

The USA as a victim of international/transnational terrorism targeting what it is or what it does?

Heba Zahra

*Department of Political Science, Faculty of Economics and Political Science,
Cairo University, Giza, Egypt*

Abstract

Purpose – The USA has been suffering from international/transnational terrorism for decades. There is no consensus on whether this situation is a result of the international status of the USA and the principles it upholds or the policies it embraces in its interaction with the outside world.

Design/methodology/approach – This study adopts both the “American Primacy” theory and the “anti-Americanism” theory in its effort to reach a conclusion concerning this issue. This study aims to examine previous research that linked international terrorism to the US hegemony and the principles it abides by and showed the relevance of this perception to the “American Primacy” theory. It also examines the research that considered international/transnational terrorism as a result of the American foreign policy in its various aspects (economic, military, assistance or a whole combination of policies).

Findings – This literature on the American foreign policy and international/transnational terrorism was extensive and manifested the explanatory power of the “anti-Americanism” theory, especially in its three variants: issue-oriented, ideological and instrumental. While examining the foreign policy terrorism studies, the relevance of the “American Primacy” theory appeared at very few instances.

Originality/value – The study was able to prove that explaining the international/transnational terrorism is related to the foreign policy decisions taken by the American policymakers and cause harm to the outside world. The envy of “American Primacy” is of secondary importance.

Keywords International/transnational terrorism, US hegemony, American foreign policy, American primacy theory, Anti-Americanism theory

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The USA is a major global power in our world today and it is also one of the main targets of international/transnational terrorism. Scholars noticed that the USA has a relatively long history with terrorism; some believed that it has been a target of terrorism for decades. Throughout the past three decades of the twentieth century, statistics revealed that the USA alone was hit by “approximately one-third” of the attacks of international terrorists (Crenshaw, 2001: 425).



That is why the USA was a very attractive case study to scholars who either sought to present theories that explain this phenomenon or employ mainly the quantitative methods using a sample of terrorist attacks targeted at the USA to reach conclusions that clarify the main reasons or factors behind this situation. The main options are that the USA is being attacked for what it is, or for what it does. To make it simple, this study explores the first option which is targeting the USA in terms of attacking the giant that stands for important ideals and blocks the way in front of other powers to improve their international status. The other option tries to detect whether the problem is what the giant does to other countries, peoples and actors throughout the globe which leads to its punishment by those who are willing to take the risk just in order to teach this giant a lesson, i.e. the American foreign policy.

This study investigates this research problem and examines its aspects in details. It starts with the theoretical and conceptual framework as the first section. Section 2 explains attacking the USA as a major global power and attacking it for the ideals it is faithful to. Section 3 explores the various dimensions of the USA foreign policy that stand behind the international/transnational terrorist attacks, according to scholars. After that, in Section 4, the study moves to a final note, and Section 5 then concludes the research.

2. Theoretical and conceptual framework

2.1 International/transnational terrorism

This article is mainly concerned with discovering the main factors that explain the vulnerability of the USA to international or transnational terrorist attacks. Terrorism has been a controversial concept, and this research adopts one of its well-known definitions: “the deliberate use or threat of violence against noncombatants by a non-state actor for the achievement of political ends, typically with the intent of creating a wider psychological impact” (Patrick, 2014, 63).

Terrorism is often classified by researchers into domestic and international terrorism. Seung-Whan Choi (2016) was one of the scholars who tried to distinguish between domestic and international terrorism. Terrorist attacks that targeted Oklahoma City or Tokyo subway could be labeled domestic. On the other hand, international terrorism refers to a terrorist act that takes place in a certain country; however, it “involves perpetrators, victims, institutions, governments, or citizens” of another country. Choi reveals that the term international terrorism does not have a spatial significance, i.e. terrorists do not have to leave their country of residence and move to another country to be committing an act of international terrorism, they also do not need to be attacking under the umbrella of huge terrorist organizations to fulfill the criteria of international terrorism. The main criterion of international terrorism is to be able, while examining the targets, victims or terrorists involved in the attack, to identify the presence of a minimum of two nationalities (Choi, 2016: 220).

Scholars knew that this was the main criterion of international terrorism which distinguished it from domestic terrorism. This domestic/international terrorism dichotomy started to be shaken with the advent of the 1970s. At that point of time, a new type of terrorism emerged, which was the transnational terrorism. This new type was introduced to explain a case that appeared on the international arena, i.e. terrorist acts committed by sub-state actors. The aim of replacing the concept international terrorism with that of transnational terrorism was to break the link between nation-states and these terrorist acts. Scholars believed that this type of terrorism came to existence, because of the disappearing barriers between countries and perceived the objective of transnational terrorism to be

defying the international order through sub-national groups, and this was made possible by means of technological advances especially in communications (Guelke, 1998).

Patrick (2014) tried to provide a quick overview of the major characteristics of transnational terrorists. First of all, their attacks transcend boundaries. The second feature is that transnational terrorists can recruit local fighters, but their goals are regional if not global. As for their ideology, they believe in the urgency of changing “political relations” and the nature of “international power”. The membership of the transnational terrorist organization is not confined to a particular cultural or ethnic group; however, these organizations try to benefit from the expertise of veterans who are familiar with internal conflict. Concerning their structure, they are “decentralized networks of affinity groups, with cells in multiple countries and flexible alliances with local extremists.” Patrick believed that applying these criteria to various terrorist organizations would reveal that the number of transnational terrorist organizations represented just a small percentage of all terrorist groups (Patrick, 2014: p. 63).

This research explores the case of the USA as a victim of both international and transnational terrorism. Examining the USA as a victim of terrorism requires a theoretical framework carefully tailored to address the uniqueness of the American case. The theoretical framework suggested is a combination of Rubinstein and Smith’s theory of “anti-Americanism” and Betts’ theory of “American Primacy.” Adopting this theoretical framework helps explain the case of the USA being vulnerable to transnational/international terrorist attacks.

2.1.1 *The “anti-Americanism” theory.* Rubinstein and Smith (1988) examined the phenomenon of anti-Americanism early on during the decade of the 1980s and came up with a typology of anti-Americanism:

- *Issue-oriented anti-Americanism:* These “outbursts” erupt in third world countries out of a deep feeling of disapproval of the USA policies.
- *Ideological anti-Americanism:* The main pillar of this ideology perceives the United States to be the source of all evil across the globe. This causes hatred towards the USA even in the absence of political decisions that harm third world countries. The people who adopt this ideology in the third world can be classified into nationalists, Marxists, or Islamic fundamentalists.
- *Instrumental anti-Americanism:* This type of hostility towards the USA refers to using this feeling of hatred as a means to achieve a certain end, such as blaming the USA for the problems and weaknesses of the local government, securing popular acceptance, or (at some point of time) building an alliance with the other super power (USSR).
- *Revolutionary anti-Americanism:* This last type of anti-Americanism is embraced by forces that resent the close alliance between the USA and certain governments and plan to get rid of these governments, so targeting them will be painful to the United States. After getting rid of the government, a new one comes to rule and it will try to benefit from this hatred and outrage at the USA. This is a similarity between this type of anti-Americanism and the previous one. The major examples in this regard are Iran and Nicaragua (Rubinstein and Smith, 1988: 35).

2.1.2 *The “American primacy” theory.* The second part of the theoretical framework is Richard Betts’ contribution (2002) to the notion of “American Primacy”. Richard Betts linked “American Global Primacy” to being exposed to terrorism. He tried to adopt the perception of huge terrorist networks like al Qaeda to explain why it targeted the USA in particular. He

emphasized that the combined power of the USA in its military, political, cultural and economic dimensions helped it exert much impact on the government and religion of the country that terrorists belong to. According to Betts, “political and cultural power makes the USA a target for those who blame it for their problems.” Since these terrorist groups lack the means to get involved in a struggle against this major global power using the conventional methods, they resort to “unconventional modes of force.” That is why the Pentagon refers to the terrorist attacks as “asymmetric warfare.” The September 11 terrorist attacks drew the attention of Americans to the fact that their superiority did not provide them with the means to dominate only, but also made them so provocative to others. Betts commented that the American primacy had provided a façade of strength that reached the limit of invulnerability, which proved to be false by the terrible attacks of 9/11. The American government was informed by various reports that there was an imminent danger and the leader of Al Qaeda organization had been threatening the USA since 1998. However, no one took these threats seriously and the attack of 9/11 was a great surprise to all (Betts, 2002: 33, 34, 38).

These two components of the theoretical framework are helpful in explaining the various determinants of international/transnational terrorism targeting the USA.

2. Internal factors and international/transnational terrorism against the USA: (targeting what it really is or what it stands for)

2.1 Attacking the major global power

It is worth mentioning that the “American global primacy” theory that our study adopts has gained extra credibility through testing it empirically using quantitative methodology. Sobek and Braithwaite (2005), in their groundbreaking study, “Victim of Success: American Dominance and Terrorism,” tested the hypothesis that the more “dominance of the international system” the USA enjoys, the more terrorist attacks will be aimed at its interests. They explained the underlying logic in the same way used by Betts; believing that the superior international status enjoyed by the USA blocks every way in front of the forces that aim to improve their international status using ordinary methods, which makes resorting to terrorism a highly plausible option. The two authors describe terrorism as “the choice of the powerless”, and this explains why the American superiority increases the susceptibility of the American interests to terrorism. Dominance, according to them, is expressed by means of two factors: “preferences and power”. The first refers to the extent to which there is a clear consistency between the preferences of the USA and those of other (major) states, which results in reluctance on the side of these other states to change the status quo. The second factor is “power,” which deters any attempt of other states in the international system to challenge the will of the dominant state if they think they need to do so. It requires cooperation between states that believe in the need for such a change to carry out the mission successfully through “conventional means.” This empirical study examined the attacks against the American interests from 1968 and 1996 and was able to prove the validity of the hypothesis that assumed a positive relationship between the American dominance and the increased terrorist attacks aimed at its interests (Sobek and Braithwaite, 2005: 135, 138, 139).

2.2 Attacking the ideals that the USA stands for

2.2.1 Human rights. In a rather interesting attempt, a group of scholars tried to test the statements of politicians empirically to make sure they provided the public with the real causes of anti-American terrorism. One may also argue that this is an attempt to test whether terrorists actually attack the USA, because of the ideals it stands for. Hillary

Clinton was one of the politicians who took part in the debate on the main factors behind the anti-American terrorist attacks. Clinton advocated the importance of preserving the rights of women to sustain the national security of her country, known as “Hillary Doctrine”. This group of scholars found the doctrine intriguing and decided to carry out an empirical research in order to investigate the validity of this claim. Their sample was huge (156 countries) studied throughout the period (1981-2005). Their quantitative analysis was able to prove the clear link between jeopardizing the rights of women and the extreme behavior, which gave credit to the “Hillary doctrine.” The authors confirmed that this was not the only factor behind the terrorist attacks targeting the USA, but their main conclusion was that when law granted legitimacy to the traditions that perceived women as inferior to men, the tendency to target Americans with terrorist attacks increased. That was why they presented a recommendation to the USA to try to enhance gender equality across the world, because this was directly related to its national security (Saiya *et al.*, 2017).

Section 2 dealt with the contributions of researchers who believed that international/transnational terrorism against the USA was attacking it for what it was: a major global power in our world, and also for the ideals it lived up to, such as preserving human rights and gender equality. These studies were a clear manifestation of the “American Primacy” theory, i.e. terrorizing the USA as a punishment for its supremacy.

3. The foreign policy of the USA as a cause of international/transnational terrorism

3.1 Foreign aid

Some scholars tried to pinpoint the foreign policy tools used by the USA that might cause resentment towards it and highlighted the importance of foreign aid which was supposed to make the USA win the hearts and minds of people around the globe; however, empirical studies were able to prove that this same benign foreign policy tool was really dangerous. This harmless intervention into other countries would result in classifying people into two teams according to the benefit they gained: winners and losers. Losers, who started to be resentful of their local political regime, would feel the same way towards the USA: the main ally and supporter of the regime. However, it was proved that this dangerous faction (the losers in the aid game) would be less dangerous (i.e. less likely to adopt a negative attitude towards the USA), if they belonged to democratic countries (Tokdemir, 2017).

While some researchers just warned the aid-providing countries of the hostility that losers would show, others went a step further and stressed the positive relationship between foreign aid and transnational terrorism believing that this relationship depended on the circumstances in the countries that benefitted from the aid. One such study used the quantitative methodology and was able to prove that the “combinations of local repression and economic and particularly military aid” stood behind the increasing terrorist attacks that targeted the USA. This gave credit to opponents of American intervention in other countries. The study also concluded that this relationship was not valid, once the aid exceeded certain limits, because this huge foreign aid strongly enabled the repressive governments to combat terrorism (Gries *et al.*, 2015: 100).

This particular relationship between foreign aid and terrorism proves the explanatory power of the “anti-Americanism” theory, particularly the two versions “issue-oriented anti-Americanism” and “ideological anti-Americanism.” The first version, as explained earlier, refers to the anger of the developing countries at certain policies pursued by the USA and this becomes particularly evident, since we are examining the case of losers who are harmed by the foreign aid policy. This case may also be a manifestation of “ideological anti-

Americanism.” The resentment of the losers in this game may drive them to develop an ideology that the USA is the “villain” or the source of all evil.

3.2. *Capitalism (and critique)*

Economic problems are the most painful to people. Therefore, scholars interested in identifying the main factors that make the USA more likely to suffer from international/transnational terrorist attacks focused on the economic dimension. That was why scholars highlighted the negative reaction of disadvantaged groups who suffered from the consequences of adopting the market economy, which drove them to retaliate against the model of free market in the world: the USA. An empirical analysis of this relationship tackles capitalism not in its classic sense which makes this factor unrelated to anti-American terrorism, but as “social-market capitalism” which recognizes capitalism as “the extent to which citizens in a society regularly contract with strangers located in a market to obtain goods, services and incomes” and makes capitalism unrelated to the minimal government supervision over the market. Although the study proved a negative relationship between “higher levels of market- capitalism” and terrorist attacks targeted at the USA, it unfortunately found out that “the process of marketization” triggered terrorist attacks. The perpetrators would be the losers: the “anti-market interest groups” whose interests were consistent with deviating from capitalism and who believed that the USA was to blame for this economic transformation in their country. According to these interest groups, their attacks would achieve certain benefits: such as empowering themselves and stopping free market policies, as well as striking a blow at the evil process of “Americanization” that was running through their societies (Krieger and Meierrieks, 2015: 46, 49).

In a quite similar view concerning the effect of market economy on terrorism, Mousseau (2010) carried out an extensive study in which he explained that the values that could help combat terrorism, such as “tolerance” and “equity” were actually cultivated in societies that adopted the free market economy. As free market economies were prevalent in developed countries, it became well known that terrorism was deeply rooted in underdeveloped countries. Mousseau revealed the main factor behind terrorism, which was “social anarchy produced by globalization and the difficulties attending the transition to a market economy.” That is why, in his study, Mousseau introduced the term “market civilization” which ended up “in conflict with much of the developing world.” The solution lay in the role of the developed countries that adopted the free market economy and should give a hand to developing countries in their efforts to introduce the same model, because this would be the way to secure the USA and its allies (Mousseau, 2010: 25).

While the above-mentioned studies believed that the phase of the transition to market economy would be particularly problematic, other studies were skeptical of accepting the prevalence of market economy to be the main factor behind anti-American terrorist attacks. The World Systems theorist Omar Lizardo adopted this viewpoint and claimed that “cultural globalization” was a critical factor that could lead to anti-American terrorism. According to him, this cultural globalization spreads institutions that emphasize “global models for action”. To be clearer, this cultural globalization changes the perceptions of local actors and encourages them to forge alliances with global actors and grants them the power to conduct violent activities for political purposes (Lizardo, 2006: 178).

This aspect (capitalism) has proved to be controversial and requires a careful analysis. We have two groups: one of them recognizes terrorism as the outcome of the process of the transition to market economy and the other believes that cultural globalization is a factor to be included in the analysis. Both visions are consistent with the first two versions of “anti-

Americanism”: the issue-oriented version and the ideological version. Analyzing the vision of the first team reveals that the hostility towards the USA emanates from the painful experience of the movement towards the market economy. The other vision believes that the cultural globalization and the main force behind it (the USA) should be taken into consideration. These two stances in the literature can be examined in the light of the discontent at the USA policy (issue-oriented anti-Americanism). Moreover, the economic stance can be examined in the light of the ideological anti-Americanism. Concerning the cultural vision, it is consistent with the ideological anti-Americanism. It is worth mentioning that the interpretation of Lizardo, “cultural globalization” and the spread of international organizations can be somehow close to the “American primacy” theory, placing much emphasis on the USA as a major global power.

3.3 Military intervention in foreign countries

Another aspect of the American foreign policy that received particular attention of those keen to determine the factors that make the USA prone to terrorism was the military intervention of the USA in foreign countries. A study published in 2016 stated that the US Department of State declared that starting from late September 2011, there were 205, 118 American soldiers in over 150 countries (Choi, 2016). This wide spread phenomenon was very intriguing to scholars who believed in the relationship between the American military presence in a certain country and the feelings of hatred and hostility towards the USA that the citizens of this country would embrace. Accordingly, many studies aimed to clarify the truth concerning the possibility of the existence of a relationship between the American military troops and equipment found in countries all over the world and anti-American terrorist attacks, through employing quantitative methodology. Surprisingly, all the studies reviewed came up with the same conclusion, i.e. there was a clear positive relationship between the two variables. However, reviewing the literature on this aspect revealed the different interpretations that scholars had for such a relationship.

Some studies proved the positive relationship between the USA military intervention and the terrorist attacks in regions like the Middle East. The problem, according to them, was the inability of the American politicians to understand the specific characteristics of the Middle Eastern countries and their distinctive features. Such a study is a policy-oriented study that advises the American policy makers to reconsider their foreign policy towards the region especially after the Arab revolutions. This type of studies believed that the more the US policymakers understood the nature of the Arab regimes, the more the Arabs would understand the importance of the US military presence in the Middle East to preserve the American interests (Oualaalou, 2013).

Other scholars proved the relationship, but explained it with reference to a catalyst that facilitated the impact of the military presence on the terrorist attacks, which was the provoking effect of the leaders of rogue states. Those leaders felt the danger of the USA military presence and the chaos of the local terrorist groups and found that demonizing the USA and encouraging citizens to attack it through granting these attacks the needed legitimacy would be the only way to rescue their governments (Choi, 2016).

Another category of studies proved the validity of the positive relationship between the military presence of the USA in a certain country and targeting Americans. After writing in 2010 to explain how international alliances can increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks (Neumayer and Plumper, 2010), Neumayer and Plumper wrote more specifically about attacking Americans demonstrating that these attacks would achieve the main goal of terrorists, i.e. weakening and getting rid of the government in their country. According to terrorists, it seemed beneficial to strike severe blows at the foreign actor (the USA), which

the local government depended on for “military aid, arms exports and stationed military personnel” (Neumayer and Plumper, 2011: p. 14).

In a quite different explanation of the reason behind the positive relationship between the military presence and the terrorist attacks, a group of researchers differentiated between the military aid and troop deployment and the impact of each on terrorist attacks. The first factor affected terrorism, but the second did not. The underlying logic, according to the study, was that there was a negative relationship between the amount of military aid that a country received from the USA and the efficiency of the political institutions in this country. When aid took a monetary form, local governments would not spend the money to improve the status of the political institutions, but to improve their repression capabilities and manipulate the opposition. On the other hand, the US personnel would be the responsibility of the American government only. This was the difference and that explained why the authors believed that the military aid would weaken the political institutions, which would aggravate resentment and cause increased terrorism towards the USA (Dimant *et al.*, 2017).

At the end of this part, we notice that all the studies discussed agreed on the positive relationship between the military intervention of the USA in other countries and the probability of it being attacked by terrorists; however, their explanation of the dynamics of this issue differed. If we analyze the efforts of local governments to portray the USA as the occupier of the territory, then we will probably be analyzing the situation in light of the instrumental anti-Americanism theory (manipulates hatred towards the USA to blame it for the problems that the country suffers from). However, if we believe in the contribution that considers attacking the USA a plausible method to weaken the local government by depriving it of the USA support, then this will be a case in which terrorism emanates from a sense of dissatisfaction at the policies of the super power that supports an unpopular government. This is closer to the issue-oriented anti-Americanism theory.

3.4 A combination of flawed policies: Ignorance or defiance?

Interestingly, many scholars who tackled the topic of the vulnerability of the USA to international/transnational terrorism pointed to a combination of aspects of the American foreign policy; designating them as the main reasons behind the increased terrorist attacks that the USA suffered from.

Some studies declared these aspects of foreign policy, which were mainly: giving terrorists the opportunity to impose their will, helping “freedom fighters” who later on forgot what the USA did for them and targeted it, the inability to appreciate different cultures, “applying force selectively,” being arrogant about the strength of the USA and its invulnerability to terrorists and finally the American media which made people accept the idea of subordination to the terrorists’ will. This deadly combination of “ignorance and arrogance” was the cause of the terrorist predicament (Bolechow, 2005: 783, 791).

Another category of studies was less critical of the USA foreign policy, restricting its comments to the irrelevant response of American policy makers to the changes driven by the forces of globalization and “the inherent weaknesses of the Arab region.” American policymakers did not know how to respond to these external conditions which would help terrorism survive as the number one threat to Western countries in the new century (Cronin, 2002/2003: 30).

On the other hand, another category of studies heavily criticized the American government and even accused it of attacking and killing civilians. Therefore, it will be pointless to describe attacks from other countries as terrorist attacks, while the USA is actually one of the main causes of the terrible conditions that many parts of the world suffer from (Parenti, 2002; Boyle, 2004).

A former military general gave an opinion which could be considered a manifestation of the anti-Americanism theory (issue-oriented, ideological and instrumental) and also the “American primacy” theory (both our theories) and tried to summarize the main problems of the American foreign policy that led to the terrorist attack in 2001. They were mainly: the anti-American feeling that the Soviet allies spread during the cold war era, the clear support that authoritarian regimes got from the USA, the clear dominance of the USA of the international institutions that shaped the lives of many people in developing countries and hating the prevalence of the American culture (Cameron, 2002). This same perception was shared by academics who believed that the terror inflicted on the USA was a result of the endorsement that the USA offered to governments that many people opposed and more importantly governments that fought against secessionists. That was why these groups would resort to violence against the USA. In addition to this, they highlighted the importance of “cultural hegemony” or cultural invasion of the USA with its values and corporations all over the globe (Ditzler, 2004: 199).

A group of researchers criticized the American foreign policy, emphasizing the falseness of any cultural claims to explain anti-Americanism. These studies showed that the Muslim world did not hate the USA, because this was a clash of civilizations. Muslim citizens prefer democratic regimes just as Westerners do. These studies believed that it was “a clash over policy”. Al Qaeda organization was provoked by the USA foreign policy towards the Muslim World and ordinary citizens were bitter at the USA support to the Israeli occupation and the American occupation of Iraq. The American foreign policy after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 actually exacerbated the “clash over policy” (Cole, 2006: 30).

This whole part examined various opinions of the flaws of the US foreign policy which generated hostility towards it. Therefore, it is a manifestation of the issue-oriented anti-Americanism and it is somehow related to ideological anti-Americanism, as these foreign policy flaws will create an image of the USA as a villain. In addition, the instrumental anti-Americanism is clear with regard to the opinion that links hostility towards the USA to the propaganda of the former USSR. However, as few opinions believe in the importance of the cultural hegemony exercised by the USA and the international institutions that it dominates, then there is a dimension of “American Primacy” theory that appears in this factor.

3.5 Creating the monster

One could think that the factor that made the USA a victim of terrorists was what it did with its own hands; the problem could be that the USA created the monster and at some point of time it lost control over it and the monster was unleashed. This proposition was discussed in light of the history of the USA with Osama bin Laden, the terrorist accused of being responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attack against the USA.

Academics noticed that the USA helped empower people like Bin Laden. In its competition with the Soviet Union and during the fight in Afghanistan, it spent on improving the military capabilities of these fighters. Osama bin Laden’s fight started in Afghanistan in the early 1980s on the side of the Americans. Later on, in 2001, he was accused of terrorizing the USA in an attack that revealed its great vulnerability (Chitkara and Sharma, 2002).

One critical point in the history of communist Afghanistan was the assassination of the American ambassador by four Afghan extremists in February 1979. This terrible incident caused President Carter to agree to provide the opposition in the country with American aid. The Soviets feared this growing American influence and interfered militarily in Afghanistan. The USA was behind the Mujahiddin in this political game who were

considered “freedom fighters” and Osama bin Laden was a member of these Mujahiddin (Seddon, 2003: 191).

It is noteworthy that one of the main aims of Al Qaeda organization is raging a “holy war” whose two parties are: all the Muslim World on one side and the USA and its allies on the other side, issuing a fatwa in 1998 that Muslims around the world should “kill US citizens-civilian or military, and their allies everywhere” (Wilkinson, 2006: 40).

The USA created the monster then it was unleashed. Discussing the aims of Al Qaeda terrorist organization reveals that such organizations hate the American Primacy (Richard Betts’ theory). Also, the link between this perception on one side and the issue-oriented anti-Americanism (dispute over policies) and the ideological anti-Americanism on the other side (USA is the source of all evil) is apparent. The bottom line is that the hatred towards the USA and targeting it with terrorist attacks could be considered the result of a combination of factors.

4. A final note: weaknesses in the governmental apparatus→ catalyst not factor

At the end of this research, it is important to know that some academics pointed the finger of blame towards the USA itself in terms of its internal governmental apparatus and believed that this facilitated the occurrence of the harsh terrorist attacks that Americans experienced. This trend increased after the earth shattering terrorist attacks of 9/11. Some insider information was revealed after these attacks which showed that Osama bin Laden had been recognized as a time bomb threatening the safety of Americans and the national security of the USA even before the attacks of 9/11. The Central intelligence Agency, for example, was willing to pay to anyone who helps it capture bin Laden. The 9/11 attacks made President Clinton admit that as a president, the issue that he was not successful at was “not apprehending bin Laden.” Ironically, the intelligence agency warned the leadership of the possibility of an attack targeting the USA shortly before the catastrophe of 9/11 (Fawn, 2003: 11).

The “organizational weakness” that characterized the intelligence agencies was behind the catastrophe of 9/11. These agencies failed to develop relevant strategies to deal with the world after the Cold War. Some believed the American intelligence agency still worked with the old techniques that it used to confront the USSR during the Cold War (the old pattern of “electronic surveillance” instead of the modern “human intelligence efforts”). This led to its knowledge of an imminent terrorist threat, but its inability to deal with it (Zegart, 2009: 3).

Finally, the author of this research paper thinks that this is a catalyst, an element that facilitated targeting the USA in 2001, not a factor that led to attacking the USA. It is discussed near the end of this research, so that the reader takes into consideration the importance of some elements that cannot be considered reasons or factors; however, they led the USA to become susceptible to terrorism.

5. Conclusion

This research paper is mainly interested in exploring the main factors that make the USA one of the primary targets of international/transnational terrorism. The research question is asking whether the USA is targeted by this kind of terrorism for what it is (a major global power) and what it upholds (ideals for the welfare of humanity), or for what it does (the various aspects of its foreign policy and interactions with the outside world). This study uses the “American Primacy” theory which helps explain how the USA can be targeted for being the major global power, and the “anti-Americanism” theory which explains how the USA can suffer from terrorist attacks as a result of the policies it adopts with the outside world.

Very few studies link international/transnational terrorist attacks to the fact that the USA is the major global power and upholds some ideals. There is an obvious consistency

between their vision and the “American Primacy” theory. On the other hand, Section 3 of the research deals with the foreign policy of the USA toward other international actors and how this is linked to terrorist attacks. Various aspects of the American foreign policy are examined: the foreign aid dimension, the economic dimension, the military dimension, supporting fighters and finally the view that a group of policies adopted by the USA provoked the outside world and stood behind the attacks. The foreign policy is a rich section in which many studies are examined, and prove to be consistent with the “anti-Americanism” theory (mostly the issue-oriented version and the ideological version, and to a lesser extent the instrumental anti-Americanism). However, it is noteworthy that in a few instances the theme of the “American Primacy” theory appears, while explaining the relation between different aspects of foreign policy and terrorism.

The above argument shows that when people speculate about the USA as a main target of international/transnational terrorism, they should know that this anti-Americanism is mainly the result of the policies that the USA adopts in its foreign relations. Various policies adopted by American policymakers lead people across the globe to be disgruntled and provoke violent forces to direct their strikes against the USA. This study is not trying to convince the reader to disregard the effect of hating this major global power. However, the above analysis shows that this is a secondary cause; different international forces are not green with envy of the status of the USA. The emphasis should be on the foreign policy of this global power and its detrimental consequences on others. Envy of the USA for its unique status and prestige should be of secondary importance.

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Corresponding author

Heba Zahra can be contacted at: hmzahra@cu.edu.org

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