September 11, 2001, Americans have lived in a “new normal” historical context in which the way they think about many aspects of everyday life is colored by the background of a terrorist threat. Many Americans have shown themselves to be willing to cede some of their civil liberties to the government for the sake of greater security (Davis and Silver 2004a). And numerous surveys have shown persistent levels of fear or concern about the possibility of a terrorist attack.³ Furthermore, it was fear and shock after such a heinous event that rallied a large majority of Americans to support the President. Indeed, this type of “rally effect” is to be expected when a national political leader takes decisive public action against an external threat (Mueller 1970, 1973; Edwards 1997, Baker and Oneal 2001, Hetherington and Nelson 2003).

It is reasonable to expect, therefore, that in making their voting choice in November 2004, many Americans are likely to take into consideration the President's success in addressing the threat of international terrorism. People who are more concerned about terrorism should be more likely to vote for Bush's re-election. Indeed the conventional wisdom is that because of the perception of his strong leadership in the aftermath of 9/11, President Bush established that not only he but also the Republican Party is best able to protect the country from terrorism. Several national public opinion polls showed such a Republican advantage during 2002 and 2003 (e.g., Pew Research Center 2004c). Bush and the

³ Relevant poll results from the Pew Research Center and CBS News/*New York Times* are summarized at <http://pollingreport.com/terror.htm>.

Republican Party might be seen as protectors who, during the period of strong bipartisan support for both the attack on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the Patriot Act legislation, led the way to a safer America.

Many assumptions underlie such expectations, however. One is that there is always a positive correlation between perceptions of threat and popular support for the President. Another is that perceptions of threat or insecurity will matter more than, or at least independently of, perceptions of other aspects of a President's performance such as his management of the economy or of foreign affairs. Even if there is a tendency for the public to rally in support of the President during or in the immediate aftermath of national security crises, people are likely to evaluate the President's performance over four years by weighing multiple criteria.

Furthermore, if some of the President's decisions in time of crisis later come to be perceived as wrong, ineffective, or even counter-productive to the reduction of threat, then the initial popular support during the crisis may dissipate later. This could happen, for example, if a series of investigations and media reports create the public impression that the President failed to anticipate or to plan for the possibility of the 9/11 attack. Similarly, while the public may rally behind the President as he mobilizes public opinion in favor of attacks on other countries such as Afghanistan or Iraq, if the management of these efforts comes later to be seen as inadequate the same initiatives may be held against the incumbent. A heroic national leader standing on the decks of an aircraft carrier off the coast of San Diego making a triumphal declaration on May 1, 2003, that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended" may receive a great deal of popular approbation at the time; yet if the legitimacy or cost-to-benefit assessments involved in the decision to go to war are later brought into doubt, this same moment can come to signal a failure of leadership and work against the President's re-election.

As a counter hypothesis to the expectation that people's readiness to rally behind the president in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 will help his re-election, it is equally reasonable to expect that as

more people come to question the efficacy of the anti-terror effort and the material and human costs of the Iraq war, the incumbent will suffer at the ballot box in 2004. This expectation is consistent with research on the effects of wars on incumbent tenure in other countries (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson, and Woller 1992; Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995). Wars have costs, even wars that are won, and the costs may eventually impinge on how society at large looks at its leaders, whether they are elected or anointed.

Therefore, in order to assess whether perceptions of the threat of terrorism are factors in the vote decision, we must also take into account perceptions of the 2003 Iraq war, since it is that initiative more than any other that appears to have most challenged the President's leadership. Not only did the stated primary rationale for undertaking a preemptive attack on Saddam Hussein prove to be ill-founded after the failure to find stocks of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), but the expectation of a quick, cheap, and decisive military victory and a rapid transition to democracy proved to be unrealistic.

The problem with being a "war president" is that if the war – whether the "war on terrorism" or the "war in Iraq" – seems to have been mismanaged or too costly, then people's persistent sense of threat and fear at home may become an electoral liability to the incumbent. If before it was people's fears and sense of patriotism that compelled many of them to support the President, later the same sense of fear can alienate people from a President whose earlier promises or decisions seem to have gone wrong. Although majorities of Americans were convinced in late 2002 and early 2003 that Saddam Hussein was in league with Al Qaeda or behind the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (Pew Center 2003⁴, Nagourney and Elder 2003), by 2004 this interpretation had been widely questioned, even if still staunchly defended by the President and the Vice President. And some critics

⁴ A data summary is available at <http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?PageID=675>.

of the war even argued that the attack on Saddam Hussein's regime decreased America's national security by stoking the fire of the terrorists and alienating America's primary European allies.

Similar logic can be applied to assessing whether the President might be held partly responsible for the 9/11 attacks themselves. Well before the various congressional committee and independent commissions began to bring into wide public view evidence of missed signals and failed opportunities to prevent the 9/11 attack, a majority of the American public thought that America's international behavior had contributed to the hatred that led to the terrorist attacks (Davis and Silver 2004c). Despite the surges in presidential approval after 9/11 and the launching of Operation Iraqi freedom, the people were able to see that U.S. behavior had in some respects been provocative. As we shall see, this popular judgment affected the level of presidential approval.

Thus, any assessment of the impact of threat perception on presidential approval or the 2004 vote decision should take into account perceptions of the economy, foreign policy, and partisan and ideological predispositions – as well as the perception of threat.

Data and Measures

Surveys

Our data come from two national random digit dialing (RDD) surveys and 11 state of Michigan RDD surveys. All of the surveys were conducted by the Office for Survey Research of the Institute for Public Policy & Social Research at Michigan State University. The first wave of the national Civil Liberties Survey was conducted between November 15, 2001 and January 14, 2002, and included 1,448 respondents age 18 and over.⁵ The sample was stratified to increase the proportion of African American and Latino respondents. The data are weighted to be representative of the adult population of the country as a whole (Hembroff 2002, 2004). Wave 2 of the Civil Liberties Survey was conducted

⁵ One respondent contacted the survey organization later and was interviewed on January 31, 2002.

between January 31 and May 28, 2003, and included 1,963 individuals, of whom 679 had also been interviewed in the first wave. This survey, too, includes an oversample of African Americans and Latinos and is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population. A third wave of this survey began in July 2004 and will be completed in the Fall. Further details about the samples for the Civil Liberties Survey are shown in Table 1.⁶

[Table 1 About Here]

The Civil Liberties Survey has as its main focus people's willingness to trade off civil liberties for personal security. It also includes measures of trust in government, presidential approval, and several other aspects of individual political orientations and attitudes.⁷ The interviews averaged 25 minutes in wave 1 and 28 minutes in wave 2.

We also call upon results of several waves of the State of the State Survey (SOSS) in Michigan, which has been conducted by Michigan State University since 1994. This survey uses a random sample stratified by region of the state, but the results are weighted to be representative of the adult population of Michigan. Each round includes between 950 and 1000 respondents. The main substantive focus of these surveys varies from round to round. However, all but one round since early 2002 have included at least one core question about perceptions of the threat of terrorism, and all have included the same question about presidential approval.

Each SOSS wave was in the field for 4 to 6 weeks, and the data collection covers a majority of the months since 9/11. As a result, the SOSS data allow us to examine the relationship between presidential approval and perceptions of the threat of terrorism at many specific time points between January 2002 and June 2004. While the national surveys provide a richer array of variables for examining the relationship between the perceptions of terrorist threat and support for the President,

⁶ For technical details see Hembroff (2002, 2004).

⁷ The questionnaires can be found on-line at www.msu.edu/~bsilver/CivLibPage.htm.

the Michigan survey allow us to examine time-specific effects of several threat “warnings” that have occurred since early 2002. Furthermore, the latest round of the survey (SOSS 34), conducted between April 19 and June 15, 2004, contained a series of candidate assessment and policy questions as well as a vote intention question, which serve as a pre-election poll for the 2004 presidential election.⁸

In this section we describe the main indicators of threat and presidential approval. The indicators of the economic situation of respondents and their attitudes toward foreign policy will be introduced later.

Threat

For the purpose of this study, we focus on answers to the a item tapping sociotropic threat:

All in all, how concerned are you that the United States will suffer another terrorist attack in the next 3 months? Would you say you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not all concerned? (SEC4)

This question on sociotropic threat was included not only in the Civil Liberties Survey but also in all but one round of the Michigan SOSS survey since January 2002.

Furthermore, our previous research has shown that the answers to this question are highly predictive – in fact more highly predictive – of the willingness to trade civil liberties for security than the answers to the personal threat questions. As we will show later, the answers are also less sensitive to certain sorts of political biases than the typical questions used in national opinion polls – which tend to ask about the government’s performance in protecting us from terrorism, as opposed to asking more simply and directly how threatened people feel.⁹

⁸ Information on the sample designs, response rates, and other methodological details for SOSS can be found on-line at www.ippsr.msu.edu/soss.

⁹ Our question is a variation on those by CBS News (“How likely do you think it is that there will be another terrorist attack in the United States within the next few months: very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?”) and the Pew Research Center (“How worried are you that there will soon be another terrorist attack in the United States: very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not at all worried?”). The three variants generate similar levels and patterns of change in concern about terrorism over time. See <http://pollingreport.com/terror.htm>.

Presidential Approval

The national Civil Liberties Survey asks:

Do you approve or disapprove of the job that George W. Bush is doing as President?

The Michigan SOSS surveys ask:

Overall, how would you rate the way President Bush is performing his job as President? Would you say excellent, good, fair, or poor?

Because of the different formulations of the approval question, we have to be careful about combining the data from the two types of survey. Although we treat the answers “excellent” and “good” as approve, and “fair” or “poor” as disapprove, these reduced categories are not exactly equivalent to the dichotomous answers to the simple approve-disapprove question posed in the Civil Liberties Survey. They tend to produce lower “approval” of the President than do approve-disapprove questions.

Results

Trends in Sociotropic Threat

Figure 1 shows the levels of sociotropic threat – concern that the country might suffer another terrorist attack in the next three months – over a two and a half year period using a combination of the first two waves of the nationwide Civil Liberties Survey and ten waves of the Michigan survey. Bear in mind that the time intervals between surveys shown in Figure 1 are not equal. The percentages are based on respondents who said either that they were very concerned or that they were somewhat concerned about such an attack.

[Figure 1 About Here]

Although Michigan residents may feel somewhat more threatened than the country’s residents as a whole, we see a definite trend toward lower sociotropic threat over time. One upward spike in Figure 1 occurred at the time of the war in Iraq in March and April 2003. Later we will show the precise

timing of this upward spike by breaking the Civil Liberties Wave 2 results into shorter intervals based on the date of the interview. Furthermore, if we were to break down the Civil Liberties Wave 1 results by week of the interview, we would see a downward trend in sociotropic threat between mid-November 2001 and the end of January 2002, with the exception of a temporary upward spike for the period around New Year. We obtain substantially the same picture if we focus just on those who said they were “very” concerned (Figure 2).

[Figure 2 About Here]

The Effects of Terror Alerts

In 2002, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) developed and the President introduced by executive order a color-coded “terrorism alert warning system” that is supposed to raise people’s awareness of the possibility of a terrorist attack if events or intelligence indicate a heightened probability of an attack. To our knowledge there have been no studies of the impact of terrorism alerts on the general public.

Using both our national Civil Liberties Survey and the State of the State Survey in Michigan we are able to test for the impact of such alerts for six out of eight instances after the 9/11/2001 attacks on which either an “Orange Alert” was given or U.S. government high officials issued urgent warnings without turning on the orange signal or a dramatic threatening event occurred (the Madrid bombings in March 2004). Taking into consideration the long-term downward trend in the sense of sociotropic threat shown in Figure 1, the test for the effects of terror alerts is whether upward spikes in the sense of sociotropic threat occur when either formal Orange Alerts or proxy alerts occur.

Specifically we ask: given the prevailing level of concern about terrorism by respondents to a given survey up to and including the day of the threat warning (or other potentially threatening event), did the warnings raise people’s concern about terrorism in the days immediately after the warning? In

general, there is no reason to expect that the respondents who were interviewed after the alerts were different in background from the respondents who were interviewed prior to the alerts, so we can interpret changes in the level of concern after the threat warning as a “net effect” of the alert on the people interviewed during the survey. We can also test for the effects of the alerts statistically by pooling the surveys. However, whether surveys were in the field at the time threatening events occurred was mainly a matter of luck, so that an uneven and sometimes small number of interviews were completed on the critical days surrounding the alert dates. For practical reasons, therefore, we focus in each survey on three periods: (1) respondents interviewed up and including to the warning date (the “baseline” for the survey), (2) respondents interviewed during the 6 days immediately following the warning date (the “warning period”), and (3) respondents interviewed from the 7th day after the warning until the end of the given survey.¹⁰

The dates of potentially relevant events are depicted in Figure 3. The “Homeland Security Advisory System” was created by presidential order on March 12, 2002. Prior to that date, however, in connection with the Salt Lake City Olympic games the government had issued one terrorism alert, which ran from February 3 to February 27, 2002. Since then (though July 25, 2004), five official “Orange Alerts” have been announced. In addition, Attorney General Ashcroft all but signaled an Orange Alert on May 26, 2004. At a press conference on May 26, 2004, Ashcroft declared that Al Qaeda was “almost ready to attack the United States” and harbored a “specific intention to hit the United States hard” (Stevenson and Lichtblau 2004). He referred to extraordinary security measures

¹⁰ We experimented with different periodizations, such as using 3-day intervals, or beginning the “post alert” period with the date of the alert itself. However, we ruled out the shorter interval because for some surveys too few interviews were conducted to provide stable estimates for short intervals and because with the exception of the invasion of Iraq the effects of all of the warnings wore off by the 7th day. We ruled out counting the date of the alert as the first day mainly because inspection of the day-by-day results showed no warning effect on the respondents’ concern about terrorism for those who were interviewed on the day the warnings were issued.

being planned for the forthcoming economic summit in Georgia in June and the Democratic and Republican national party conventions in July and August.

[Figure 3 About Here]

Although at his May 26th news conference Ashcroft stated that he had “credible intelligence from multiple sources’ that terrorists planned to attempt an attack in the next few months” (Schmitt and Winton 2004), the DHS did not raise the terrorism threat alert level to Orange (“high risk of terrorist attacks”) at that time, and a joint communique issued by Ashcroft and Ridge on May 28th made the threat seem less urgent than Ashcroft’s words had implied two days earlier.

Nonetheless, Ashcroft continued to speak with urgency about the threat in later weeks, declaring in Miami on July 1 that plans for another major attack in the U.S. this year were “between 75 and 90 percent complete” (Weaver 2004). Ultimately, on July 8th Secretary Ridge also reiterated the warning:

Credible reporting now indicates that al-Qaeda is moving forward with its plans to carry out a large-scale attack in the United States in an effort to disrupt our democratic process (DHS 2004).

However, the DHS still kept the threat level at yellow (“elevated,” signaling a “significant risk of terrorist attacks”), perhaps reserving the possibility of boosting the threat level to Orange to the dates of the party national conventions, but also thereby perhaps sending mixed signals about the seriousness of the threat.

The disparity in tone between Ashcroft’s May 26th press conference and the joint Ashcroft-Ridge communique on May 28th led some in the media to question whether the Attorney General in particular was playing politics by fanning fears in the general public (Stevenson and Lichtblau 2004, Fireman 2004). When it was revealed that nearly a month later the FBI had not yet acted on its stated intention to interview a large number of Middle Easterners in an effort to uncover terrorists, further question was raised about Ashcroft’s sincerity (Schmitt 2004).

Underlying the skepticism about the motivations of Ashcroft and Ridge in issuing warnings and changing the official threat levels has been a more general concern about the use and meaning of terrorism alert warning system. On at least two earlier occasions the threat level was raised to orange in the absence of any publicly obvious event. On one of these, in February 2003, a buying panic was set off as Americans shopped for duct tape and plastic sheeting to seal their windows in the event of a chemical or radiological attack. On another occasion, however, on the eve of the U.S. launching Operation Iraqi Freedom, a certain amount of nervousness was to be expected and the impending beginning of war was reason enough for the threat level to be increased. Elevations of the threat level occurred in connection with events such as the Olympic Games in Salt Lake City in February 2002¹¹ and on the first anniversary of the 9/11/2001 attack. Yet on March 11, 2004, when the Madrid train bombings occurred and Americans first started discussing the possibility of similar election-timed attacks in the U.S., the official threat level remained at yellow. And on May 26, 2004, when Ashcroft warned of future event-related terrorist activities in the U.S., the threat level was also kept at yellow.

Thus, if not skepticism then at least some public confusion about the threat level system was understandable, since the level did not always change on the occasion of some serious real-world events or public warnings by federal authorities, and yet did change on some occasions when there was no obvious event linked to it. In June 2004, the General Accounting Office issued a report criticizing the terror warning system as confusing and not offering clear signals to local and national agencies and officials about what actions to take (CNN 2004; GAO 2004). The latest Orange Alert, however, which was issued on August 1, 2004, was far more specific than usual and identified “iconic economic targets” in New York, Washington, D.C., and Newark. Yet when in his press conference Secretary Ridge stated

¹¹ The “signal light” terrorism warning system was only established in 2003. However, a threat warning was announced by the government on February 3, 2002, and lifted on February 27, 2002 surrounding the days of the Olympics.

the following it again raised question as to the motivation behind this alert that occurred in the middle of the presidential election campaign and within a week of the end of the Democratic Party Convention:

And so this afternoon I ask our citizens for their watchful eyes as we continue to monitor this situation. I certainly realize that this is sobering news, not just about the intent of our enemies, but of their specific plans and a glimpse into their methods. But we must understand that the kind of information available to us today is the result of the president's leadership in the war against terror, the reports that have led to this alert are the result of offensive intelligence and military operations overseas, as well as strong partnerships with our allies around the world, such as Pakistan.¹²

Whatever the *rationale* behind the raising and lowering of the colored threat levels, observers have commonly assumed that raising the threat level has political *consequences*, namely by reinforcing support for President Bush. The logic would seem to be that raising the warning level shows that the administration is in command of events and further that it would be unwise to switch leadership horses in the middle of the on-going war on international terrorism. Some cynics have viewed such warnings, however, as defensive “CYA” strategies designed to absolve the government of blame if an attack were to occur.

Underlying both arguments is an assumption that the warnings themselves have consequences for public opinion – that people’s concern about terrorism and people’s evaluation of President Bush rises or falls with such warnings. So let us now examine whether in fact raising the threat level causes Americans to be concerned about an impending terrorist attack. In this analysis, we treat both the Olympic Games alert and the Ashcroft May 26th alert as equivalent to Orange Alerts. They were widely reported and discussed in the media. In addition, we treat the occasion of the Madrid train bombings on March 11, 2004, as another occasion when the American public might have become alarmed by the threat of terrorism, and which, in fact, has been a source of speculation and precautionary security measures, especially during Spring and Summer 2004 and in the run-up the the November 2nd election,

¹²Transcript of Ridge news conference: www.chron.com/cs/CDA/ssistory.mpl/nation/2713552.

based on the idea that terrorists might draw the lesson from Madrid that they can bring a peace party into office by scaring the voters or discrediting the incumbents through another major attack.

For five of the six terrorism alerts for which we can match survey data to the event timeline, we find a significant increase in the level of public concern about terrorism within six days of the alert period, compared with the baseline period (Figure 4).¹³ We are unable to account for the anomalous Event 3, other than by reminding readers that the number of interviews completed during the three periods associated with each event – except Event 4 – is sometimes small. Nonetheless, the results suggest that the warnings do achieve the intended effect of increasing public alertness to the possibility of a terrorist attack. This should be good news for the DHS concerning the efficacy of the terrorism alerts.¹⁴

[Figure 4 About Here]

Furthermore, the effects of the warning appear to be especially large for the last two events whose effects we are able to measure, Events 5 and 8. We would speculate that these heightened effects may be due in part to the low level of baseline concern about terrorism and the lack of any obvious immediate events that motivated the warnings. Coming out of the blue, as it were, these warnings were perhaps more shocking than warnings that came during periods of overall heightened levels of concern about terrorism or other events that might have attracted people’s attention. The effects of the warnings on these two occasions also suggest that the public has not become jaded because the government is perceived as having “cried wolf” on earlier occasions.

¹³ We did not have a survey in the field at the time of the Madrid bombings. We did have a survey in the field at the time of the August 1, 2004, “canonical economic centers” Orange Alert; however, the data from that survey are not yet ready for analysis.

¹⁴ Further study might be devoted to examining which kinds of people move more easily across different levels or thresholds in the response categories. Also, some events may more readily move people from “not concerned at all” into the “not very concerned,” while others are more likely to move people into the most intense “very concerned” category. However, the analysis of the effects of events reported here works equally well when the mean level of concern is used (assigning 4 points to “very,” 3 points to “somewhat,” and so on) instead of the two highest categories.

Finally, with the exception of Event 4 – the Orange Alert and the President’s Iraq ultimatum on March 17, 2003 – the effects of all of the alerts appear to have disappeared one week after the alert was announced. Once the immediacy of the warning event wears off, people revert to the previously prevailing level or trend.

Event 4 is, of course, different from all of the others because it marked the beginning of a massive three-week invasion of Iraq, culminating on about April 9th with Saddam Hussein and his government abandoning their posts, and later with President Bush’s triumphal visit on May 1 to the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln where he announced the end to major hostilities in Iraq. During much of that period people’s concern about another terrorist attack on American soil remained at a high level. But as we have noted, in surveys conducted beginning in late April 2003 til mid-June 2004 the level of concern about terrorism was notably lower than it had been at any other time after the 9/11 attacks, except for occasional one-week intervals after Orange Alert warnings were issued.

To complete this analysis of the effects of the terrorism alerts, we show in Figure 5 that terrorism warnings that clearly increased the public’s concern about terrorism for a few days did not raise their approval of President Bush if the President himself was not a major decisive actor in the event.¹⁵ The only one of the six events in which the terror warning was followed by a distinctive increase in presidential approval was the March 17, 2003 ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and the subsequent launching of the attack on Iraq on March 19th (U.S. time). From that event, President Bush’s approval soared and, as we know from other surveys as well, was sustained at a high level for a few weeks after the fall of Baghdad.¹⁶

¹⁵ For Event 8, the apparent rise in Bush approval one week after the event is probably an artifact of the small number of interviews conducted toward the end of the survey field period.

¹⁶ See job approval ratings gathered by PollingReport.com at <http://pollingreport.com/BushJob.htm>.

Finally, we can summarize the effects of the terror warnings (omitting the Iraq warning) on both popular concern about terrorism and approval of Bush by conducting a statistical analysis using pooled data from five surveys. In Table 2, we show that the mean effect of the terror warnings was a five point increase in the “warning period” compared with the base period in the percentage of the population that was somewhat concerned or very concerned about the prospects of a terrorist attack in the coming three months. While these estimates take into account the changes in the overall levels of concern, they do not reflect the apparently larger effects of the warnings for the last two events observed in Figure 4. But they show that the jump in concern associated with the warnings was statistically significant and that seven days after the event the concern had returned to the pre-event level.¹⁷

[Table 2 About Here]

Table 3 shows analogous results for Bush approval. On net there was no increase in Bush approval during the “warning period” compared with the baseline. Aside from the fact that the evidence suggests that whatever their intended purpose the terror warnings did not raise the President’s public approval, the evidence also suggests that the relationship between the concern about terrorism and presidential support is not straightforward. Although the cases of the immediate post-9/11 period and the Iraq War period show that events (and presidential action) can indeed drive presidential approval sharply upwards, this approval cannot be stimulated by ill-defined events that only raise popular anxiety. Furthermore, the results encourage us to look at the individual-level correlation between concern about terrorism and approval of the President both generally and over time.

[Table 3 About Here]

¹⁷ If we conduct the same analysis separately for each of the events, we also find that differences in the levels of concern in the six days after the warning compared with the baseline period were statistically significant for all except event 3.

Sociotropic Threat and Bush Approval

Bivariate Relationships. To test the idea that people who feel most frightened or threatened by terrorism are most likely to approve of the President's leadership, we begin by examining the simple correlations between sociotropic threat and presidential approval for all of the available Civil Liberties (national) and SOSS (Michigan) surveys. For the Michigan datasets we show results using both the 4-point presidential approval scales and a dichotomized version of these scales with "excellent" and "good" treated as "approve," and "fair" and "poor" treated as "disapprove; for the national datasets we use the 2-category approve-disapprove scale in those surveys. The measure of sociotropic threat is a 4-point scale, with "very concerned" coded as 4, and "not at all concerned" coded as 1. Thus, if greater threat is associated with greater approval of Bush, we should expect a positive correlation coefficient. Because we want to explore the consistency of the relationships over time, we do not pool the data from the surveys.

In the national Civil Liberties Survey Wave 1 – shortly after 9/11 – of those who were very concerned about terrorism 93 percent approved of George W. Bush's performance as president, 76 percent of those who were not at all concerned about terrorism approved of Bush's performance. This evidence is consistent with our initial expectation that those who would rally most to support the president were those who felt most threatened by terrorism. A similar result is found when we look at the national Civil Liberties Wave 2 survey – which includes the period surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom in March-April 2003. However, at most other dates, that is when there was not a sense of immediate crisis, the differences in approval associated with sociotropic threat are small.

[Table 4 About Here]

The correlation between perceptions of threat and presidential approval is sometimes negative. This was true, for example, in SOSS 29, which was conducted in the weeks immediately prior to President Bush's March 17, 2003, 48-hour ultimatum to Saddam Hussein. But perhaps most striking

is the magnitude of the negative relationship between threat and presidential approval in the last Michigan survey (SOSS 34): whereas among those who are not concerned at all about another attack, 59 percent approve of Bush, among those who are very concerned about another attack just 29 percent approve of Bush. If this result is part of a sea change in the perceptions of Bush, at a time shortly before the next election, the conventional wisdom about fear driving people to support Bush is wrong.

Multivariate Analysis. Before elaborating on this conclusion it is important to elaborate the statistical analysis by weighing the effects of other factors that might be driving the level of presidential approval. We introduce four sets of factors: (1) political orientations (party ID and ideology), (2) economic evaluations (current, retrospective and prospective financial situation), (3) foreign policy orientation (U.S. responsibility for the hatred that led to 9/11), and (4) socio-demographic characteristics (race, gender, age, and education).

The inclusion of party ID and ideology in an account of presidential approval needs little justification. These are relatively stable orientations and identities that often serve as short-hand heuristics for evaluating political actors, issues, and events. We expect Republican party identifiers to be much more likely to approve of Bush's performance than either independents or Democrats; similarly, we expect Conservatives to be much more approving of Bush's performance than Moderates or Liberals. For this analysis, we use a three-category party ID scale, based on answers to the first question of the standard American National Election Survey question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, Independent, Democrat, or something else?" Our measure of political ideology is a three-category scale based on the answer to the question: "Do you generally think of yourself as Conservative, Moderate, or Liberal?"

Economic sentiments are included in the equations under the expectation, well established in the literature on presidential popularity, that people who have prospered or are optimistic about their financial situation are more likely to approve of the president's performance. In the analysis of the

Michigan results we use the answers to three questions out of a standard battery available in every round of that survey. One of these questions is also employed in the national Civil Liberties Survey. These questions ask about the the retrospective, prospective, and current financial situation of the respondent (see the Appendix for Question wording). Income is an additional economic factor that we expect (other things being equal) to be positively associated with approval of Bush’s performance.

We deliberately avoid using questions that are likely to be strongly confounded with the assessment of the president itself – namely, questions on the sociotropic economic assessment of business conditions or the economy as a whole. We also sought to minimize the extent to which our indicator of “concern about another terrorist attack” might be confounded or confused with “concern about the economic consequences of another attack.”¹⁸

The Michigan surveys do not usually include questions on foreign policy attitudes. SOSS 34 did include several such questions that we will use in our analysis of the 2004 electoral choice. For six SOSS rounds, however, as well as the two national Civil Liberties Surveys, we included a question designed to evaluate one aspect of foreign policy performance:

How much responsibility do you personally believe the United States bears for the hatred that led to the terrorist attacks? Would you say a lot of responsibility, some responsibility, a little responsibility, or no responsibility?

We have assessed the responses to this question in a previous paper (Davis and Silver 2004c). Surprisingly, the country (as well as the state of Michigan) is fairly evenly divided on this issue; however, in all surveys in which we have asked this question a majority of respondents choose “a lot” or “some” responsibility. In the first wave of the national Civil Liberties Survey, 53 percent attributed some or a lot of responsibility to the U.S.; in wave 24 of the SOSS in Michigan, 55 percent held such a view, and in wave 34, 60 percent held this view.

¹⁸ The three economic indicators that we examine here show no response to the “terror warning events” that we analyzed earlier. That is, in the six days immediately following Orange Alerts or equivalent alarms, there is no significant change in people’s current, retrospective or prospective economic assessments.

One wave of the Michigan survey included a follow-up open-ended question that asked, “*When you say the U.S. bears some responsibility for the hatred that led to the terrorist attacks, what do you have in mind?*” The answers showed that in the great majority of cases people have in mind aspects of U.S. international behavior, ranging from our policy in the Middle East, to unilateralism, to arrogance in dealing with other countries, to giving an insufficient amount of foreign aid to less developed countries (Davis and Silver 2004c). Thus, the answers appear to reflect a broader view of foreign policy behavior than simply an evaluation of the anti-terrorist campaign. Although the answer to the “US Responsibility” question can be expected to be correlated with approval of the president’s overall performance, it need not be correlated with answers to the question on sociotropic fear. In fact, the correlation between the answers to these two questions is just .06, which while statistically significant ($p \leq .01$, with a pooled N of 5,537), suggests that these two factors have the potential to have statistically distinct impacts on presidential approval.

No social-demographic factor is likely to be as important to presidential approval as race. African Americans’ reactions to the attack on America have been markedly different from those of white and Hispanics (Davis and Silver 2004b). African Americans have been much less likely to give up civil liberties for the sake of greater security, even though on average African Americans are much more likely to be concerned about the threat of terrorism. At the same time, the overwhelming majority of African American voters chose Bush over Gore in the 2000 election, and thus can be expected in the post-9/11 period to give a less favorable assessment of Bush’s performance as President than either whites or Hispanics as a whole.

We also expect ethnicity to make a difference; roughly two-thirds of Hispanic voters chose Gore over Bush in 2000. Within our national Civil Liberties Survey, we have sufficient numbers of both African American and Hispanic respondents to assess differences between racial and ethnic groups. In SOSS, because Hispanics are a much smaller proportion of the population in Michigan than of the

country as a whole the estimated differences between Hispanics and whites are not statistically significant even when the coefficients are moderate in size. The African American proportion of the population of Michigan is similar to that of the country as a whole.

In addition to race and ethnicity we include a few covariates whose effects on presidential popularity we do not have firm prior theoretical expectations: education, gender, and age. However, we control for them in the statistical estimates because of their possible impact (following Kish 1959).

Table 5 shows the results of a series of logistic regression analyses, for every survey for which we had indicators in all of the categories of theoretical interest. The availability of the question on “U.S. responsibility” determines the number of surveys available for this analysis. Unlike in Table 4, the models in Table 5 treat the categories of the sociotropic threat variable as discrete, with “not concerned at all” as the reference category. This relaxes the assumption that our sociotropic threat indicator is an interval-level scale.¹⁹ This reveals that the effects of increasing perceived threat are sometimes not monotonic. By and large, however, the models perform respectably in predicting Bush approval, though of course in the first Civil Liberties Survey – conducted within a few months of the 9/11 attack – this approval was extremely high (90 percent) and in that sense it is easy to “predict” whether individual respondents would approve of Bush.

[Table 5 About Here]

More importantly, the multivariate models confirm the relationships between sociotropic threat and Bush approval depicted in Table 4. In the national survey conducted from November 15, 2001 to January 14, 2002 those who felt most threatened were most likely to voice approval of Bush’s performance, a relationship confirmed in the Michigan survey taken shortly thereafter (mid-January to

¹⁹ The substantive findings reported in this section would not change if we had kept the indicator as an interval scale; however, the magnitude of the estimated effects of perceived threat would, of course, differ somewhat. We rejected the alternative of simply dichotomizing the threat variable because the proportion of respondents who said they were “not concerned at all” was always much less 10 percent.

mid-February 2002). This was a period when Bush's approval ratings were still riding a crest achieved after 9/11. In the Civil Liberties 1 survey, among those who were very concerned about another attack, 92 percent approved of Bush's performance, while among those who were not at all concerned (only 3 percent of the respondents) 76 percent approved. In SOSS 24, among those who were very concerned 79 percent approved of Bush, while among those who were not at all concerned 56 percent approved.

The results for Civil Liberties 1 and SOSS 24 are consistent with the expectation that more threatened people would be most likely to rally to Bush. Later surveys generally do not support the expectation, and by the time SOSS 34 was conducted in April-June 2004 those who felt most threatened by terrorism were *less* likely to voice approval of Bush than those who felt least threatened. Adjusting for financial situation and assessments, political orientations, and social and demographic differences, in SOSS 34 among those very concerned about another attack 26 percent approved of Bush; among those who were somewhat concerned, 44 percent approved of Bush; among those who were not very concerned 41 percent approved; and among those who were not at all concerned 64 percent approved of Bush (Table 6). This reversal in the polarity of the relationship between threat perception and presidential approval suggests not just a loss in overall confidence in Bush but that Bush is now held accountable for the persistent threat.

[Table 6 About Here]

Of course, other factors do affect presidential approval, and in expected ways (see Table 5). Republicans and Conservatives are significantly more likely to approve of Bush, Democrats and Liberals less likely. African Americans are significantly less likely than whites or Hispanics to approve of Bush. By and large, people with more favorable economic circumstance are more likely to approve of Bush. And people who think the U.S. government bears at least some responsibility for the hatred that led to the terrorist attacks are less likely to approve of Bush. Net of all of these factors, the perception of

threat makes a difference. But our earliest surveys support the idea that threat increases presidential approval; our last survey totally inverts the relationship.

Threat of Terrorism and the 2004 Election

The two quotations posted at the beginning of this paper imply that those who are most concerned about terrorism will be more likely to support Bush because they view Bush as more capable of dealing with the terrorist threat. The last assumption itself could be begging the question for one reason: successive polls of the ABCNews/*Washington Post* have shown the gap between Bush and Kerry in their perceived ability to protect the country from terrorism to be diminishing.

We propose as a counter-hypothesis, however, that even if the incumbent were perceived as better able to pursue the effort against terrorism, the intensity and persistence of the terrorist threat itself may work against the incumbent, as would negative feelings about the Iraq war. We have already shown evidence of the negative effect of threat on presidential approval in recent months. Relying again on the latest available Michigan survey, we now ask whether when people feel more threatened they are less likely to support Bush for re-election in 2004. Our assessment of the vote choice between Kerry and Bush relies on SOSS 34, which was taken between mid-April and mid-June 2004. Later Michigan and national surveys (currently in the field) will allow us to update and elaborate this analysis.

Erosion of Bush Credibility, Opportunity for Kerry. In his State of the Union address on January 20, 2004, which was regarded by some as Bush's first campaign speech of the 2004 election, the President warned of the continuing threat of terrorism in America. As the year went on, and the leading contenders for the Democratic nomination reduced to one presumed nominee, polls showed that people

considered Bush best able to protect the country against terrorism. As a political issue, combating terrorism seemed to be Bush's strong suit.²⁰

However in Winter and Spring, the persistent problems in Iraq continued to raise questions about the President's prewar planning as well as his management of the antiterrorism war in general. David Kay, who headed the administration's inspectorate for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, declared in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on January 28, 2004, "Let me begin by saying, we were almost all wrong, and I certainly include myself here" in expecting that the Iraq Survey Team would find WMD in Iraq. Kay called for an investigation and analysis of why this error had occurred.²¹ In a highly publicized event in late March, Richard Clarke, former "antiterrorism tsar" of the Bush administration, in televised testimony before the "9/11 commission" accused the Bush administration of neglecting the threat of terrorism prior to 9/11 and diverting its focus toward Iraq immediately after 9/11 (also see Clarke 2004). The scandal of prisoner abuse by American armed forces in Iraq broke out in late April 2004 and brought Congressional hearings in May and further public criticism of the Bush administration's leadership. In late May 2004, General Tony Zinni, first in a highly publicized interview on the CBS News' "60 Minutes" and then in a book authored by the novelist Tom Clancy (2004), declared that Bush's foreign policy, especially the initiative in Iraq, had weakened American national security.

²⁰ As if to document the Bush administration's successes, the State Department's 2003 edition of its annual Patterns of Global Terrorism report, released originally in April 2004, revealed a sharp downturn in terrorism events in the year 2003 – implying that the U.S. was winning the global war against terrorism. However, after receiving numerous expressions of skepticism about the report, and about changing definitions and coverage, on June 10th the State Department issued a statement: "Correction to Global Patterns of Terrorism Will Be Issued." The report was then declared to be a "mistake" by Secretary of State Colin Powell (CNN June 13, 2004), and later reissued.

²¹ "Transcript: David Kay at Senate Hearing," CNN.com (January 28, 2004) at <http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/01/28/kay.transcript/>.

Vice President Richard Cheney continued to assert on the campaign trail that Saddam Hussein had “long established ties” with al Qaeda.²² And the president reemphasized the same even after the 9/11 Commission reported that there was “no credible evidence” of a collaboration between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein on 9/11. Furthermore, although American popular support for the decision to enter Iraq held fast from March through early June 2004, with a majority considering it to have been the “right decision,” opinion was evenly divided on whether the Iraq war had reduced or increased the terrorist threat and a majority disapproved of the way President Bush had handled the war (Pew 2004c).

Thus, in late Spring and early Summer, the 2004 election campaign shaped up with the threat of terrorism at the center of public attention and the President’s decision to depose Saddam Hussein and his planning and management of post-Saddam Iraq the subject of increasing criticism and concern. The series of highly publicized criticisms and revelations in the first half of 2004 appears to have undermined the credibility of Bush’s leadership, as well as his approval ratings, and given reason for John Kerry to seek electoral advantage on what was to be Bush’s strongest suit in the 2004 election campaign.

Survey Questions. Our analysis incorporates the variables used in the Bush approval analysis. However in place of Bush approval, we use the electoral choice between Bush and Kerry based on the question:

*If the presidential election were held today, who would you vote for? George Bush, John Kerry, or someone else?*²³

Furthermore the survey included additional questions that may help to account for this choice. First, it includes several questions comparing Bush and Kerry:

I would like to read you some policy areas and have you tell me which presidential candidate, George Bush or John Kerry, you think can do a better job in that policy area. Which candidate do you think

²² “Cheney Claims Ties Between Saddam, al Qaeda,” CNN.com, June 15, 2004.

²³ At the time of the survey it was not known whether Ralph Nader would be on the ballot in Michigan. Some respondents did just answer “someone else,” and some explicitly mentioned Nader.

*can do a better job of . . . protecting America from terrorism on our own soil? . . . Conducting America's foreign policy? . . . Managing the economy? . . . Protecting your civil liberties? . . . Protecting the environment? . . . Being a strong leader in times of crisis? . . . Reducing unemployment and creating more jobs?*²⁴

We focus on whether the candidates evaluated Kerry or Bush as likely to do a better job at protecting the country against terrorism (CI1a), conducting America's foreign policy (CI1b), and managing the economy (CI1c). At the time our latest Michigan survey, 55 percent of Michiganders regarded Bush as likely to do the better job handling terrorism, compared to just 28 percent who regarded Kerry as likely to do better; 43 percent regarded Kerry as better able to conduct America's foreign policy, compared to 39 percent for Bush; and 46 percent regarded Kerry as better able to manage the economy, compared to 37 percent for Bush.

In addition, the survey includes two questions about Iraq:

Now, thinking about the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, do you think it was justified, or not justified?

Do you think the potential benefits of the war in Iraq outweigh the costs that Americans are bearing?

Opinion on these two items was fairly evenly split. In answer to the first question, 52 percent responded that the invasion of Iraq was justified. In answer to the second, 47 percent responded that the benefits of the war outweigh the costs. These percentages are in line with those found in national surveys in early summer.²⁵

Our goal is not to forecast the November vote but instead to learn how the threat of terrorism may play into the choice between the two major party candidates. At the time of our survey, quite a few respondents remained "undecided." This includes a disproportionate number of African Americans who, we surmise, would be very likely to choose Kerry if they were to vote but at the time of the survey said they were "undecided" between Bush and Kerry (Davis and Silver 2004d). These may be late

²⁴ The order of Kerry's and Bush's names as well as the policy areas were randomized in the survey.

²⁵ The responses to both of these questions are more evenly split than a year ago, and even in January of 2004, when nearly two out of three Americans regarded the U.S. decision to use military force in Iraq as the right decision (Pew 2004a).

deciders but their likely preference is highly predictable. In the analysis we include respondents who expressed a preference either for Kerry or for Bush, without trying to predict the decision whether to vote or to screen for likely voters.

Analysis. Model 1 in Table 6 assesses the effects of sociotropic threat, economic self-reports, and the demographic variables on the electoral choice of Bush over Kerry. As in the model of presidential approval using the same survey (see SOSS 34 in Table 5), higher levels of concern about a terrorist attack are associated with lower support for Bush's re-election. Whereas among those who are not at all concerned about an attack 65 percent prefer Bush to Kerry, among those who are very concerned about an attack 32 percent prefer Bush to Kerry (Table 7).

[Table 6 About Here]

Model 2 in Table 6 adds party identification and liberal-conservative ideology to the equation. These factors work as predicted. With these political orientations taken into account, concern about terrorism still has an independent effect on the Bush-Kerry choice. And greater concern about terrorism is associated with a greater preference for Kerry over Bush. Among those who express no concern about another attack, 67 percent prefer Bush to Kerry; among those who are very concerned about such an attack, only 40 percent prefer Bush over Kerry (Table 7).

Model 3 substitutes a set of variables assessing the relative strength of Bush and Kerry in specific policy areas. Because these variables are highly correlated with the political orientation variables, the two kinds of variables are not placed in the same equation. Furthermore, there is substantial risk that how people answer the policy questions is in effect determined by their prior decision to vote for Kerry or Bush. But the policy variables allow us to interpret the vote choice in a different way than before. In place of the "U.S. responsibility" variable used in the presidential approval analysis, we now incorporate variables reflecting the judgment whether Bush or Kerry can do a better job conducting foreign policy, whether Bush or Kerry can do a better job of protecting America from terrorism on our

own soil, whether the decision to invade Iraq was justified, and whether the benefits of the Iraq initiative outweigh the costs. In addition, the equation includes variables indicating whether Bush or Kerry is perceived to be better able to manage the economy.

All of the coefficients for the candidate evaluation variables have the expected signs, and most are statistically significant. But as suggested above, these coefficients are probably artificially high because of the reciprocal effect of the prior vote choice on how people answer the issue questions. However, even taking into account the perceptions of the candidates' ability to handle foreign affairs, terrorism, and the economy – as well as people's evaluation of the war in Iraq – the sense of threat still matters. Greater perceived threat is associated with lower support for Bush (see Table 7). Thus, the perception of threat has a distinctive, and negative, effect on support for Bush.

[Table 7 About Here]

The conventional wisdom, quoted at the beginning of this paper, about the impact of fear on support for Bush was predicated on two assumptions: first, that threat or fear by itself would drive people to support the incumbent; second, that the effect of fear would be magnified in Bush's favor because Bush was perceived as better able to conduct the campaign against terrorism. That is, there would be an "interaction effect" of fear and the perception of Bush as a stronger leader in the campaign against terrorism.

We have shown, however, that although the sense of threat did indeed foster support for Bush during major rallies in the first two years after 9/11, by late Spring 2004 the polarity had reversed: greater perceived threat was correlated with *lower* Bush job approval and stronger preference for Kerry in the November election. Panel 1 in Figure 7 shows this overall negative effect of greater threat on voter support for Bush. Reflecting an interaction of threat with perceptions of Bush's ability to handle the antiterrorist campaign, Panel 2 shows that even among people who think Bush is better able to protect the country from terrorism, stronger sense of threat is associated with eroding support for Bush

over Kerry. In contrast, Panel 3 shows that among those who think Kerry is better able to protect the country from terrorism, support for Kerry does not vary with people's level of concern about terrorism.²⁶ Thus, the effects of threat are asymmetrical for the two candidates.

[Figure 7 About Here]

Conclusion

Our study calls into question the conventional wisdom that fear of terrorism impels people to support Bush's reelection. Terror alerts (Orange Alerts) have no effect on approval of Bush, though they do raise people's concern about terrorism. Higher levels of concern about terrorism used to be associated with greater support for President Bush, but if the results of our latest survey in Michigan hold up this association is no longer true. In 2004, a long series of revelations and criticisms of Bush's antiterrorism policies, the rationale for launching the war in 2003, the planning and management of post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, and foreign policy generally, gave John Kerry an opportunity to make fighting terrorism his issue rather than Bush's.

As this paper is being written, whether the latest Orange Alert (event number 9 in Figure 3) was based on evidence of an imminent security threat is being widely debated in the mass media (e.g., Eggen and Priest 2004, Kessler 2004, Zajac and McCormick 2004). However, many commentators continue to assume that whether or not the motivations for the alerts are cynical efforts to promote Bush's reelection, a climate of fear favors Bush's re-election. Our evidence questions this assumption. Although no one can be sure what would happen in the election if there were an actual terrorist attack before election day, Kerry has positioned himself as someone who would do a better job of managing American foreign policy and he is on the verge of establishing in the public's mind that he is better able

²⁶ Figure 7 is based on a statistical test of interaction effects between sociotropic threat and whether Bush or Kerry is seen as better able to handle the campaign against terrorism. The equation is not shown in a table. If instead of using predicted vote proportions we were to include the actual stated vote intentions from the survey, the results would be substantially similar to those reported in Figure 7.

than Bush to handle the U.S. campaign against terrorism and the situation in Iraq. It also seems plausible to argue that it would be Kerry rather than Bush who most benefits from continued high levels of concern about terrorism, perhaps even in the event of a new terrorist attack in the U.S., because a failure to reduce the threat or to prevent another attack could signal the need for new leadership in the White House. If so, what once was regarded as the incumbent's strongest suit in his re-election campaign may be taken over by the challenger.

Appendix: Wording of Survey Items

Presidential Approval

The Civil Liberties Survey (national survey):

“Do you approve or disapprove of the job that George W. Bush is doing as President?”

The Michigan SOSS surveys ask:

“Overall, how would you rate the way President Bush is performing his job as President?

Would you say excellent, good, fair, or poor? Would you say excellent, good, poor, or fair?”

Party ID

“Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, and Independent, or something else?”

Ideology

“Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Conservative, a Moderate, or a Liberal?”

Financial Situation

[Retrospective] “Would you say that you (and your family living there) are better off [3] or worse off [1] financially than you were a year ago?” [CC1] ® volunteered “Same”=2)

[Prospective] “Now looking ahead, do you think that a year from now, you (and your family living there) will be better off financially or worse off financially?” [CC2]

[Current] “How would you rate your household's overall financial situation these days? Would you say it is excellent [5], good [4], just fair [3], not so good [2], or poor [1]?” [CC3]

Security from Terrorism

[Sociotropic threat] “All in all, how concerned are you that the United States might suffer another terrorist attack in the next 3 months? Would you say you are very concerned [4], somewhat concerned [3], not very concerned [2], or not concerned at all [1]?” [SEC4]

[Govt. protecting] “How would you rate the job the federal government in Washington has done in preventing or preparing for the possibility of another terrorist attack? Would you say excellent [4], good [3], only fair [2], or poor [1]?” [AT4]

[Terrorists' ability] “Overall, do you think the ability of terrorists to launch another major attack on the U.S. is greater than [3] it was before September 11, 2001, the same as [2] it was at the time of the 9/11 attack, or less than it was at that time [1]?” [AT6]

Foreign Policy

[U.S. Responsibility] “How much responsibility do you personally believe the U.S. bears for the hatred that led to the terrorist attacks? A lot [4], some [3], a little [2], or none at all [1]?” [CT1]

Iraq

[Iraq Justified] “Now, thinking about the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, do you think it was justified, or not justified?” [IR1]

[Iraq Benefit/Cost] “Do you think the potential benefits of the war in Iraq outweigh the costs that Americans are bearing?” [IR2]

Comparing Bush and Kerry Policies

“I would like to read you some policy areas and have you tell me which presidential candidate, George Bush or John Kerry, you think can do a better job in that policy area. Which candidate do you think can do a better job of . . . protecting America from terrorism on our own soil? . . . Conducting America's foreign policy? . . . Managing the economy? . . . Protecting your civil liberties? . . . Protecting the environment? . . . Being a strong leader in times of crisis? . . . Reducing unemployment and creating more jobs?” [CI1a through CI1g]

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Table 1. Specifications from First and Second Waves of Civil Liberties Survey

	Field Dates	N	Samples	Completion Rate	Language of Interview
Wave 1	15 Nov. 2001 to 14 Jan. 2002 (median interview: Dec. 12, 2001)	1,448	National RDD, Oversamples of Latinos and African American	52.4 percent of RDD Sample (AAPOR RR4)	English
Wave 2	Jan. 31, 2003 to May 28, 2003 (median interview: March 17, 2003)	1,963	Panel: 679 ^a New Wave 2: 1,284, National RDD, Oversamples of Latinos and African American	46.9 percent of 1,448 ^b 41.1 percent of RDD Sample (AAPOR RR4)	English and Spanish

^a The data from each wave are weighted to correct for the oversampling of Latinos and African Americans, as well as to adjust for differences by education, age, and sex between the respondents and the US population for the year 2002. In the unweighted data, in Wave 1 the numbers of respondents by race are 891 White (non-Hispanic), 201 Hispanic (not black), 322 African-American, and 34 Other. In wave 2 (including the panel and the new respondents), the numbers are 1,115 White (non-Hispanic), 413 Hispanic (not Black), 385 African-American, and 50 Other.

^b Reinterviews were attempted only with respondents from the first wave who agreed to be recontacted (93 percent of the respondents). Of the 1,298 who agreed, second wave interviews were completed with 53.2 percent. Most of the fall-off was due to respondents who could not be located for reinterviews.

Table 2. Predicted Effect of Five non-Iraq Threatening Events on Concern about a Terrorist Attack (logistic regression)^a

Variable^b	b	Standard Error	Significance	Exp(B)
Day 1-6	0.387	0.134	0.004	1.473
Day 7 or later	0.105	0.09	0.246	1.11
SOSS 27	-0.296	0.125	0.017	0.744
SOSS 29	-0.184	0.115	0.111	0.832
SOSS 30	-0.844	0.114	0.001	0.43
SOSS 34	-0.856	0.109	0.001	0.425
Constant	1.544	0.085	0.001	4.685
<i>N</i>	4880			
Nagelkerke R ²	0.034			
Pct. Predicted	75.8			

^a Binary dependent variable: whether respondent was “very concerned” or “somewhat concerned” about another terrorist attack, as opposed to “not very concerned” or “not at all concerned.”

^b Reference categories are: Before Event and SOSS24. The analysis is based on data from Michigan only.

Prediction Conditioned on	Predicted Probability of Being Concerned
Before Event	.754
Days 1-6 of Event	.805
After Event	.751
Overall	.758

Table 3. Predicted Effect of Five non-Iraq Threatening Events on Bush Approval^a

Variable	b	Standard Error	Significance	Exp(B)
Days 1-6	-0.075	0.115	0.510	0.927
Day 7 or later	-0.243	0.081	0.003	0.784
SOSS 27	-0.709	0.109	0.001	0.492
SOSS 29	-1.510	0.099	0.001	0.221
SOSS 30	-0.763	0.105	0.001	0.466
SOSS 34	-1.592	0.101	0.001	0.927
Constant	1.24	0.076	0.001	3.457
<i>N</i>	4880			
Nagelkerke R ²	0.097			
Pct. Predicted	62.6			

^a Binary dependent variable: whether the respondent said Bush is doing an “Excellent” or “good” job as president, as opposed to “fair” or “poor.”

^b Reference categories are: “Before Event” and SOSS 24. The analysis is based on data from Michigan only.

Prediction Conditioned on	Predicted Probability Approving of Bush
Before Event	0.563
Days 1-6 of Event	0.569
After Event	0.545
Overall	0.558

Table 4. Bivariate Correlations between Concern about Terrorist Attack and Bush Approval

Survey	Field Dates	Correlation with Bush Performance Measured as:		Predicted ^a Percent Approving if:	
		Approve- Disapprove	4-point scale	Not at all Concerned	Very Concerned
Civil 1 (USA)	11-15-01– 1-29-02	.104** ($<.001$)	NA	76	93
SOSS 24 (MI)	1-11-02– 2-19-02	.009 (.769)	.058 (.066)	76	78
SOSS 25 (MI)	3-08-02– 4-23-02	.009 (.793)	.064* (.049)	72	73
SOSS 27 (MI)	8-15-02– 10-27-02	.012 (.720)	.023 (.487)	58	60
SOSS 28 (MI)	10-19-02– 12-31-02	-.011 (.744)	-.001 (.964)	59	57
SOSS 29 (MI)	1-21-03– 3-10-03	-.063* (.050)	.013 (.674)	50	39
Civil 2 (USA)	1-31-03– 5-02-03	.049* (.038)	NA	64	72
SOSS 30 (MI)	4-25-03– 6-16-03	.102* (.002)	.064* (.049)	48	65
SOSS 31 (MI)	6-27-03– 8-11-03	.022 (.493)	.017 (.595)	49	53
SOSS 32 (MI)	10-27-03– 12-01-03	-.044 (.178)	-.065* (.045)	41	33
SOSS 33 (MI)	1-31-04– 3-11-04	.034 (.303)	.034 (.345)	41	47
SOSS 34 (MI)	4-19-04– 6-15-04	-.182** ($<.001$)	-.174** ($<.001$)	59	29

* Significant at $p \leq .05$ (2-tailed)

** Significant at $p \leq .01$ (2-tailed)

^a Predictions are based on logistic regression of the dichotomous presidential approval variable on the four-category question on sociotropic fear, treated as an interval-level measure. The regression coefficients are not shown.

Table 5. Logistic Regression of Effects of Sociotropic Threat and Other Factors on Bush Approval^a

	Civil 1	SOSS24	SOSS25	SOSS27	Civil 2	SOSS30	SOSS33	SOSS34
Concerned about Attack?^b								
Very	1.242* (.013)	1.207* (.012)	-.265 (.606)	1.395 (.388)	-.024 (.939)	1.046* (.019)	.292 (.508)	-1.411** (.006)
Somewhat	1.230* (.013)	1.072* (.026)	-.460 (.364)	1.027 (.232)	.009 (.977)	.576 (.161)	-.295 (.429)	-1.695** (.001)
Not Very	1.068 (.056)	1.041 (.052)	-1.231* (.029)	1.445 (.103)	-.993** (.005)	.066 (.878)	.032 (.938)	-2.193** (.001)
Financial Assessment^c								
Retrospective		-.184 (.162)	.252 (.088)	.438** (.002)		.280* (.019)	.225 (.129)	-.144 (.372)
Current	.017 (.909)	.722** (.001)	.312* (.021)	.163 (.289)	.298** (.002)	-.046 (.721)	.479** (.003)	.386* (.028)
Prospective		.170 (.271)	.250 (.122)	.426** (.005)		-.375** (.006)	.336* (.028)	.847** (.001)
Income	.071 (.170)	-.152** (.007)	.026 (.642)	-.092 (.156)	.016 (.614)	-.046 (.368)	-.056 (.394)	.140* (.036)
Political Orientations^d								
Republican	1.104** (.002)	1.815** (.001)	1.368** (.001)	1.808** (.001)	2.095** (.001)	1.848** (.001)	2.542** (.001)	1.671** (.001)
Democrat	.068 (.780)	-.090 (.691)	-.704** (.002)	-.756** (.003)	-.214 (.163)	-.877** (.001)	-1.022** (.001)	-2.219** (.001)
Conservative	.077 (.786)	.729** (.004)	1.013** (.001)	-.171 (.510)	.929** (.001)	.213 (.350)	.920** (.001)	1.074** (.001)
Liberal	-.920** (.001)	-.048 (.859)	-.353 (.169)	-1.348** (.001)	-.421* (.015)	-.602* (.021)	-1.116** (.002)	-1.333* (.011)
Foreign Policy Orientation								
U.S. responsible ^c	-.410** (.001)	-.255* (.013)	-.347** (.001)	-.787** (.001)	-.927** (.001)	-.460** (.001)	-.353** (.003)	-.664** (.001)
Race and Ethnicity								
Black	-.897** (.002)	-1.084** (.001)	-1.338** (.001)	-1.222** (.002)	-.466* (.028)	-.127 (.683)	-3.966** (.001)	-1.210* (.049)
Hispanic	.484 (.281)	-.967 (.057)	-.825 (.178)	-.193 (.798)	.643* (.010)	.272 (.717)	2.179 (.113)	.465 (.592)
Demographic Variables								
Female	.288 (.199)	-.301 (.157)	.094 (.652)	-.038 (.872)	-.385** (.008)	-.109 (.570)	-.234 (.329)	.296 (.237)
Age	.020 (.754)	-.014 (.813)	.008 (.905)	.005 (.944)	-.066 (.096)	-.086 (.137)	-.217** (.002)	.116 (.140)
Education	-.385** (.001)	.149 (.210)	-.094 (.647)	-.092 (.156)	-.219** (.002)	.004 (.969)	-.071 (.618)	.289* (.036)
Constant	2.273** (.005)	-1.329 (.128)	.225 (.813)	-.329 (.777)	3.014** (.001)	.415 (.589)	-.995 (.296)	-2.816** (.004)
<i>N</i>	1125	765	753	666	1,500	718	634	690
Pct. Correctly Predicted	90.3	80.7	80.1	81.1	79.3	74.0	82.1	85.2
Base Pct. Predicted	90.8	79.3	75.0	61.9	69.8	61.5	54.1	58.6
Nagelkerke R ²	.189	.294	.365	.518	.439	.391	.631	.671

^a Approve-Disapprove of Bush is the dependent variable. * Significant at $p \leq .05$ (2-tailed) ** Significant at $p \leq .01$ (2-tailed)

^b Omitted category: Not at all concerned. ^c Continuous variables, with more favorable economic assessments scored in positive direction.

^d Omitted categories: Independent Party ID, Moderate ideology. ^e Continuous variable, with “a lot of responsibility” scored as 4, “none at all” scored as 1.

Table 6. Logistic Regression of Effects of Sociotropic Threat and Other Factors on Intention to Vote for Bush^a (SOSS34 – Michigan, Mid April-Mid June 2004)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Concerned about Attack?^b			
Very	-1.431** (.001)	-1.844** (.002)	-2.234 (.082)
Somewhat	-.765* (.030)	-1.896** (.001)	-2.005 (.098)
Not Very	-.604 (.102)	-1.671** (.005)	-.904 (.510)
Financial Assessment^c			
Retrospective	.312* (.018)	-.208 (.326)	-.599 (.238)
Current	.141 (.301)	.343** (.121)	.199 (.663)
Prospective	.692** (.001)	.696** (.001)	-.027 (.956)
Income	.090 (.091)	.089 (.322)	.052 (.789)
Political Orientations^d			
Republican		3.339** (.001)	
Democrat		-2.688** (.001)	
Conservative		1.586** (.001)	
Liberal		-1.182* (.047)	
Policy Assessments			
Prefer Bush foreign pol.			2.236* (.023)
Prefer Kerry foreign pol.			-5.003** (.001)
Prefer Bush terror pol.			1.992 (.108)
Prefer Kerry terror pol.			-.493 (.741)
Iraq War Justified			1.222 (.106)
Iraq Benefits Outweigh Costs			2.540** (.014)
Demographic Variables			
Black	-1.835** (.001)	-.890 (.218)	1.607 (.143)
Female	-.614** (.002)	-.622* (.047)	-1.918* (.030)
Age	.222** (.001)	.035 (.721)	.275 (.721)
Education	.202 (.092)	.226 (.206)	.226 (.251)
Constant	-3.529** (.001)	-2.133 (.051)	1.466 (.575)
<i>N</i>	589	581	581
Pct. Correctly Predicted	74.0	89.2	97.7
Base Pct. Predicted	50.1	50.5	50.1
Nagelkerke R ²	.329	.781	.945

^a Intend to vote for Bush rather than Kerry of Bush is the dependent variable (respondents who are undecided or prefer another candidate are omitted).

Table 7. Predicted Mean Percent Intending to Vote for Bush, by Level of Sociotropic Threat (from models in Table 6)^a

How Concerned about Terrorist Attack?	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Not at all	65	65	67
Not very	55	51	48
Somewhat	53	54	52
Very	32	34	40

^a Analysis is limited to respondents who say they intend to vote for Bush or Kerry, i.e., those intending to vote for any other candidate, or who are undecided, are excluded.

Figure 1. Percent Very or Somewhat Concerned about a Terrorist Attack in Next 3 Months

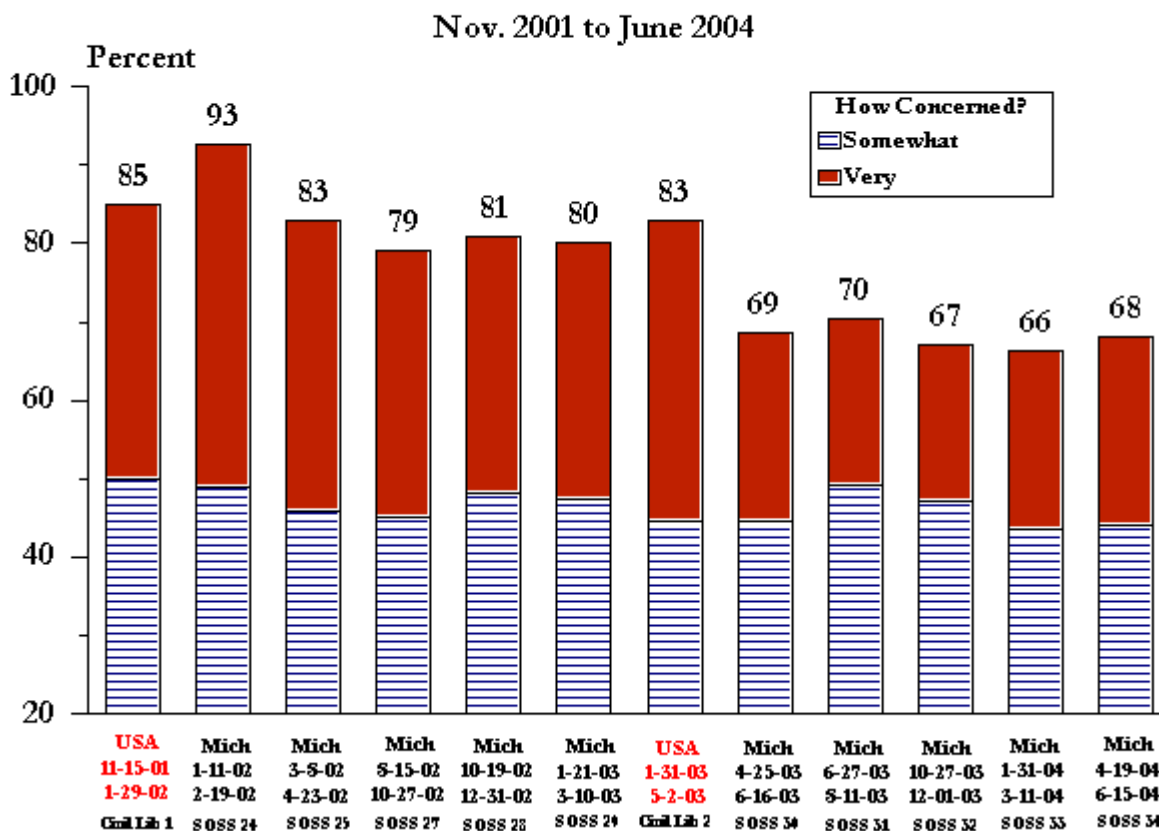


Figure 2. Percent "Very" Concerned about Terrorist Attack in Next 3 Months

Nov. 2001 to June 2004

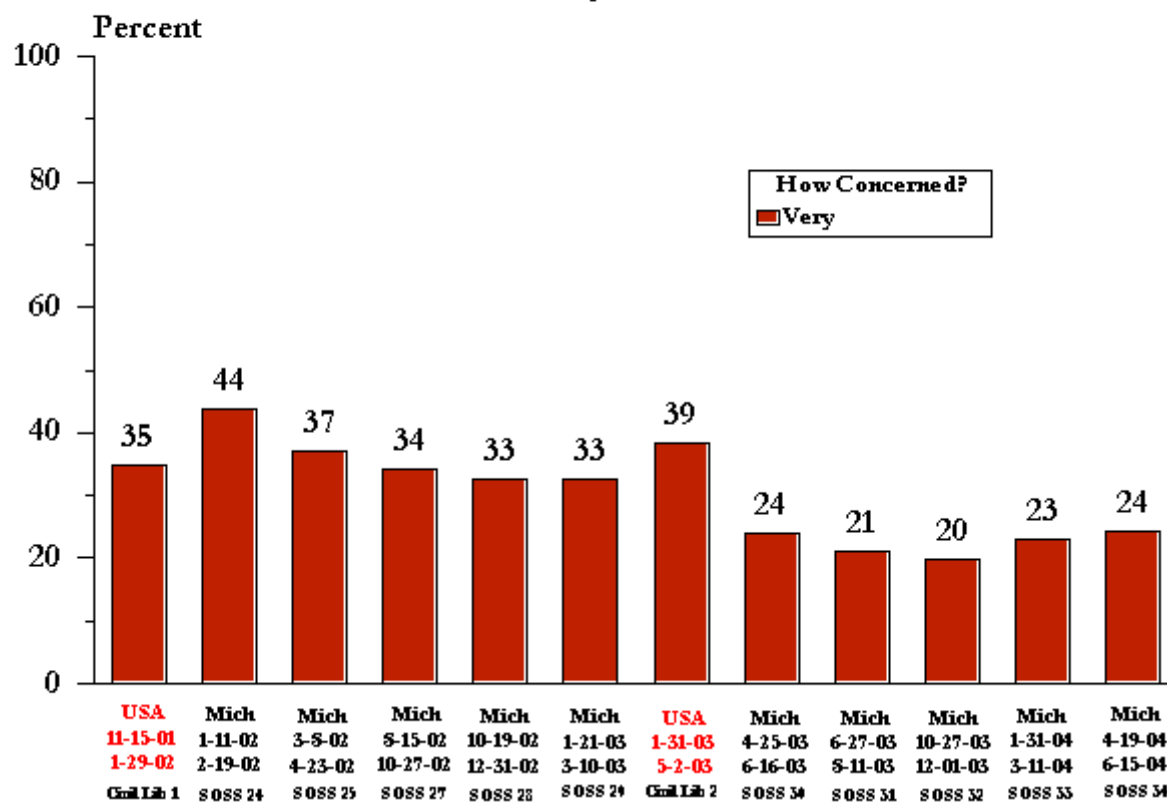


Figure 3. Terror Event Timeline

2001	11-Sep	WORLD TRADE CENTER & PENTAGON STRUCK BY AIRPLANES		
	14-Sep	President at Ground Zero: “The people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon.”		
	20-Sep	President speaks to the nation in Joint Session of Congress		
	5-Oct	Anthrax death -- Robert Stevens first of five to die, awakens national concern about bioterrorism		
	7-Oct	Invasion of Afghanistan (“Operation Enduring Freedom”)		
	8-Oct	Office of Homeland Security set up in White House, headed by Tom Ridge		
	26-Oct	President signs U.S.A. Patriot Act after overwhelming support in Congress		
	12-Nov	Taliban flee Kabul, Northern Alliance enters on 13-November		
	12-Nov	AA Flight 587 crashes shortly after takeoff from LaGuardia, initial concern it’s caused by terrorists		
	22-Dec	“Shoe bomber” Richard Reid attempts to blow up Paris to Miami flight, subdued by crew		
	2002	17-Jan	Ashcroft, Mueller news conf, release tapes recovered from rubble of Afghanistan, name suspects	
		25-Jan	Ashcroft, Mueller news conf. -- release photos of 5 suspected terrorists	
		29-Jan	Ashcroft press release announces heightened security at Winter Olympics	
29-Jan		Bush State of Union: “states in the . . . axis of evil . . . pose a grave and growing danger.”		
3-Feb		TERRORISM ALERT (before the color-coded scheme introduced)	EVENT 1	
8-Feb		Winter Olympic Games open in Salt Lake City	SOSS24	
24-Feb		Winter Olympic Games end		
27-Feb		TERORISM ALERT ENDS		
12-Mar		Color coded “Homeland Security Advisory System” created by Presidential order		
26-Aug		Cheney to VFW in Nashville: “The risks of inaction are far greater than the risks of action” in Iraq.		
10-Sep		ORANGE ALERT -- anniversary of 9/11 (first actual use of color coded system)	EVENT 2	
12-Sep		Bush to UN General Assembly: Iraqi regime a threat to the UN and to peace		
24-Sep		BACK TO YELLOW	SOSS27	
4-Oct	“Shoe bomber” pleads guilty, sentenced to 20 years			
11-Oct	Congress authorizes the use of U.S. military force against Iraq			
12-Oct	Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist bomb in Bali nightclub kills 202 people			
25-Nov	Homeland Security Act signed by President, authorizes Dept. of Homeland Security			
2003	24-Jan	Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) opens, ending WH Office of Homeland Security		
	29-Jan	Bush State of Union: “If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm . . . we will lead a coalition to disarm him.”		
	5-Feb	Colin Powell addresses UN Security Council on Iraq denial and deception on WMD		
	7-Feb	ORANGE ALERT (run on sales of duct tape and plastic sheeting)	EVENT 3	
	13-Feb	Law enforcement, Americans brace for imminent attack on NY, DC, or FL: “dirty bomb scare”	SOSS29	
	27-Feb	BACK TO YELLOW		
	1-Mar	DHS absorbs 180,000 employees from other agencies and offices		
	17-Mar	Bush 48 Hour Ultimatum to Saddam Hussein	EVENT 4	
	17-Mar	ORANGE ALERT (DHS announces “Operation Liberty Shield”)	Civil Lib. 2	
	19-Mar	Bush speech from Oval Office (bombs over Baghdad 20 Mar) (“Operation Iraqi Freedom”)		
	25-Mar	Texas oil plants on terror alert		
	9-Apr	Saddam Hussein statue pulled down in Firdos Square in Baghdad		
	11-Apr	101st Airborne enters Baghdad		
16-Apr	BACK TO YELLOW			
1-May	Bush on deck of USS Abraham Lincoln, declares “major combat operations in Iraq have ended”			
12,16-May	Bombings in Saudi Arabia (May 12), Morocco (May 16)			
20-May	ORANGE ALERT--Boston, NY, in wake of Saudi Arabia and Morocco bombings	EVENT 5		
30-May	BACK TO YELLOW	SOSS30		
22-Jul	Saddam Hussein’s sons killed in shoot-out with American troops in Mosul			
4-Sep	DHS warning of Al Qaeda plans to hijack airliners between international points and the U.S.			
21-Nov	DHS urges vigilance in holiday season, refers to aircraft and chemical/hazmat facilities			
13-Dec	Saddam Hussein rooted out of spider hole			
21-Dec	ORANGE ALERT -- “chatter” suggests could be holiday attack	EVENT 6		
2004	9-Jan	BACK TO YELLOW but stays orange for NYC, LA, DC, and Las Vegas		
	11-Mar	MADRID TRAIN BOMBINGS kill 191, injure 2000 (no Orange Alert)	EVENT 7	
	26-May	ASHCROFT WARNING of terrorist plans related to coming major political events	EVENT 8	
	28-May	Ashcroft-Ridge joint press release strikes calmer tone	SOSS34	
	25-Jun	AP story about Fed Election Assistance Commission researching how to “cancel the election”		
	1-Jul	Ashcroft in Miami: plot to attack U.S. this year is “between 75 and 90 percent complete”		
	2-Jul	FBI urges increased vigilance for July 4th weekend		
	8-Jul	Ridge reports Al Qaeda plans major attack on U.S. to “disrupt our democratic process”		
	22-Jul	9/11 Commission issues report: “We are not safe”		
	1-Aug	ORANGE ALERT – DC, NY, northern New Jersey “iconic economic targets”	EVENT 9	

Figure 4. Impact of Threatening Events on Concern about Terrorist Attack in U.S.

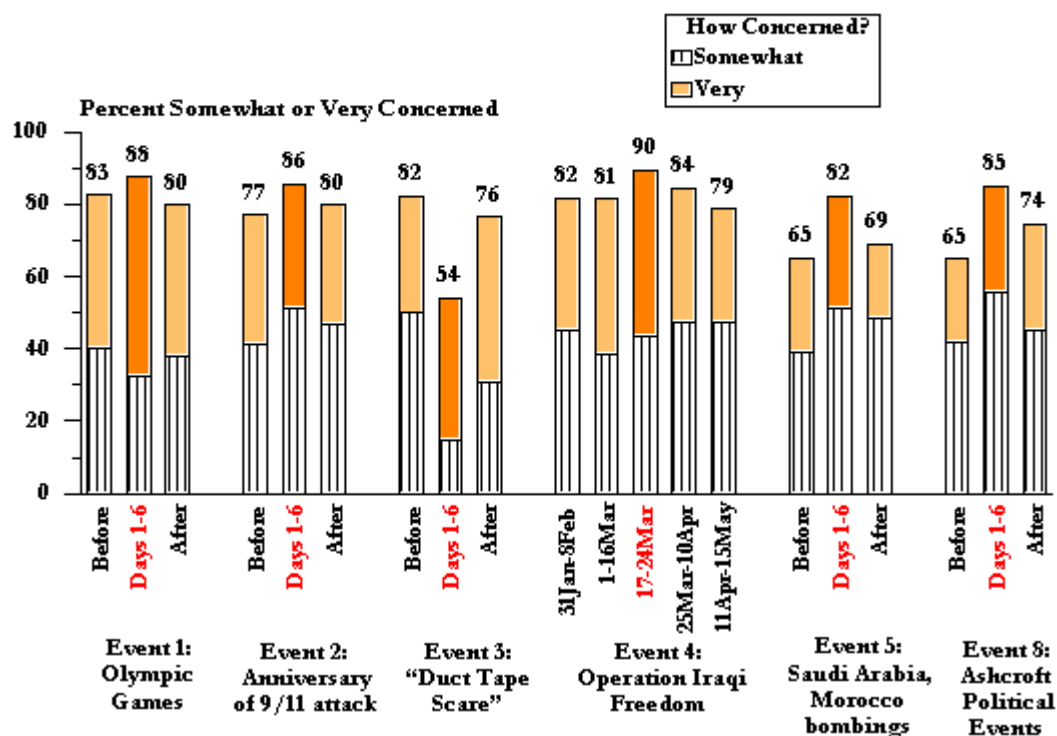


Figure 5. Impact of Threatening Events on Approval of Bush's Performance as President

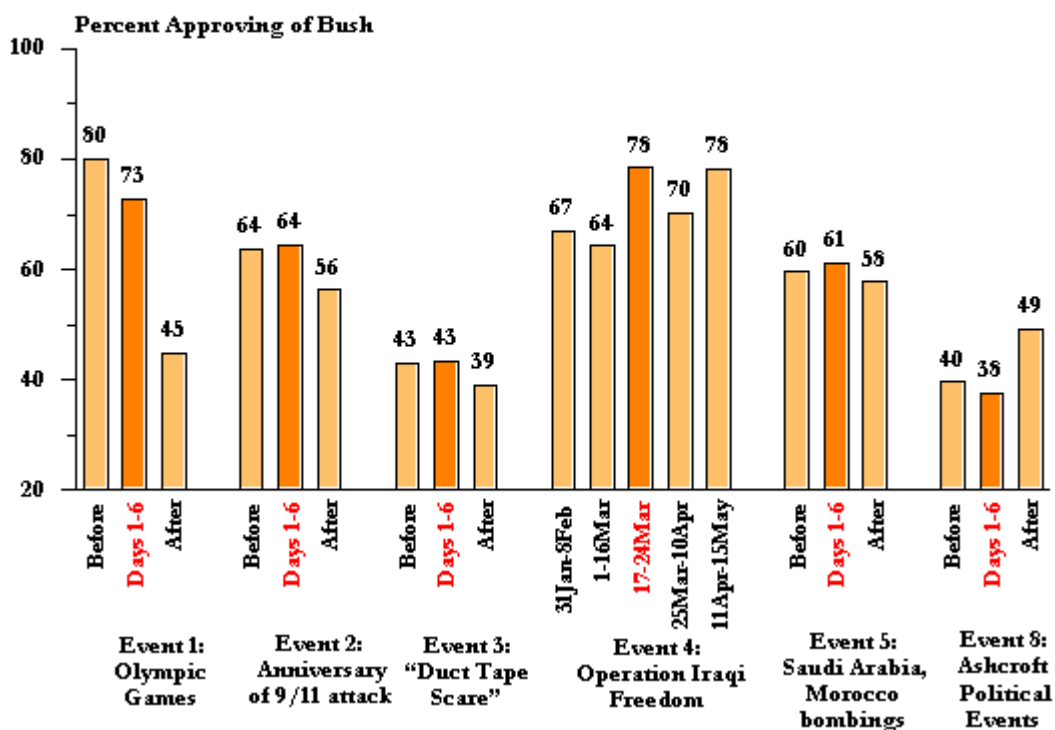


Figure 6. Predicted Bush Approval, by Level of Concern about Another Terrorist Attack (from multivariate models)

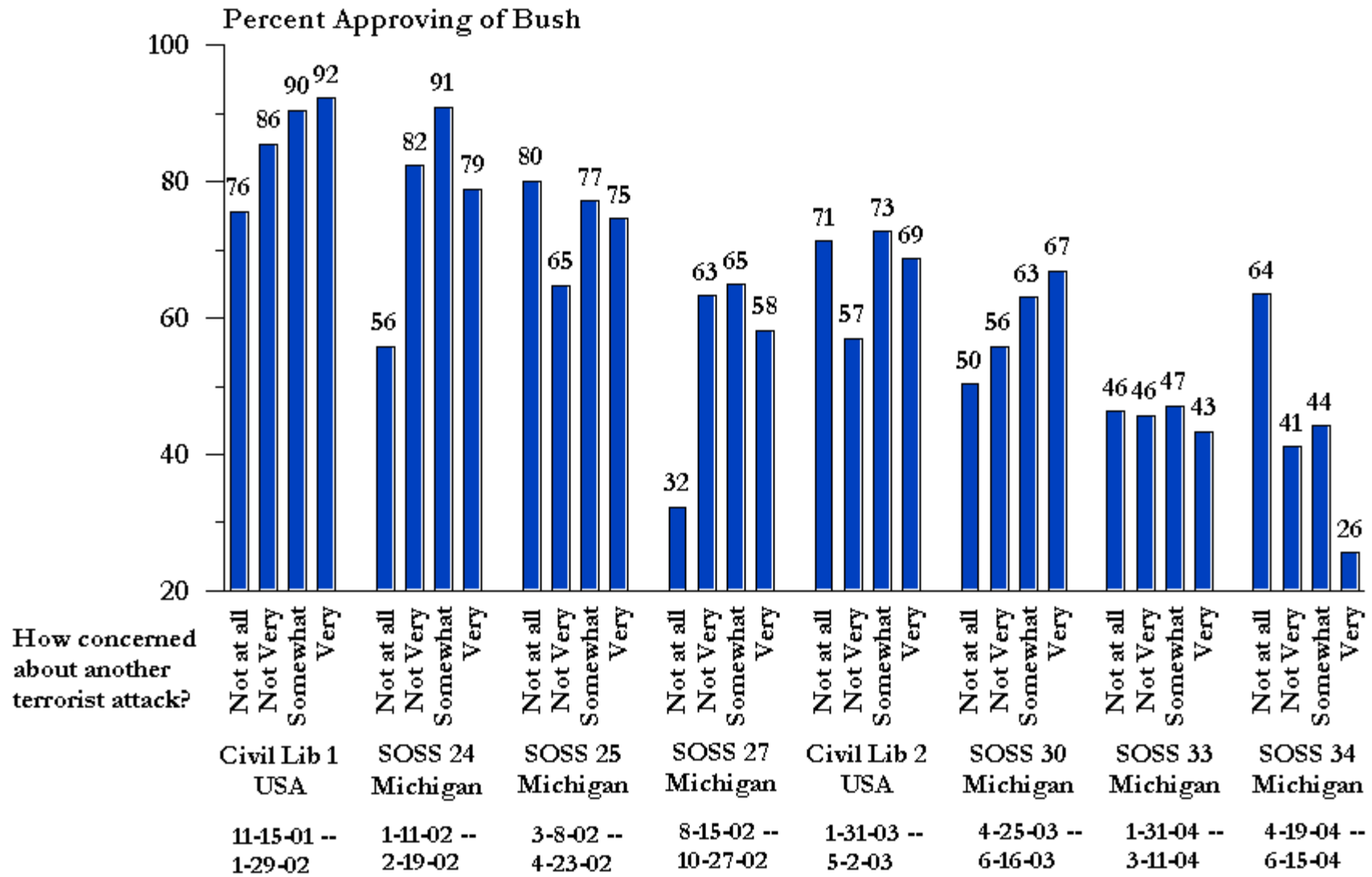
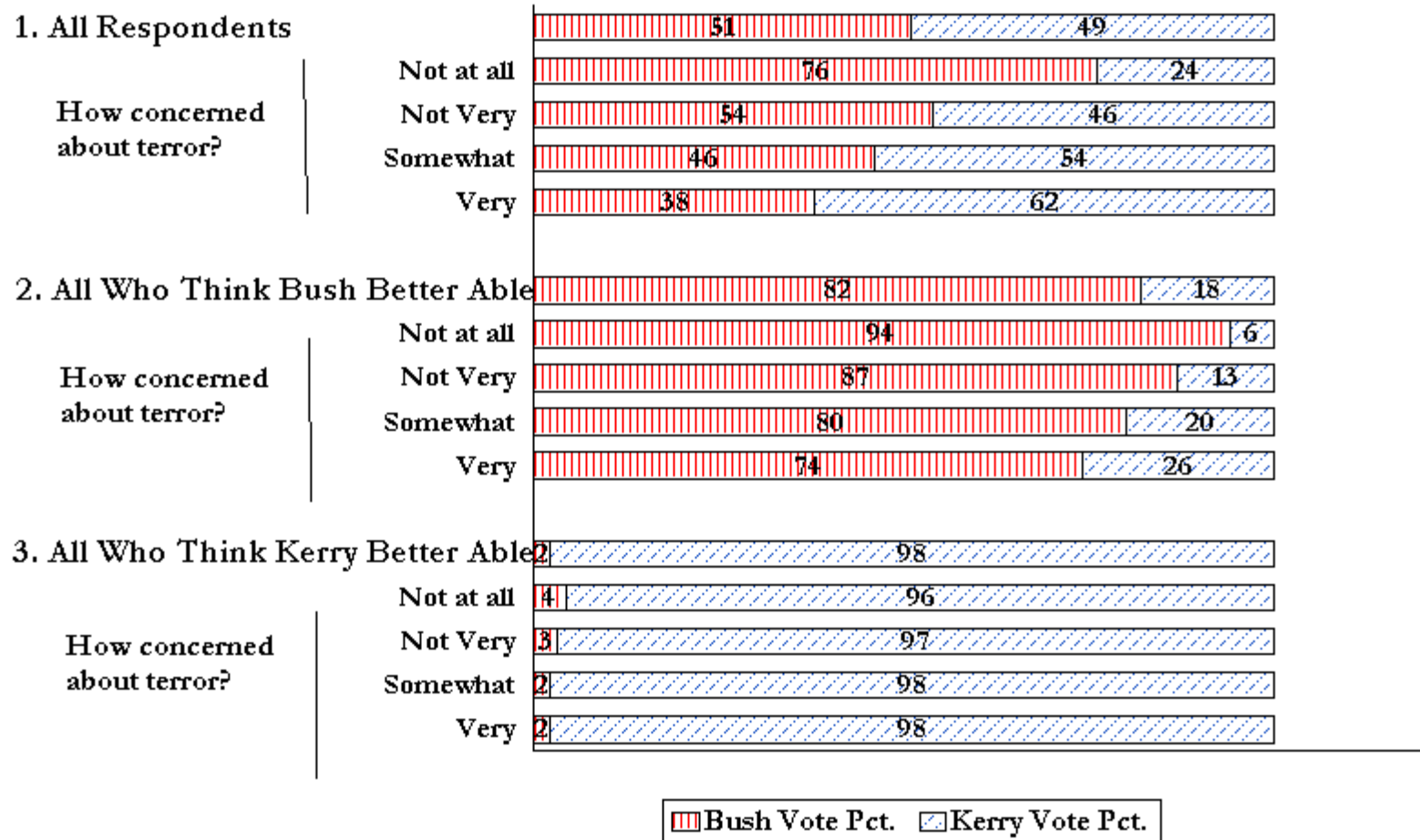


Figure 7. Expected 2004 Vote, by Level of Concern about Terror and Who Is Considered Better Able to Protect the Country from Terrorism



Note: Based on a model with interaction effects between level of concern about terrorism and who respondent believes is better able to protect Americans from terrorism. Data are from SOSS 34 in Michigan.