# Terror and Ethnocentrism: Foundations of American Support for the War on Terrorism

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*The events of 9/11 set in motion a massive reordering of U.S. policy. We propose that the American public's response to this redirection in policy derives, in part, from ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism—"prejudice, broadly conceived"— refers to the commonplace human tendency to partition the social world into virtuous ingroups and nefarious outgroups. Support for the war on terrorism, undertaken against a strange and shadowy enemy, should hold special appeal for Americans with an ethnocentric turn of mind. To see if this is so, we analyze the panel component of the 2000–2002 National Election Study. We find that ethnocentrism powerfully underwrites support for the war on terrorism, across a variety of tests and specifications, and the strength of the relationship between ethnocentrism and opinion is influenced in part by the extraordinary events of 9/11. Ethnocentrism is easily found among Americans, but its relevance and potency for politics depends, we suggest, upon circumstance.*

Tuesday, September 11, 2001, dawned temperate and nearly cloudless in the eastern United States. Millions of men and women readied themselves for work. Some made their way to the Twin Towers, the signature structures of the World Trade Center complex in New York City. Others went to Arlington, Virginia, to the Pentagon. Across the Potomac River, the United States Congress was back in session. At the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, people began to line up for a White House tour. In Sarasota, Florida, President George W. Bush went for an early morning run.

For those heading to an airport, weather conditions could not have been better for a safe and pleasant journey. Among the travelers were Mohamed Atta and Abdul Aziz al Omari . . .[1]

9/11—the "day of fire" as President Bush referred to it in his second inaugural address— transformed the world. The lethal attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington stunned the United States and set in motion a massive redirection in U.S. policy. Within the day, President Bush declared that the United States was at war. On the evening of the 11th, in a televised address to the nation from the White House, the President asserted, "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them. . . . None of us will ever forget this day."[2]

Priorities and policies shifted overnight. The President approved the creation of a new cabinet agency dedicated to homeland security. The USA PATRIOT ACT, a hugely complicated proposal to enhance the government's ability to gather intelligence within the United States and to encourage the sharing of such information between intelligence and law enforcement communities, was thrown together. By the end of October, it was the law of the land, having passed both houses of Congress by large majorities.

In the meantime, plans for military retaliation were going forward. On September 20, addressing a joint session of Congress and a national television audience, President Bush made public the demand that had already been conveyed through private diplomatic channels: "The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share their fate. . . . Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make," the President

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[1]Thus begins the final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (*The 9/11 Commission Report* 2004, 1).

[2]http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html.

declared. "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."[3] On October 7, the President authorized air strikes and Special Operations attacks on vital al Qaeda and Taliban targets. Ground attacks shortly followed. By the middle of November, the Taliban had fled Kabul, and by early December, all major Afghan cities had fallen to the U.S.-led coalition forces.

In "Phase Two" of the war on terrorism, the Bush Administration turned its attention to the "gathering threat" posed to the United States by Saddam Hussein. "The attacks of September the 11th showed our country that vast oceans no longer protect us from danger. Before that tragic date, we had only hints of al Qaeda's plans and designs. Today in Iraq, we see a threat whose outlines are far more clearly defined, and whose consequences could be far more deadly."[4] War came to Iraq in March of 2003, through air strikes and then ground assaults. The government quickly collapsed. Saddam Hussein fled Baghdad and was captured hiding in a tiny shaft tunneled into the ground. The ongoing occupation of Iraq has not gone as smoothly as the Administration had predicted, however, and the cost, in any case, has been high. By the end of fiscal year 2005, the United States will have spent in excess of 200 billion dollars on Iraq. As of June 2006, more than 2,500 American servicemen and women have given their lives in the effort. Over 18,000 have been seriously wounded.[5] Many thousands of Iraqis have perished. Political debate increasingly centers on exit strategies.

In short, 9/11 set in motion a fundamental reordering of U.S. priority and policy. Our intention here is to offer an account of the foundations of American support for the "war on terrorism." We are particularly interested in determining the part played by ethnocentrism. Such an interest may seem odd. Ethnocentrism—what Daniel Levinson once called "prejudice, broadly conceived" (1949, 19)—is all but invisible in modern political analysis, and it is especially hard to find in empirical studies of American public opinion. True enough, but a mistake, we think. Ethnocentrism is a deep human habit, an altogether commonplace inclination to divide the world into ingroups and outgroups, the former characterized by virtuosity and talent, the latter by corruption and mediocrity. Support for the war on terrorism, under-

taken against a strange and shadowy enemy, should come disproportionately, we propose, from Americans possessed of an ethnocentric turn of mind.

To see if this is so, we analyze national survey data supplied by the 2000–2002 National Election Study. The 2000–2002 NES Panel Study is well-designed for our purposes. Respondents comprising a representative national sample of Americans of voting age were interviewed before and immediately after the 2000 election, and then again before and after the 2002 mid-term elections. The 2000 NES, carried out before 9/11, includes a wide array of standard measures of political predispositions, including ethnocentrism. One might say that in our analysis, ethnocentrism is assessed at a moment of comparative innocence. In the fall of 2000, all that would shortly come—the horrific collapse of the twin towers, the dark gash into the Pentagon, the transformation of U.S. policy, a new and indefinite war on terrorism—was unimagined. The 2002 NES was carried out after 9/11 and in an entirely altered context: as domestic security alerts issued by the Department of Homeland Security had become routine, after American-led forces had swept the Taliban regime out of power in Afghanistan, and in the midst of planning for war with Iraq. Naturally, the 2002 NES included an extensive set of questions relevant to this new world: questions on immigration restrictions, homeland security, the war against the Taliban, and much more. Together, then, the 2002 and the 2000 interviews provide splendid evidence for our project. By analyzing the 2000–2002 panel, we can identify whether ethnocentrism, measured before 9/11, helps account for American attitudes toward the policies, events, and authorities that have dominated national politics since that fateful day.[6]

We begin by spelling out in more detail what we mean by ethnocentrism and then go on in the following section to describe how ethnocentrism should be measured. Next we summarize American opinion on

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[3]http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html.

[4]http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021007-8.html.

[5]http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_casualties.htm.

[6]The 2000–2002 American National Election Panel Study was conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the Institute for Social Research. Data collection was carried out by the Indiana University Center for Survey Research. All interviews were conducted in English and over the telephone, using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology. The panel component of the 2000–2002 study consists of 1,187 respondents, all of whom had previously participated in the 2000 NES. Of these, 1,070 were also interviewed in the 2002 postelection wave. The 2002 leg of the NES panel would not have been possible without the financial support of a consortium of organizations: the Carnegie Corporation, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), the Russell Sage Foundation, the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, the University of Michigan Office of the Provost, and the University of Michigan Office of the Vice President for Research.

the war on terror, drawing on NES interviews carried out in the fall of 2002. Then, in the heart of the paper, we estimate the extent to which ethnocentrism explains American opinion on the war on terror. Quite a bit, is our answer. Next we show that the strength of the relationship between ethnocentrism and support for the war on terror is a product in part of the extraordinary events of 9/11. Ethnocentrism is not hard to find among Americans, but its relevance and potency for politics depend, we suggest, upon circumstance.

## Ethnocentrism

"Ethnocentrism" is a modern word, introduced at the opening of the twentieth century by William Graham Sumner. Sumner invented the concept of ethnocentrism to name what he took to be a universal condition regarding human groups and social norms: namely, that people are convinced that their way of doing things—their folkways—are superior to the way things are done elsewhere. Ethnocentrism, as Sumner put it, is

> The technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything. . . . Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders. Each group thinks its own folkways the only right ones, and if it observes that other groups have other folkways, these excite its scorn. (Sumner [1906] 2002, 13)

From *Folkways*, we learn that the Greenland Eskimo believe that Europeans wandered onto their homeland to be taught the good manners that they so conspicuously lacked; that the Mbayas of South America are instructed by divine authority to take their neighbors' wives and property; that the Chinese know that persons of distinction come only from their own grand and glorious middle Kingdom; and so on. More recent and systematic surveys since Sumner's time have turned up an abundance of comparable examples. When referring to outsiders, humans generally seem quite prepared to resort to terms of contempt and denigration (e.g., Brewer and Brown 1998; Brewer and Campbell 1976; Campbell and LeVine 1961; Sumner, Keller, and Davie 1927; Tajfel et al. 1971).[7]

Our conception of ethnocentrism is especially indebted to the writings of Daniel Levinson (1949; Adorno et al. 1950). In Levinson's analysis and in ours, ethnocentrism is a certain mode of thinking—a perceptual lens through which individuals understand and evaluate the world around them.[8] Some individuals rely on this particular lens more than others do. In the extreme case,

> . . . the distinction between ingroups (those groups with which the individual identifies himself) and outgroups (with which he does not have a sense of belonging and which are regarded as antithetical to the ingroups) is of paramount importance. Outgroups are the objects of negative opinions and hostile attitudes; ingroups are the objects of positive opinions and uncritically supportive attitudes; and outgroups are regarded as properly subordinate to ingroups. (Levinson 1949, 20)

Ethnocentrism encompasses both cognition (belief) and affect (feeling). Ethnocentrism is not just an error in judgment, not just a matter of intellectual functioning; it involves emotions as well, both positive and negative. These beliefs and feelings apply not just to one outgroup or two, but to many; and not just to some members of the group, but to most. In this respect, ethnocentrism is a general outlook on social difference, distinguishable from other varieties of social animosity by this very generality. While prejudice is hostility directed at a specific group, ethnocentrism refers to a "relatively consistent frame of mind concerning 'aliens' generally" (Levinson 1950, 102). Ethnocentrism, in contrast to prejudice, "has to do not only with numerous groups toward which the individual has hostile opinions and attitudes but, equally important, with groups toward which he is positively disposed" (Levinson 1950, 102). Thus, when we shift our attention from racism or anti-Semitism or any other ill-feeling tied to a particular group, on the one hand, to ethnocentrism, on the other, we encounter prejudice, broadly conceived.

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[7]This literature is persuasive, as far as it goes, but what is missing here, perhaps surprisingly, is systematic evidence on ingroup favoritism among naturally occurring groups in postindustrial stratified societies like the United States. Part of what we have

accomplished in our ongoing research on ethnocentrism has been to fill this gap. We'll briefly summarize this evidence a little later on.

[8]Ethnocentrism is a mode of thinking, not a *value* in and of itself. Defining values as "general standards used as a basis for numerous specific evaluations across situations" (Feldman 2003, 481), ethnocentrism can determine which general standards people adopt as their own. Those who are of an ethnocentric turn of mind are more likely to esteem those values, customs, and beliefs that are accepted and elevated by the ingroup and to cast aspersions upon those values, customs, and beliefs that are associated with the outgroup. Ethnocentrism, then, provides a yardstick for determining which standards deserve esteem and which merit contempt or condescension.

Ethnocentrism is a general outlook on groups and group relations, one that partitions the social world into us and them, into friend and foe. Defined this way, ethnocentrism will likely have a part to play in the story of American support for the war on terrorism. To most Americans, the adversaries in this war are unfamiliar. They come from far away and exotic places. Their language, religion, customs, and sheer physical appearance: all of it is strange. And after 9/11, not just strange, but sinister. Americans who are generally predisposed towards ethnocentrism—who as a matter of habit see the world divided into virtuous ingroups and inferior outgroups—should be especially likely to lend their support to the new war on terrorism.

## Measuring Ethnocentrism

We measure ethnocentrism through *stereotypes*, beliefs about the characteristic attributes and features of particular social groups (e.g., Allport 1954; Stangor and Lange 1994). In contemporary cognitive psychology, stereotyping is treated as an ordinary manifestation of the ubiquitous process of categorization (e.g., Fiske 1998). Stereotypes, one might say, are inevitable, an intrinsic and essential aspect of cognition. As Gordon Allport once put it,

> Life is so short, and the demands upon us for practical adjustments so great, that we cannot let our ignorance detain us in our daily transactions. We have to decide whether objects are good or bad by classes. We cannot weigh each object in the world by itself. Rough and ready rubrics, however coarse and broad, have to suffice. (1954, 9)

As such, stereotypes are, we say, the right cognitive "container" for ethnocentrism. To measure ethnocentrism, expressed in terms of stereotypes, we draw upon a set of questions originally developed by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for use in its General Social Survey (GSS). Slightly modified, this battery has appeared in recent installments of the NES, including the 2000 study, and provides the principal measure for our analysis of the role ethnocentrism might play in support for the war on terrorism. The battery begins as follows:

> Now I have some questions about different groups in our society. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the characteristics of people in a group can be rated. In the first statement a score of 1 means that you think almost all of the people in that group are "hard-working." A score of 7 means that you think almost all of the people in the group are "lazy." A score of 4 means that you think the group is not towards one end or the other, and of course you may choose any number in between that comes closest to where you think people in the group stand.

> Where would you rate whites in general on this scale?

After being asked to judge whites on this score, respondents were then asked to make the same judgment about blacks, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans, in randomized order. The procedure was then repeated for two additional dimensions: "intelligent versus unintelligent" and "trustworthy versus untrustworthy."

The NES questions suit our purposes well. Moral character and intellectual capacity are central features of stereotypes (e.g., Fiske 1998; Stangor and Lange 1994). Moreover, claims of ingroup superiority are commonly expressed precisely in these terms: that ingroups are generally smarter, more industrious, more trustworthy and so on than are outgroups (Brewer and Campbell 1976).

Notice that in these questions, social groups are defined by race and ethnicity. The categories are white, black, Asian American, and Hispanic American. Race and ethnicity are, of course, not the only way to partition the social world, and so not the only way to define ethnocentrism. Group boundaries specified by race and ethnicity should nevertheless serve us well in our effort to demonstrate the political significance of ethnocentrism. American politics and society have been organized in important ways around racial and ethnic conflict from the very outset (e.g., Burnham 1974; Myrdal 1944; Smith 1997), and race and ethnicity remain today significant categories governing how Americans construe one another (e.g., Bargh 1999; Devine 1989; Hirschfeld 1996).

Notice also that these questions are formatted so that people can express favoritism for their own group without flagrantly violating norms of fairness. For example, white Americans who believe that blacks are less intelligent than whites can say so indirectly, in a sequence of separated judgments, without ever having to subscribe explicitly to the invidious comparison. In addition to this practical advantage, measuring ethnocentrism through social comparison is appropriate on theoretical grounds as well. Ethnocentrism requires consideration of ingroups and outgroups, and the stereotype measures do just that.

With this in mind, to measure ethnocentrism in the 2000 NES, we first divided our national sample into three groups: blacks, Hispanics, and (non-

Hispanic) whites.[9] Then for each of the three groups taken separately, we computed an average difference score (ingroup–outgroup), weighting equally each of the nine comparisons (three outgroups x three attributes). Consistent with the notion that ethnocentrism is a mode of thought and that individuals are more or less ethnocentric in their thinking, this procedure yields a highly reliable scale.[10]

In principle, the scale ranges from −1 to +1, where −1 means that individuals regard outgroups to be superior in every respect to their own group; +1 means that individuals regard outgroups to be inferior in every respect to their own group. In a society free of ethnocentrism, the scale should be distributed in a tight band around 0, signifying that individuals regard outgroups and their own group to be (on average) indistinguishable. In practice, this is not what we find. The distribution of the ethnocentrism scale is not centered at zero. Rather, it is displaced to the right, in the ethnocentric direction. In percentage terms, a small number of Americans end up to the left of the neutral point, and many land right on or close to it, but most Americans are to be found to the right of neutrality, in the region of ethnocentrism. In mild form, ethnocentrism is widely shared, much as Sumner would have anticipated.[11]

The mere existence of ethnocentrism of course says nothing one way or the other about its political importance. Ethnocentrism might be a psychological curiosity, unconnected to the wider world of public life. Let's see.

## American Support for the War on Terrorism

Our special interest here of course is the extent to which ethnocentrism predicts American support for the war on terror. To gauge this support, we make use of a wide-ranging set of questions included in the 2002 National Election Study. Interviews for the 2002 NES

were taken just before and then again just after the 2002 mid-term elections. Our measurement of support for the war on terrorism comes therefore about one year after the attacks on New York and Washington; after the end of the war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan; as war with Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power was under serious consideration; and in the midst of mid-term elections in which President Bush and the Republicans focused their campaign on terrorism and, against very strong historical precedent, picked up strength in Congress (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 2003).

The first group of questions we examine includes policies ostensibly designed to make the country safe. All were included as part of a standard NES battery on government spending. This battery presents a series of federal programs, asking respondents in each case whether, if they had a say in making up the federal budget, spending should be increased, decreased, or kept about the same. Sprinkled into a long series of government programs were four with high relevance for our project: (1) Homeland Security; (2) the War on Terrorism; (3) tightening border security to prevent illegal immigration; and (4) national defense.[12] Americans were quite enthusiastic about all four. The least popular was national defense, but even here, nearly 60% of Americans wanted the government to spend more on defense and only about 7% wanted to spend less. And support goes up from there. Nearly two-thirds of Americans said spend more on homeland security and the war on terrorism; 70% wanted to spend more on border security. When asked whether the government should do more to make the country safe, Americans said yes.

Of course, Americans *generally* say government should do more. They complain about government in the abstract, but they tend to support most programs in the particular (Free and Cantril 1967). A completely standard result from the NES spending battery is that Americans favor increases in federal spending over cuts. This has been so for as long as the questions have been asked, and it is so in 2002. However, of the 16 domestic programs included in the 2002 spending battery, just two generated more support than did the policies intended to make the country safe from terrorism: public schools in general and early education

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[9]We would have liked to examine the reactions of Asian Americans as well, but the NES does not supply enough cases to support even a rudimentary analysis.

[10]Cronbach's *alpha* for the composite scale of ethnocentrism is .87 for whites, .74 for blacks, and .68 for Hispanics.

[11]Consistent with results we have found in other national samples (including the 1992 and 1996 NES and the 1990 and 2000 GSS), whites in the 2000 NES were significantly more ethnocentric than blacks and Hispanics ($p < .000$ and $p < .0003$, respectively). For whites, the average score on the ethnocentrism scale is .08 (standard deviation = .15); for blacks, it is .00 (standard deviation = .14); and for Hispanics, it is .01 (standard deviation = .11).

[12]By random assignment, respondents were asked *either* about federal spending on Homeland Security *or* about federal spending on the war on terrorism. We combined responses to the two questions into a single composite variable, as a $\chi^2$ test indicated that responses to the two questions were distributed similarly, and the sample means were indistinguishable from each other.

programs for poor children.[13] Aside from these two programs, Americans worried most about terrorism. They wanted increases in spending for the war on terrorism, and more Americans wanted this than wanted to increase spending on environmental protection or on unemployment benefits or on building highways and bridges or on a host of other domestic programs. From this perspective, American support for the war on terrorism seems quite substantial.

A second aspect of support has to do with military action. In a speech to the nation shortly after 9/11, President Bush warned the world that "any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime."[14] The 2002 NES asked two questions on U.S. policy toward hostile nations. One looked to the past and asked whether the war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was worth the cost. Nearly 80% of Americans in the fall of 2002 said that they believed it was.[15] The other question asked not for an assessment of the past but for advice about the future. After being reminded that President Bush and his top aides were discussing the possibility of taking military action against Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power, respondents were asked whether they favored or opposed military action against Iraq. On balance, Americans supported this move. Most—more than 80%—expressed an opinion, and of these, supporters of the president's policy outnumbered opponents by more than two to one.

A third feature of the war on terrorism is the assignment of overwhelming priority to national security (over humanitarian assistance) in U.S. foreign policy. We measure this indirectly with a single item. The standard spending battery in the 2002 NES

included a question on foreign aid. Providing assistance to other countries has always been among the very least popular government programs, perhaps at least in part because the average American has a wildly exaggerated view of the amount government actually spends on foreign aid. In any case, in the fall of 2002, just one American in ten wanted federal spending on foreign aid increased, while nearly half recommended that spending be cut.[16]

Fourth and finally, we take up public support for the president. Perhaps it was inevitable that the war on terrorism would become the president's war. The reasons are partly historical: 9/11 happened on President Bush's watch. Partly practical: these days, the command and control center of U.S. foreign policy resides in the White House. And partly symbolic: the president is the single most visible and potent representation of the nation. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the public turned to the president for reassurance and consolation, and in the weeks and months that followed, for policies to ensure the safety of the country (Jamieson and Waldman 2002).

Several questions on presidential performance were included in the 2002 NES. The questions vary in their relevance and specificity to the war on terrorism, but they all indicate substantial support for the president. More than 80% said they approved of President Bush's response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11; more than 70% approved how he was handling the war on terrorism; more than 60% approved of his handling of relations with foreign countries; and nearly 70% gave their stamp of approval to George W. Bush's overall performance as president.[17]

Americans not only approved of what Bush did, but they also seemed to like him. The 2002 NES included the so-called "thermometer scale," a general purpose measure of feelings toward social and political objects. On the thermometer scale, feelings can range from very cold and highly unfavorable (0 degrees) to very warm and highly favorable (100

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[13]74.6% of the sample said that federal spending on public schools should be increased; the identical percentage said the same about federal spending on early education programs for poor children.

[14]http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/index.html.

[15]This extraordinary level of support no doubt reflects the effectiveness of the American military campaign, but it also may have to do with the forceful way the question was put:

> After the September 11 terrorist attacks, President Bush declared a war on terrorism. A first step was to launch air strikes against the Taliban government of Afghanistan that was providing aid and protection to Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda terrorists responsible for the September 11 attacks. Taking everything into account, do you think the U.S. war against the Taliban government was worth the cost or not?

Substantially more Americans said that the war against the Taliban was worth the cost (80%) compared with the percentage who said the first Persian Gulf War was worth the cost (66% in the 1991 NES Pilot Study, 55% in the 1992 NES).

[16]Of the 21 government programs included in the 2002 NES federal spending battery, foreign aid was the only case where Americans preferred reductions in spending to the status quo.

[17]Respondents to the 2002 NES were randomly assigned to be asked *either* about President Bush's response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 *or* about his handling of the war on terror. We analyze these items separately, as the null hypotheses of equal means and similar distributions cannot be rejected ($p < .0001$ and $p < .001$, respectively). On the overall performance measure, Bush did far better among the general public than did his immediate predecessors at the mid-term point of their first terms. Carter's mid-term approval rating was 57.0%; Reagan's was 47.8%; Bush senior's was 61.9%; and Clinton's was 48.3% (all of these percentages were estimated using the NES cumulative file).

degrees). In the fall of 2002, Americans gave President Bush an average score of about 65 degrees. This is an excellent (that is, warm) "temperature." No other president among George W. Bush's immediate predecessors was evaluated so favorably at this point in their presidency: not Nixon, not Carter, not Reagan, not Bush senior, and not Clinton.

Taken all around, Americans expressed considerable support for the war on terrorism. But of course the war was more popular in some quarters than in others. Some Americans said that federal spending for fighting terrorism should be cut back; or that we were spending too much on border control; or that the war against the Taliban was a mistake; or that President Bush was making a mess of foreign policy. More thought otherwise, of course. And many Americans stood in between. The question is: why? And what role, if any, does ethnocentrism play in explaining support for the war on terrorism?

## Ethnocentrism and Support for the War on Terrorism

Here, we estimate the extent to which American support for the war on terrorism derives from ethnocentrism. To make our empirical estimates of the impact of ethnocentrism credible, our analysis must take into account plausible explanations of support for the war on terrorism aside from ethnocentrism, culled from our reading of the literature on public opinion in the domain of foreign policy (Holsti 1996; Mueller 1973, 1994). Three alternative explanations are particularly notable.

The first is *Partisanship*. Attachment to party is a standing commitment, a "persistent adherence" as the authors of *The American Voter* put it, one that profoundly influences how citizens see the world of politics (Campbell et al. [1960] 1980, 146; see also Bartels 2000; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002):

> To the average person, the affairs of government are remote and complex, and yet the average citizen is asked periodically to formulate opinions about these affairs. . . . In this dilemma, having the party symbol stamped on certain candidates, certain issue positions, certain interpretations of reality is of great psychological convenience. (Stokes 1966, 126–27)

The war on terrorism has largely been the work of a Republican president, supported disproportionately by Republican elites, and we should see clear consequences of this in the thinking of ordinary Americans

(Holsti 1996; Mueller 1973).[18] Our analysis includes an interaction between partisanship and political awareness, on the idea that partisans who are most attuned to elite debate might exhibit the greatest degree of polarization (Zaller 1992).[19]

Second is *Perception of Threat*, on the prediction from realistic group conflict theory that support for waging war on anti-American terrorists should be proportionate to the severity of the threat that such terrorists appear to pose (e.g., Blumer 1958; Coser 1956; Sherif and Sherif 1953; Sumner [1906] 2002). We represent threat here with a single question, asked as part of the 2002 NES. The question assesses Americans' estimation of the vulnerability of the United States to terrorist strikes:

> How likely do you think it is that the U.S. will suffer an attack as serious as the one in New York and Washington some time in the next 12 months? Would you say very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely?

Three features of this question are worth noting. First of all, it asks about *imminent* threat—the likelihood of an attack taking place within the next 12 months. Second, it asks about a *serious* strike—comparable in magnitude to the attacks of 9/11. And third, it asks about threat to the *nation*—whether the United States would suffer an attack. Defined in this fashion, many Americans took the threat posed by terrorism seriously: 19.2% said that it was very likely and another 47.7% said that it was somewhat likely that the country would suffer a calamitous attack some time in the next 12 months. We expect such people to be among the most ardent advocates of strong precautionary and preemptive action.[20]

The third alternative explanation we take into account is *Authoritarianism*. In theory, authoritarians are distinguished by their predisposition to submit to established authority, to support violence against

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[18]Partisanship is measured in 2000 (v000523) with a 7-category variable, ranging from 0, which corresponds with Strong Republican, to 1, Strong Democrat.

[19]We measure political awareness using responses to four information items, with responses averaged into a composite scale: Cronbach's *alpha* = .64; items are v001446a/b, v001449a/b, v001452a/b, v001455a/b.

[20]Perception of threat is measured with v023118. 23.7% of respondents saw another attack as somewhat unlikely and 9.4% saw it as very unlikely. We rely on a single measure of threat perception. To account for the possibility that reduced reliability might attenuate the effect of threat perception, we estimated Errors-in-Variables correction models. Assigning a range of plausible values assigned for the reliability of the threat measure, the Errors-in-Variables correction models boosted the coefficient on threat but had little to no effect on the coefficient for ethnocentrism.

targets sanctioned by established authority, and to adhere rigidly to traditional social conventions (Adorno et al. 1950; Altemeyer 1981, 1996; Feldman and Stenner 1997; Stenner 2005). If this is really so, then authoritarians should be eager to enlist in the President's—*their* President's—war on terrorism. Conveniently for this purpose, the 2000 NES included four questions designed to measure authoritarianism. The questions ask about the values most important for parents to emphasize in the raising of their children, with each posing a choice between the authority of parents and the autonomy of children. We expect that Americans who value authority and deference in family relationships will be inclined to close ranks behind their President.[21]

In addition to these three—partisanship, threat, and authoritarianism—our analysis includes a short list of controls: (1) *strength of religious faith*, to capture the likelihood that some Americans see post-9/11 policy in religious terms; (2) *gender,* on the idea that women are more reluctant than men over the deployment of violence for political purposes (e.g., Conover and Sapiro 1993; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986); and (3) *race*, based on the empirical regularity that white Americans have generally been more enthusiastic in their support for U.S. military interventions than black Americans (Holsti 1996; Mueller 1973, 1994).[22]

[21]The virtue of these questions is that they capture the conceptual core of authoritarianism while avoiding the problems—acquiescence response set, explicit references to social and political arrangements—that crippled the original measure (Altemeyer 1981; Hyman and Sheatsley 1954; Stenner 2005). For the scale as a whole, Cronbach's *alpha* = .60. The four items that make up the authoritarianism scale are v001586 to v001589. Are authoritarianism and ethnocentrism related? Levinson would certainly expect them to be. Levinson and his associates believed ethnocentrism could be explained only by invoking the idea of personality: anti-Semitism and ethnocentrism were themselves expressions of a deeper psychological coherence provided by the authoritarian personality. We are less interested in this part of their story and in any case are persuaded much less by it. But it is true that in the NES 2000 data, authoritarianism and ethnocentrism are positively correlated, though quite modestly so (Pearson r = .22).

[22]Strength of religion consists of a 3-item scale, all three items appearing in the 2000 NES: how much guidance religion provides to the respondent (v000872, v000873); how often the respondent prays (v000874); and how regularly the respondent attends religious services (v000877, v000879, v000880). For the 3-item scale, Cronbach's *alpha* = .81. Gender is a dummy coded 1 for females. Race is a dummy coded 1 for blacks. In equations predicting support for President Bush, we also include measures of economic well-being, following the well-established result that a president's popularity depends in an important way on economic conditions (e.g., Alesina, Londregan and Rosenthal 1993; Kinder 1981; Rosenstone 1983). We include assessments of change in the family's economic condition as well as change in the country's economic condition. Retrospective national economic evaluations are measured with v023028, scaled from 0 (negative evaluation of the

Mathematically, our model can be expressed as:

$$y^* = x'\beta + \varepsilon$$
$$= \beta_1 \text{Ethnocentrism} + \beta_2 \text{Partisanship} +$$
$$\beta_3 \text{Partisanship} \times \text{Awareness} +$$
$$\beta_4 \text{Awareness} + \beta_5 \text{Perception of threat} +$$
$$\beta_6 \text{Authoritarianism} + \beta_7 \text{Religiosity} +$$
$$\beta_8 \text{Gender} + \beta_9 \text{Race} + \varepsilon$$

$$\Pr(y = m) = \Pr(\tau_{m-1} < y^* < \tau_m)$$
$$= \Phi(\tau_m - x'\beta) - \Phi(\tau_{m-1} - x'\beta)$$

The term *y* refers to the opinions (falling into one of *m* categories) Americans express on spending for homeland security, border control, and other matters discussed above, each taken up separately, while the term $y^*$ represents the unobserved latent variable. Given the categorical nature of the opinion measures, we rely on ordered probit for statistical estimation.[23] Each of the opinion variables is coded such that low values represent strong opposition to the war on terror and high values represent strong support. Ethnocentrism is coded from −1 to +1, where +1 means that Americans regard outgroups to be inferior in every respect to their own group; −1 means that Americans regard outgroups to be superior in every respect to their own group; and 0 means that Americans regard outgroups and their own group to be on average indistinguishable. All other independent variables are coded 0–1.

With a single exception, all right-hand side variables are taken from the 2000 NES. The only exception is perception of threat. Thus, for the most part, the predispositions that are presumed to motivate opinion on terrorism—ethnocentrism, partisanship, authoritarianism, and all the rest—are measured some two years before opinion itself. This arrangement relieves some of the worry about endogeneity that normally bedevils causal inference. Prior measurement of putative causes makes it more plausible to regard them as exogenous to the opinions we wish to explain.[24]

performance of the national economy over the past year) to 1 (positive evaluation). Retrospective household economic evaluations are measured with v023026, scaled from 0 (negative evaluation of household economic conditions over the past year) to 1 (positive evaluation). Both variables appear in the 2002 survey.

[23]For ease of interpretation across the dependent variables, we rescaled the feeling thermometer measure into nine categories and analyzed it with ordered probit as well. Treating the thermometer scale as a continuous measure running from 0 to 100 and relying instead on OLS for estimation generates virtually identical results.

[24]Bartels has recently made this point as part of a broader argument on behalf of panel designs. According to Bartels, covariates measured in the prior time period "may more plausibly be con-

TABLE 1    Ethnocentrism and Support for the War on Terrorism

| | Increase Spending on Homeland Security/War on Terrorism | Increase Spending on Border Control | Increase Spending on Defense | Afghanistan Worth It | Support Military Action in Iraq | Decrease Foreign Aid |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethnocentrism | .827** | 1.113*** | .744** | −.166 | .521* | .854*** |
| | (.327) | (.356) | (.313) | (.372) | (.279) | (.298) |
| Party Identification | −.072 | .124 | −.574*** | −.659*** | −.402** | −.048 |
| | (.209) | (.220) | (.203) | (.252) | (.181) | (.191) |
| Party Identification × Awareness | −.973** | −1.117** | −.669 | −.086 | −1.648*** | −.682 |
| | (.470) | (.476) | (.447) | (.608) | (.409) | (.418) |
| Awareness | .660** | .472 | .370 | .295 | .171 | .264 |
| | (.312) | (.312) | (.297) | (.421) | (.262) | (.267) |
| Threat | .495*** | .453*** | .306** | −.207 | .303** | .293** |
| | (.158) | (.166) | (.155) | (.192) | (.138) | (.148) |
| Authoritarianism | .391** | .382** | .310* | −.048 | .398*** | .158 |
| | (.170) | (.178) | (.165) | (.217) | (.150) | (.157) |
| Religiosity | .179 | .014 | .253* | .131 | .101 | −.398*** |
| | (.149) | (.155) | (.146) | (.188) | (.130) | (.139) |
| Female | .168* | −.035 | .186** | −.244** | −.268*** | −.115 |
| | (.094) | (.099) | (.091) | (.118) | (.081) | (.087) |
| Black | −.233 | −.469*** | −.039 | −.656*** | −.550*** | −.334** |
| | (.167) | (.171) | (.162) | (.180) | (.147) | (.158) |
| $\tau_1$ | −.855 | −1.203 | −1.228 | −1.654 | −1.069 | −1.447 |
| | (.207) | (.218) | (.205) | (.260) | (.181) | (.196) |
| $\tau_2$ | .346 | −.076 | .134 | | −.742 | .122 |
| | (.203) | (.212) | (.200) | | (.179) | (.190) |
| $\tau_3$ | | | | | −.240 | |
| | | | | | (.178) | |
| $\tau_4$ | | | | | .141 | |
| | | | | | (.178) | |
| lnL | −624.783 | −559.526 | −664.393 | −342.208 | −1,196.807 | −737.664 |
| $p > \chi^2$ | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| N | 815 | 823 | 819 | 872 | 877 | 819 |

*$p < .10$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .01$, two-tailed.    (Continued on next page)
*Source:  NES 2000–2002 Panel Study.*

As shown in Table 1, American support for the war on terror is indeed derived in a significant way from ethnocentrism. Americans who believe their own group to be superior to others are also inclined to say that we should be spending more on homeland security, on keeping our borders impregnable, and on building a strong national defense. They want foreign aid cut. They think President Bush has been effective in responding to the terrorist attacks and in managing relations with other nations, and they evaluate him warmly. The effect of ethnocentrism is statistically

sidered 'exogenous' rather than 'endogenous,' making interpretations of their apparent effects a good deal more straightforward and compelling" (2006, 148).

significant and substantively sizable in each of these cases.[25]

[25]Ethnocentrism does not appear to be a strong predictor of views on whether the war in Afghanistan was worth it: Only party identification, gender, and race significantly predict these retrospective judgments about the war. Why is that? Perhaps ethnocentric Americans applaud the success of the military operation in Afghanistan as action necessary for keeping the nation safe, while less ethnocentric Americans view the toppling of the oppressive Taliban regime as worthy of applause. We also have a bit less certainty about the relationship between ethnocentrism and overall approval and the relationship between ethnocentrism and Bush's handling of the war on terror. One possible explanation for the weaker showing regarding overall approval is that other considerations (e.g., how Bush is handling other policy domains such as the economy) may also factor into general approval. As evidence to support this claim, we find that ethnocentrism has virtually no effect in predicting evaluations of how Bush is handling the

TABLE 1 *continued*

| | Bush Approval: Overall | Bush Approval: War | Bush Approval: 9/11 | Bush Approval: Foreign Affairs | Bush Thermometer Rating |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethnocentrism | .350 | .536 | .931** | .722** | .685*** |
| | (.301) | (.440) | (.444) | (.283) | (.256) |
| Party Identification | −1.447*** | −.676** | −.388 | −1.181*** | −1.722*** |
| | (.204) | (.267) | (.317) | (.190) | (.174) |
| Party Identification × Awareness | −.904** | −.546 | −1.280* | −.594 | −.765** |
| | (.449) | (.605) | (.708) | (.422) | (.374) |
| Political Awareness | .040 | .274 | .606 | .160 | .247 |
| | (.299) | (.425) | (.478) | (.273) | (.243) |
| Threat | .025 | .043 | −.102 | −.049 | .153 |
| | (.145) | (.203) | (.230) | (.140) | (.127) |
| Authoritarianism | .483*** | .265 | .593** | .455*** | .390*** |
| | (.159) | (.225) | (.242) | (.152) | (.138) |
| Religiosity | .359*** | .022 | .039 | .369*** | .492*** |
| | (.139) | (.198) | (.209) | (.132) | (.120) |
| Female | .014 | −.099 | −.161 | .001 | .062 |
| | (.088) | (.125) | (.133) | (.084) | (.076) |
| Black | −.630*** | −.417** | −.461** | −.529*** | −.489*** |
| | (.152) | (.207) | (.234) | (.153) | (.138) |
| National Econ. Eval. | 1.526*** | 1.336*** | 1.122*** | 1.138*** | 1.074*** |
| | (.218) | (.300) | (.347) | (.203) | (.182) |
| Household Econ. Eval. | .647*** | −.112 | .274 | .662*** | .538*** |
| | (.180) | (.244) | (.280) | (.171) | (.156) |
| $\tau_1$ | −1.066 | −1.199 | −1.129 | −.546 | −2.140 |
| | (.219) | (.304) | (.341) | (.207) | (.200) |
| $\tau_2$ | −.519 | −.811 | −.797 | −.036 | −1.861 |
| | (.216) | (.301) | (.338) | (.205) | (.196) |
| $\tau_3$ | −.437 | −.760 | −.774 | .000 | −1.432 |
| | (.216) | (.301) | (.338) | (.205) | (.192) |
| $\tau_4$ | .361 | −.156 | −.083 | .740 | −.956 |
| | (.215) | (.299) | (.337) | (.206) | (.190) |
| $\tau_5$ | | | | | −.456 |
| | | | | | (.188) |
| $\tau_6$ | | | | | .147 |
| | | | | | (.186) |
| $\tau_7$ | | | | | .744 |
| | | | | | (.187) |
| $\tau_8$ | | | | | 1.563 |
| | | | | | (.191) |
| lnL | −919.740 | −482.188 | −379.603 | −1,022.615 | −1,541.732 |
| $p > \chi^2$ | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| N | 863 | 447 | 432 | 873 | 882 |

*$p < .10$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .01$, two-tailed.
*Source: NES 2000–2002 Panel Study.*

Ethnocentrism is of course not the whole story, nor did we expect it to be. Partisanship, conditioned upon political awareness, is a powerful predictor of views on

economy ($\hat{\beta} = .193$ s.e. = .279). On how Bush is handling the war on terror, the noisy estimate could in part be attributed to the comparatively small sample size (the item was half-sampled).

the war on terror as well. The coefficient on *Party Identification* identifies the effect of partisanship among the least politically aware (when awareness equals zero). This coefficient is sizable and statistically significant in several of the models, suggesting that political awareness is not a necessary condition for partisan polarization to appear on spending on

defense, views on the war in Afghanistan, support for the war in Iraq, and most of the presidential approval items. The interaction between *Party Identification* and *Political Awareness* is negative in every single one of the models, sizable in most, and statistically significant in over half, suggesting that the partisan gap grows with political awareness. Taking the coefficients on *Party Identification* and *Party Identification* × *Political Awareness* together, we see that Republicans and Democrats differ on virtually all aspects of the war on terror we examined, particularly so at higher levels of political awareness, and the differences are often substantial. Republicans were more likely than Democrats to say that we should spend more on homeland security, on tightening up the nation's borders, on national defense, and on the war on terrorism generally. Republicans were more likely to see the war in Afghanistan as worth the cost and more likely to favor military intervention in Iraq. Republicans were more likely to recommend cutting back on foreign aid. And they were—no surprise here—much more favorably impressed with George W. Bush's performance as president.[26]

The perception of threat also operates generally as expected. Americans who worried about the country's vulnerability favored forceful measures, both to protect the nation—by spending more on homeland security or by controlling immigration—and to eliminate the terrorist threat—by going into Iraq and removing Saddam Hussein from power (cf. Huddy et al. 2005).

Authoritarianism is also important. Americans who claimed to prize obedience to authority in their homes were, as predicted, more enthusiastic about the war on terrorism: willing to spend more to keep the country safe; prepared to support military action against Saddam Hussein; and in various ways favorably inclined toward the president, the nation's most visible and commanding authority figure.

Table 1 contains a number of additional results worth a quick mention. Women want to spend more on defense and more on the war on terror than men do (presumably in order to keep the country safe), but they are less keen than men on using military force to eradicate the sources of terrorism. Compared to whites, African Americans support military intervention less and criticize President Bush more (much more).

In short, the results presented in Table 1 suggest that American support for the war on terrorism is a reflection of not one thing but many: partisanship, threat, authoritarianism, gender, and race—and, not least, ethnocentrism. Taken all around, ethnocentrism appears to be somewhat less important than partisanship in explaining American opinion on the war on terrorism, but more consequential than authoritarianism or threat or any other explanation that we considered.[27]

The significance of ethnocentrism can be appreciated more clearly by translating the ordered probit estimates into graphical form. Figure 1 does this for four representative cases: spending more on the war on terror and homeland security, spending more on national defense, approval of President Bush's response to 9/11, and approval of President Bush's management of foreign affairs. Each graph depicts the predicted support for one of these aspects of the war on terrorism (along the vertical axis) as a consequence of variation in ethnocentrism (along the horizontal axis), along with 95% confidence intervals.[28]
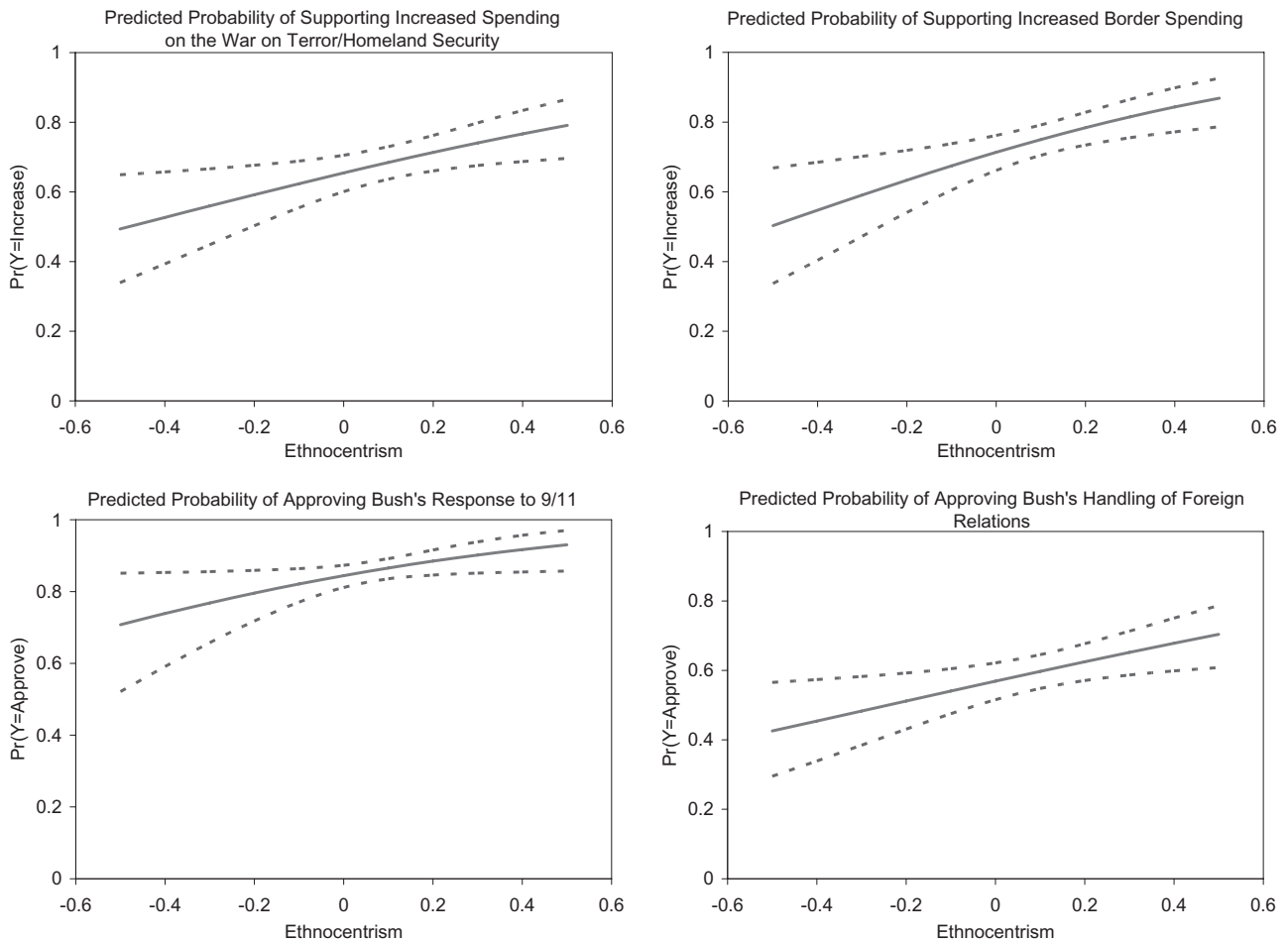
Figure 1 shows that support for the war on terror rises quite steeply with increases in ethnocentrism. For example, across the normal range of ethnocentrism found in the American public today (from −.5 to +.5), the predicted probability of endorsing the proposal to spend more on national defense increases from about 42% to just under 70%, as we move from low to high values of ethnocentrism. The other graphs presented in Figure 1 tell essentially the same story. Ethnocentrism, it would seem, plays an important part in marshalling American support for the war on terror.

The effects of ethnocentrism are not only sizable, but they are also robust across alternative measures. In the 2000 NES, Americans were asked to report their

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[26]The partisanship effect is generally conditional upon level of political awareness and grows with political awareness. The magnitude of the effect is generally comparable to that of ethnocentrism. For example, a one-unit shift in ethnocentrism (from −.5 to +.5) is associated with a .30 increase in the predicted probability of supporting increased spending on the War on Terrorism/Homeland Security (from .49 to .79). A one-unit shift in partisanship (from Strong Republican to Strong Democrat) is associated with a .33 decrease in the predicted probability that a given respondent (of maximal political awareness) will support an increase on spending on the War on Terrorism/Homeland Security (from .88 to .55). The web appendix (at http://journalofpolitics.org) displays substantive effects for all covariates, across four representative dependent variables.

[27]These claims are illustrated in the web appendix, which displays substantive effects for all covariates, across four representative dependent variables.

[28]The predictions set the values of the other variables to: white, female, an Independent leaning Democratic, and otherwise average in political awareness, sense of threat, authoritarianism, and strength of religious faith.

FIGURE 1  **Support for the War on Terrorism Increases with Increases in Ethnocentrism**

Predicted Probability of Supporting Increased Spending
on the War on Terror/Homeland Security

Predicted Probability of Supporting Increased Border Spending

Predicted Probability of Approving Bush's Response to 9/11

Predicted Probability of Approving Bush's Handling of Foreign Relations

feelings towards a variety of social and political groups on the 0–100 point thermometer scale, from very cold to very warm. Among the groups rated in this fashion were whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. From these thermometer scale ratings, it is a simple matter to construct a measure of ethnocentrism that is parallel in form to the measure we have been using (and that, on theoretical grounds, we prefer), based on group stereotypes. When we reestimated the relationships after replacing the stereotype-based measure of ethnocentrism with the measure created out of thermometer scores, we obtained very similar results.[29]

The importance of ethnocentrism is also undisturbed by more elaborate specifications. One concern might be that the effect we have attributed

to ethnocentrism might really be due to forms of conservatism correlated with ethnocentrism but omitted from our model. We added various forms of conservatism—moral traditionalism, anti-egalitarianism, belief in limited government, and conservative identification—and the estimated effect of ethnocentrism on support for the war on terror did not change.[30]

On the same theme, if ethnocentrism were really only a measure of conservatism, then we would expect it to predict not just support for the war on terror, which it does, but also other features of contemporary American public opinion. It does not. Ethnocentrism is unconnected to support for the Bush Administration's tax cut passed in 2001.[31] Ethnocentrism does not predict approval of Bush's handling of the economy. Nor does it have anything to do with evaluations of

[29]These results appear in the web appendix. We built the thermometer scale version of ethnocentrism exactly as we did the stereotype-based measure. So it, too, ranges in principle from −1 to +1. Measured by the thermometer score ratings, ethnocentrism is centered at .079 with standard deviation = .177. The correlation between the two versions of ethnocentrism, one based on stereotypes, the other based on feeling thermometer ratings, is .43.

[30]These results appear in the web appendix.

[31]This is so whether the legislation is presented as the President's proposal or as originating out of Congress.

TABLE 2    Predicting Support for the War on Terror, Distinguishing between Ingroup and Outgroup
Sentiments

| | Increase Spending on Homeland Security/War on Terrorism | Increase Spending on Border Control | Increase Spending on Defense | Afghanistan Worth It | Support Military Action in Iraq | Decrease Foreign Aid |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ingroup | .977*** | 1.264*** | .776*** | −.240 | .456* | .938*** |
| | (.341) | (.368) | (.328) | (.392) | (.292) | (.313) |
| Outgroup | −.461 | −.706* | −.668** | −.013 | −.683** | −.663** |
| | (.405) | (.437) | (.389) | (.471) | (.346) | (.367) |

| | Bush Approval: Overall | Bush Approval: War | Bush Approval: 9/11 | Bush Approval: Foreign Affairs | Bush Thermometer Rating |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ingroup | .465* | .561 | 1.056** | .788*** | .866*** |
| | (.313) | (.453) | (.468) | (.298) | (.269) |
| Outgroup | −.059 | −.458 | −.656 | −.571* | −.279 |
| | (.375) | (.549) | (.555) | (.351) | (.316) |

Group stereotypes are coded from 0 (negative) to 1 (positive).
All models include controls which appear in previous tables. Full results appear in the web appendix.
$*p < .10$, $**p < .05$, $***p < .01$, one-tailed.
*Source: NES 2000–2002 Panel Study.*

prominent political figures not part of the Bush team: not Bill Clinton, not Ralph Nader, not Jesse Jackson, and not Al Gore.[32] In short, ethnocentrism not only shows up strongly where we expect it to, but it also disappears where it should as well.[33]

Finally, we have stressed the point that ethnocentrism is prejudice in general, that it has to do both with ingroups and outgroups. To the extreme ethnocentric, the world appears divided sharply into "us" and "them." Ethnocentrism entails favoritism toward ingroups and animosity toward outgroups. If this is so—if as Levinson put it, ethnocentrism is really prejudice, broadly conceived—then the effects of ethnocentrism on American support for the war on terror that we have documented so far should reflect in some measure both components: *both* ingroup favoritism *and* outgroup hostility.

To test this idea, we repeated the analysis summarized in Table 1, after breaking the ethnocentrism scale into two components, the first having to do with the characteristics of the person's own group, the second having to do with the characteristics of groups other than the person's own. For simplicity's sake, only the coefficients of interest, for ingroup and outgroup, are shown in Table 2.[34]

We expect to see positive coefficients on the ingroup favoritism component of ethnocentrism, based in part on Coser's (1956) social conflict theory: that ingroup solidarity is most likely to occur as a consequence of external threat. Positive coefficients tell us that Americans who regard their own group as especially virtuous support the war on terrorism. Indeed, positive coefficients abound. And, if our story is about ethnocentrism and not just about nationalism or ingroup pride, we expect to see negative coefficients on the outgroup hostility component of ethnocentrism—meaning that Americans who regard other groups as especially deficient should support the war on terrorism. And, negative coefficients appear as well. If anything, ingroup favoritism seems a bit more important than outgroup hostility, especially in support for the President. But more impressive is that both components have a role to play in American support for the war on terror. These results reinforce

[32]These results are available upon request.

[33]Does ethnocentrism operate in the same way for whites, blacks, and Hispanics? It is hard to say because there are so few black and Hispanic respondents. The 2000–2002 panel includes just 89 blacks and only 57 Hispanics who completed the 2002 postelection survey. In one version of the analysis we did include interaction terms (Ethnocentrism x Black, Ethnocentrism x Hispanic), hoping that we might glean systematic patterns worth reporting, even at generous levels of statistical significance. We did not. In other studies, with larger samples, we do sometimes find systematic differences among the three groups. The one consistent pattern is that the effects of ethnocentrism are strongest among white Americans (Kinder and Kam, n.d.).

[34]These results appear in the web appendix.

the idea that a key part of American support for the war on terrorism is ethnocentrism—not ingroup pride alone, and not mere suspicion of outgroups—but prejudice, broadly conceived.

## The Activation of Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is an abiding and perhaps irresistible human habit. But this does not mean that ethnocentrism is an inevitable feature of political life. The part played by ethnocentrism in politics is, we say, variable, contingent on circumstance. This is so in part because of the dynamic and complex nature of politics. Issues and problems come and go, and only some of these issues and problems lend themselves to ethnocentric thinking. Meanwhile, elites frame problems in various ways, in ways which may encourage ethnocentrism or neutralize it (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997).

The part played by ethnocentrism in politics is contingent also because public opinion is fluid. Citizens are generally capable of thinking about any issue in more than one way; they are in possession of a variety of considerations, ethnocentrism among them, any of which could be brought to bear on the subject at hand. Which considerations really matter in a particular case depend in part on which come to mind (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Zaller 1992; Zaller and Feldman 1992).

If, as we suggest, the importance of ethnocentrism to politics depends on circumstance, then support for the war on terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11 should serve as an exemplary case for several reasons. First is resonance: The war on terror lends itself to ethnocentric thinking. Second, elite discourse on the war in the United States has been saturated with language and symbols that emphasize a conflict between civilization and fanaticism. To the major networks, it was "America" that was under attack and a "Nation" that was responding with heroism and resolve (Jamieson and Waldman 2002). "Either you are with us," the President said to the nations of the world, "or you are with the terrorists." And third, there is the strong suggestion from experimental psychology that when people face serious threat their thinking simplifies (e.g., Fiske 1998; Fiske, Morling, and Stevens 1996; Wilder 1993). Category-based reasoning is one kind of simplification, and ethnocentrism is a specific kind of category-based reasoning, in which the categories are constructed in terms of ingroups and outgroups. Because many Americans experienced 9/11 as threatening (e.g., Huddy et al. 2002; Smith, Rasinski, and

Toce 2001), ethnocentrism, as a way to think about what was happening and what the government should do, may have been an especially easy path to follow.

For a variety of reasons, then, we expect that ethnocentrism should be more important in Americans' thinking about politics in the time immediately following 9/11 than in the period running up to 9/11. We can test this claim by comparing the potency of ethnocentrism on opinion on topics relevant to the war on terror that were asked in the 2002 NES (after 9/11) *and* in the 2000 NES (before 9/11).[35] Four such subjects appeared in both surveys: border security, national defense, foreign aid, and President Bush.

American support on these measures generally increased from the fall of 2000 to the fall of 2002. More Americans wanted to increase federal spending on border control. Fewer wanted to cut spending on national defense.[36] And Americans warmed up considerably to President Bush.[37] The only exception to this picture is foreign aid, which remained about as unpopular in 2002 as it was in 2000.

Our expectation is that in the post-9/11 world, ethnocentrism will shape these opinions more powerfully than in the pre-9/11 world. To test this expectation, we reestimated our model, this time predicting opinions measured in 2000. We restricted this analysis to respondents who eventually participated in the

[35]We are interested in the *activation* of ethnocentrism as a consequence of 9/11; we focus on determining whether the *effect* of ethnocentrism rises between 2000 and 2002. A separate question concerns whether ethnocentrism plays a role in *opinion change* between 2000 and 2002. One expectation is that in the post 9/11 world, ethnocentrism will drive foreign policy opinions in the conservative direction. Indeed, it does. To test this expectation, we reestimated our model predicting foreign policy opinions in 2002, with a lagged dependent variable measured in 2000. As predicted, ethnocentrism plays a significant role ($p < .05$ in all four cases) in shifting American support in favor of increased spending on defense, in favor of increased spending on patrolling the borders, in support of decreased spending on foreign aid, and in support of the sitting president, above and beyond where individuals stood in the pre-9/11 era. In each of our four test cases, even after controlling for opinion in 2000, ethnocentrism powerfully shapes increases in support for policies made relevant by the post-9/11 environment.

[36]To preserve cases, we combined respondents who received slightly different versions of the defense spending question in the 2000 NES (one version was formatted as a 7-point Likert question; the other as a 5-point branch-stem question), and for comparability with 2002, we recoded the responses into a 3-category measure.

[37]The increase in Bush's ratings on the thermometer scale from 57 to 66 is substantial: e.g., a 9-point difference in thermometer score ratings of major party presidential candidates would signal a landslide of historic proportions (Kinder and McConnaughy 2006).

TABLE 3 **Predicting Support for Border Security, National Defense, Foreign Aid, and President Bush Before and After 9/11**

| | Border Security | | Foreign Aid | | National Defense | | Bush Thermometer Rating | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2000 | 2002 | 2000 | 2002 | 2000 | 2002 | 2000 | 2002 |
| Ethnocentrism | .925*** | 1.080*** | .096 | .800*** | .262 | .671** | −.075 | .595** |
| | (.311) | (.349) | (.292) | (.297) | (.290) | (.308) | (.250) | (.257) |
| Party Identification | −.050 | .089 | .103 | −.042 | −.542*** | −.594*** | −2.091*** | −1.743*** |
| | (.198) | (.224) | (.192) | (.191) | (.191) | (.202) | (.176) | (.176) |
| Party Identification × Awareness | −.505 | −1.072** | −1.375*** | −.704* | −.946** | −.631 | −.680* | −.697* |
| | (.427) | (.483) | (.423) | (.419) | (.438) | (.446) | (.365) | (.372) |
| Awareness | .020 | .437 | .727*** | .253 | .827*** | .352 | .145 | .239 |
| | (.273) | (.317) | (.272) | (.269) | (.292) | (.297) | (.235) | (.244) |
| Authoritarianism | .856*** | .407** | .443*** | .153 | .359** | .334** | .566*** | .464*** |
| | (.162) | (.178) | (.160) | (.159) | (.159) | (.165) | (.137) | (.139) |
| Religiosity | −.170 | .017 | −.163 | −.363*** | .401*** | .263* | .651*** | .505*** |
| | (.140) | (.156) | (.141) | (.140) | (.139) | (.144) | (.119) | (.120) |
| Female | .108 | −.014 | −.044 | −.081 | −.316*** | .221** | .047 | .090 |
| | (.089) | (.099) | (.088) | (.087) | (.088) | (.090) | (.075) | (.076) |
| Black | −.193 | −.461*** | −.469*** | −.320** | .011 | −.088 | −.223 | −.513*** |
| | (.160) | (.170) | (.159) | (.159) | (.155) | (.160) | (.137) | (.137) |
| National Econ. Eval. | | | | | | | −.098 | 1.028*** |
| | | | | | | | (.129) | (.182) |
| Household Econ. Eval. | | | | | | | −.112 | .544*** |
| | | | | | | | (.165) | (.155) |
| $\tau_1$ | −.956 | −1.434 | −1.287 | −1.588 | −1.116 | −1.380 | −2.916 | −2.177 |
| | (.181) | (.207) | (.182) | (.184) | (.181) | (.192) | (.206) | (.190) |
| $\tau_2$ | .346 | −.336 | .273 | −.029 | .156 | −.026 | −2.499 | −1.900 |
| | (.178) | (.200) | (.178) | (.177) | (.177) | (.185) | (.198) | (.186) |
| $\tau_3$ | | | | | | | −2.027 | −1.472 |
| | | | | | | | (.193) | (.182) |
| $\tau_4$ | | | | | | | −1.233 | −.983 |
| | | | | | | | (.189) | (.179) |
| $\tau_5$ | | | | | | | −.669 | −.507 |
| | | | | | | | (.187) | (.177) |
| $\tau_6$ | | | | | | | .077 | .094 |
| | | | | | | | (.185) | (.175) |
| $\tau_7$ | | | | | | | .704 | .697 |
| | | | | | | | (.187) | (.176) |
| $\tau_8$ | | | | | | | 1.432 | 1.511 |
| | | | | | | | (.193) | (.180) |
| lnL | −723.497 | −558.822 | −714.309 | −727.489 | −760.081 | −673.075 | −1,540.137 | −1,522.886 |
| $p > \chi^2$ | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| N | 812 | 812 | 805 | 805 | 825 | 825 | 870 | 870 |

*$p < .10$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .01$, two-tailed.
*Source: NES 2000–2002 Panel Study.*

2002 study, in order to make the comparison exact, and we included the identical predictors.[38]

As predicted, the results in Table 3 show that the impact of ethnocentrism is greater in the fall of 2002 than it is in the fall of 2000—greater, that it is to say, after 9/11 than before. This is true in all four cases.

Either, in the typical case, ethnocentrism is unimportant in 2000 and becomes important in 2002; or, in the case of securing U.S. borders, ethnocentrism is important in 2000 and even more important in 2002.[39]

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[38]Economic evaluations are measured in the same year as the dependent variable.

[39]The strongest test of this assertion requires us to demonstrate that the effects of ethnocentrism in 2002 are *significantly* greater than the effects of ethnocentrism in 2000. To engage this test, we converted the panel data into two stacked, independent cross-

To illustrate these effects, we calculated predicted probabilities across the dependent variables and examined the effect of a one-unit shift in ethnocentrism (from −.5 to +.5) on opinion.[40] In 2000, a one-unit shift in ethnocentrism is associated with a negligible increase (3%) in the probability that an individual will want to cut foreign aid spending, but in 2002, the same one-unit shift in ethnocentrism is associated with a 28% increase. Similar patterns appear for the other three dependent variables. In 2000, the ethnocentric are 9% more likely to favor increased defense spending; in 2002, this difference grows to 26%. In 2000, there is only a 4–percentage point difference between the more and less ethnocentric in the probability of evaluating Bush warmly; in 2002, this difference grows to 16%. The smallest effects appear with respect to border control; ethnocentrism is a powerful predictor in 2000 (the difference in the probability of supporting increased spending on border control between the more and less ethnocentric is 33%), and it becomes only slightly more potent in 2002.

Figure 2 provides another way to appreciate the difference in the effect of ethnocentrism. The solid lines illustrate changes in the predicted probabilities of supporting aspects of the war on terrorism, across values of ethnocentrism, in 2000 and 2002. The first graph, for border spending, shows that ethnocentrism has a powerful effect in both 2000 and 2002. The other three graphs, representing opinion on foreign aid

spending, spending on defense, and evaluations of Bush, show relatively flat lines in 2000. Ethnocentrism has little to no effect in shaping individuals' opinions in 2000. However, in 2002, shifts in ethnocentrism are associated with sizable shifts in the predicted probability of supporting decreases in foreign aid, of supporting an increase in defense spending and of evaluating Bush warmly. In the 2002 period, ethnocentrism plays a much larger role in public opinion than it did in 2000.

We predicted these results, but we were not at all sure we would actually find them. The test is a stiff one. It requires that the relationship between ethnocentrism and opinion, measured two years apart, would surpass the relationship between ethnocentrism and opinion, measured in the same interview. All other things equal, the prediction would of course run in the opposite direction. And indeed, Table 3 shows that partisanship and authoritarianism reveal just this pattern: each generally does a better job predicting opinion when measured in 2000 than when measured in 2002. Evidently, when it comes to ethnocentrism, all things are not equal. Evidently, the train of events that began on 9/11 served to activate ethnocentrism among the American public.
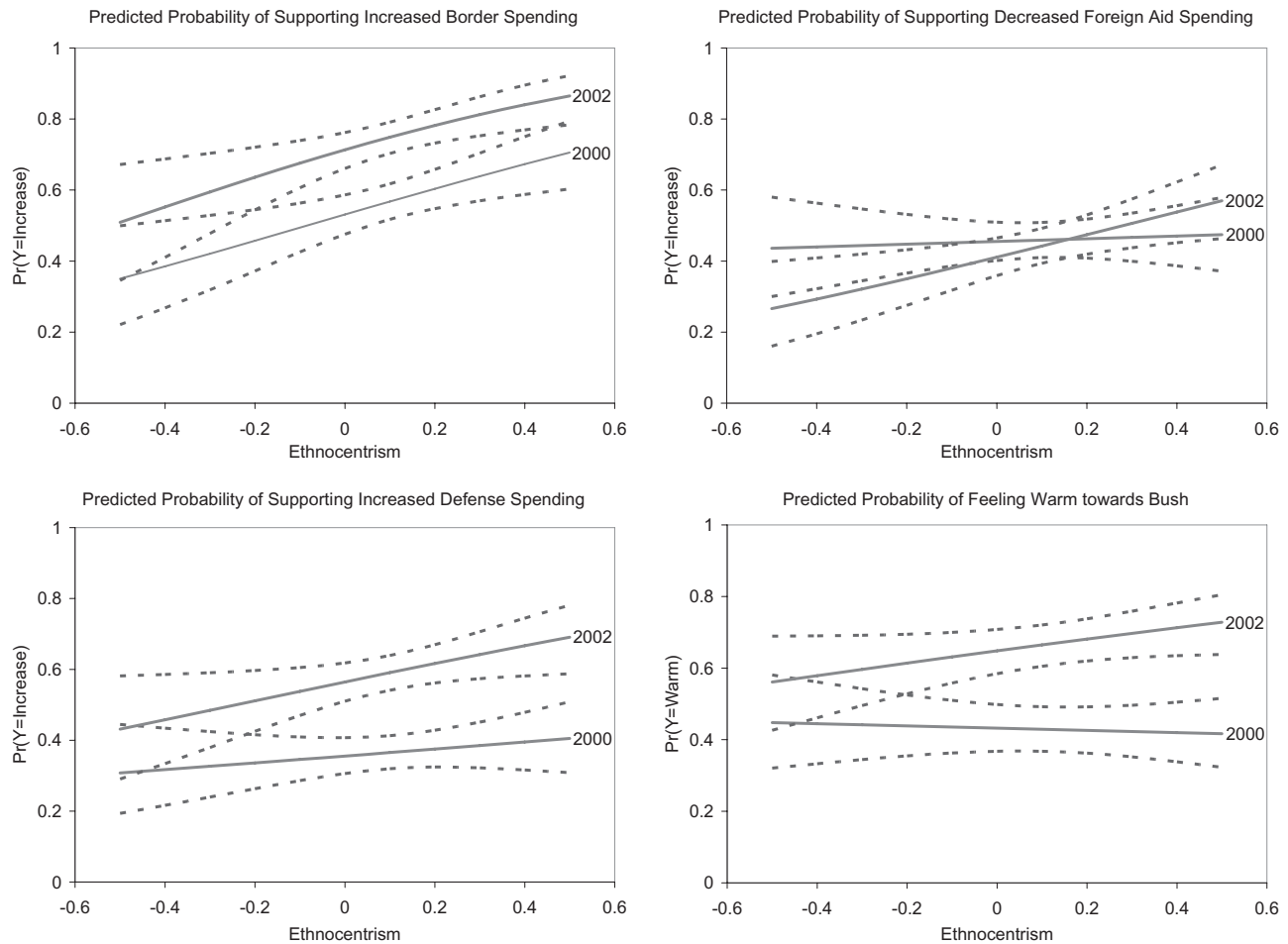
## Conclusions

By day's end on 9/11, waging war on terrorism had become the U.S. government's overriding priority. Our purpose here has been to analyze the underpinnings of American support for this new and seemingly indefinite war. Such support, we have found, has more than a single source: partisanship, authoritarianism, threat, and more. But chief among these explanations, as we suspected, is ethnocentrism.

The effects of ethnocentrism are sizable, and they hold up across a variety of tests and specifications. But is this really surprising? If ethnocentrism is a kind of generalized suspicion of strangers, then terrorism would seem to be an easy case. Consider, though, how we have measured ethnocentrism. It would be unsurprising and quite uninformative if Americans who thought *terrorists* especially dangerous were the first to line up behind the President's policies. That is not what we have shown. We have shown, instead, that Americans who are predisposed to denigrate the character and capacity of *their fellow Americans*—white, black, Hispanic, and Asian—are the ones most likely to lend their backing to the President and his policies. Support for the war on

sections by arbitrarily splitting the sample in half. In one half-sample, the independent variables and dependent variable were all measured in the 2000 NES. In the other half-sample, the independent variables came from the 2000 NES and the dependent variables from the 2002 NES. We then estimated a fully interactive model, where each predictor was multiplied by a dummy variable, coded 0 if the respondent belonged to the first "sample" (the "2000 sample") and coded 1 if the respondent belonged to the second (the "2002 sample"). To provide a sampling distribution for the coefficient interacting ethnocentrism with the 2002 sample, we repeated this process across several iterations. For each of the four opinions—border security, national defense, foreign aid, and evaluations of President Bush—we reestimated the model 50,000 times, dividing the sample a different way each time. The results of this test suggest that we can be quite certain that ethnocentrism becomes significantly more consequential for opposition to foreign aid and for evaluations of President Bush ($p < .10$ in each instance); we are less certain for spending on defense ($p < .22$) and border security ($p < .36$).

[40]The predictions set the values of the other variables to: white, female, an Independent-leaning Democratic, and otherwise average in political awareness, authoritarianism, and strength of religious faith.

FIGURE 2    **The Activation of Ethnocentrism, from 2000 to 2002**

Predicted Probability of Supporting Increased Border Spending

Predicted Probability of Supporting Decreased Foreign Aid Spending

Predicted Probability of Supporting Increased Defense Spending

Predicted Probability of Feeling Warm towards Bush

terrorism arises in an important way from prejudice, generally conceived.[41]

[41]To be sure, the war on terrorism has been waged against a shadowy enemy, and the over-riding exemplar of that shadowy enemy in the average American's mind is likely Muslim. What if we had a measure of stereotypes of Muslims? Would our story crumble as a consequence? Our expectation is that views of Muslims would likely be significant predictors of support for the war on terror, but ethnocentrism—this generalized propensity to carve the world into "us" and "them"—would still contribute to opinion as well. We come to this expectation based on analysis of other policy domains. In our analysis of immigration, for example, we have examined the extent to which specific group sentiments (e.g., towards Hispanics, towards Asians) influence attitudes on the level of immigration; the effects of Hispanic and Asian immigrants on jobs, the economy, and culture; support or opposition to bilingual education, etc. We have found that sentiments towards *other* groups are still significant predictors of immigration attitudes, suggesting that although specific group sentiments do matter, a *generalized* outlook on groups still contributes to our understanding of Americans' views on immigration. Similarly, in our analysis of policies relating to homosexuals, we have included a measure of sentiments towards gays and lesbians in our model, and we have found that ethnocentrism (as we have measured it, based on racial and ethnic categories) still has a role to play in determining indi-

Whether Higham was right to say that "no age or society seems wholly free from unfavorable opinions on outsiders" ([1955] 1983, 3), his observation seems to fit our own time and place well enough. Ethnocentrism appears quite alive in contemporary America, providing a reservoir of support for policies designed, as President Bush's directive put it, to eliminate "terrorism as a threat to our way of life."[42] But the importance of ethnocentrism to the war on terror—or to anything else—depends in part on circumstances, as suggested by our comparison of public opinion before and after 9/11.

Perhaps these are extraordinary times. 9/11 changed the country in many ways, not least by awakening ethnocentrism, turning a psychological habit into a political force. Still, we suspect that the activation of ethnocentrism does not require extraordinary

viduals' views on same-sex marriage, adoption by same-sex couples, and gays in the military. These results appear in Kinder and Kam (n.d.).

[42]*The 9/11 Commission Report* (2004, 332).

circumstances. Threat comes regularly in politics, and elites commonly rely on rhetorical weapons to pit "us" against "them."[43] Because opinion is fluid and politics is dynamic, there may reside within a democratic society the capacity to leave ethnocentrism in the dark or to bring it to center stage.

# Acknowledgments

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[43]Indeed, we have found that the effects of ethnocentrism continue into 2004, using both the 2004 NES Cross-Section and the 2004 NES panel. See Kinder and Kam (n.d.) for full discussion.

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