# FEAR
# AND THE
# DEATH OF AMBIVALENCE:

*A Social Theoretical Analysis of the Homeland Security Advisory System and Political Trust*

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## Abstract:

The Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) has received harsh criticism since its inception in March of 2002. This raises questions regarding how the American citizenry is deciphering non- traditional statements issued by the state, such as those disseminated by the HSAS, and how behavioral responses to these warnings may facilitate a reconfiguration of institutionalized political structures. I have approached the HSAS from a social theoretical perspective and conducted ethnographic interviews to examine how political trust and power are functioning at the empirical level and are guiding behavioral responses to HSAS warnings. The results of my investigation lead me to believe that the concept of political trust is more multi-dimensional than that which can be fully represented through survey results. My findings also indicate that individuals are apt to act in accordance with government issued warnings and support political leaders in times of crisis. This was evident through empirical examples which demonstrated that citizens acted in accordance with HSAS warnings despite their distrust in the current administration and the HSAS itself. These implications prompt discussion regarding the function of political trust, novel accountability systems, and institutionalized individualization in response to catastrophic and unpredictable threats in the 'post- modern' era.

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## List of Acronyms:

- **ANES:** American National Election Studies
- **CDA:** Critical Discourse Analysis
- **CIA:** Central Intelligence Agency
- **DEA:** Drug Enforcement Agency
- **DHS:** Department of Homeland Security
- **FBI:** Federal Bureau of Investigation
- **GAO:** General Accounting Office
- **NES:** National Election Studies
- **HSAS:** Homeland Security Advisory System
- **IDF:** Ideological Discursive Formation
- **PD-3:** Presidential Directive 3
- **TMT:** Terror Management Theory
- **USA PATRIOT (Act):** Uniting and Strengthening American by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (Act)

## Notes:

- All numeric dates, with the exception of 9/11, are presented in the format of (Day/Month/Year).

## Introduction:

All action produces unintended consequences. Warnings are discursive events which by definition are intended to prompt particular actions. These intentions come to fruition as behavioral responses to warnings are situated within the institutional structures from which the warnings emerged, and in turn replicate or modify the structures which guided behavior. In the public realm there are existing expectations regarding warnings which are produced by government institutions. When warnings meet these standards, regarding that which is expected of a governmental institution, it is probable that citizens will take action which follows in accordance with the primary tenets of a warning and in turn reproduce institutional structures with little deviation. But if warnings do not fit the particular mold of that which is conventionally expected from a government institution, structural change may occur as an unintended consequence of action. Warnings are discursively shaped by existing notions of political trust in the legitimacy of governmental institutions that produce the warnings. This trust in government is weighed against rational alternatives for action, with the end result of a behavioral response. When perceived as legitimate, warnings are constitutive of political power that enables outcomes to be secured which are dependent upon the agency of citizens and discourse is rendered as truth as it is the *modus operandi* behind action. It is through this process of behavioral responses to discursive events, to which warnings are a single example, that political institutions are legitimated and retain their structural integrity.

I have applied the model sketched above to explore the question of how political trust and state power are shaping behavioral responses to the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS)[1] and how actions, which are responses to the HSAS, are affecting the structures of political institutions in the United States. My aim is to dissect political trust in praxis and the role of state power in the 'post- modern' [2] era, as well as to speculate upon

[1] For the sake of the reader's internal monologue the acronym 'HSAS' can be pronounced "Shuss".

[2] Throughout this work the term 'post- modern' appears in parentheses. This punctuation use is an acknowledgement of the ongoing discussion regarding a precise definition of the term and my choice to not limit myself exclusively to one. There are a slew of definitions which describe the state of affairs in developed societies from the second half of the 20th century until present. 'Liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000), 'reflexive modernity' (Beck 1992,) and 'late- modernity' (Giddens 1991) are all definitions regarding present societies which overlap in many respects yet stress subtle differences. As I extract particular elements from each of these definitions it would inhibit my scope to limit myself to one or allow my ideas to become mired in a semantic debate. I am referring to the contemporary society when I refer to 'post- modernity'.

directions for possible structural change. 'Post- modern' theorists agree that contemporary societies are beset by a plethora of unpredictable and large scale risks (Bauman 2004, 2000, Beck 1992, 1999, 2002, Giddens 1991), one of which is terrorism. I intend to examine the question of how lay individuals are coping with this situation and perceive a state initiated warning system which was developed to confront these spiraling risks. In order to do so I have examined the question at the empirical level through fieldwork in conjunction with theoretical propositions.

As student of Social Theory & Public Affairs it is my objective to examine current events and social problems through a theoretical and abstract lens. Issues which are deemed worthy of scholarly investigation are typically examined by 'experts' who analyze an issue exclusively within the field from which it materialized. For example, the majority of research which has been conducted regarding the HSAS has taken place within the domain of emergency management and risk communication. Such research provides acute analysis according to the rules and paradigms limited to that particular field. Alternatively, looking at public affairs through a social theoretical framework allows for the issue to be conceived in a novel light which envisages the issue in its larger social context. This can enable perspectives to emerge which conceive a specific public affair within the context of larger social structures. Such perspectives may draw from a variety of disciplines and thus ideally help open a dialogue, regarding a particular public affair, between scholars of disparate fields of study. I intend for my work to contribute the bodies of literature regarding the HSAS and political trust, ideally evoking discussion, insight, and even criticism. My thesis examines the HSAS, and the circumstances which gave rise to its inception, using the ideas of social theorists as tools to dissect the issue and frame it in a novel light which allows for progressive modes of analysis to develop.

My theoretical analysis is inspired by the ideas of Giddens and Foucault against a backdrop of contemporary society as depicted by Bauman and Beck, of which the importance will gradually become increasingly evident through the progression of my work. My arguments are framed within a historical context of political trust (Chapter 3) in order to demonstrate its significance and provide a sufficient background to develop more intricate definitions. These definitions will serve as additional theoretical tools to aid the analytic deconstruction of my primary research question. For my analysis I have conducted a series of ethnographic interviews to elucidate the latent roles of political trust and power in

behavioral responses to HSAS warnings. This empirical evidence serves to support theoretical inquires and helps to explore how HSAS warnings may affect institutional structures and practices in the political realm. I will expand upon my theoretical points of departure following a succinct introduction to the HSAS and how it intends to alter the behaviors of American citizens.

The HSAS is a five tiered color- coded warning system which indicates the perceived level of risk of terrorist attack on U.S. soil. Since its inception on March 12, 2002 the HSAS has indicated that the nation is functioning at an "Elevated," "High," or "Severe" risk of terrorist attack. Despite the persistence and dramatic nature of these statements produced by the reputable source of government officials, the warnings provide minimal information regarding the specific nature of the threat, possible location, or recommendations of preventative action which should be taken. The confusion associated with the system has been expressed through the pervasively negative discourse which surrounds it. The majority of opinions perceive the system's vagueness as a shortcoming in efficacy or as an indicator that the system is a political tool to cultivate public support for political action (Connor 2004, Flynn 2005, Gray & Ropeik 2002, Reese 2004, Haberman 2007, Pena 2002, Reynolds 2003, Wermuth 2004). Chapter 1 presents a thorough overview of the system which highlights its uniqueness and frames it within the context of both expert and public opinion.

One possible reason for the ambiguity of the HSAS is that it is a response to novel threats which cannot be predicted in a traditional manner and that the warning system mirrors the uncertainty of this new situation. This implies that HSAS warnings would not fit the traditional mold of verbal announcements produced by the state. The state is expected to produce specific and transparent warnings founded in sound scientific evidence when the dissemination of such warnings is appropriate. This deviation from what is expected of statements issued by government officials is reason to speculate upon the possibility that the public is interpreting HSAS warnings in novel ways which may affect the structural integrity of political institutions. Political trust in government officials who produce warnings is unequivocally an impetus behind the behavioral responses a HSAS warning evokes, for trust must be evident to foster the belief that acts of compliance will yield positive outcomes. Political trust and power are not the only factors which shape behavioral responses to HSAS warnings and give meaning to political structures. Yet they are of paramount importance

and are therefore the primary concepts which I have chosen to focus on in the course of this work.

In order for individuals to modify behavior in response to an elevation in a HSAS threat condition it is probable that they possess some degree of political trust in the government which produced the warning. This is not to say that having political trust and taking action which is in accordance with HSAS warnings are one in the same. Rather trust must be evident in the notion that warnings are backed by legitimated knowledge if actors are to abide by HSAS under the belief that it is in their best interests. This trust is a product of individual experience and collective definition regarding the government's ability to allocate its resources to produce accurate warnings regarding possible terrorist attacks. It is a normative expectation of government to possess more knowledge than the lay citizen regarding issues of national security. This expectation is based upon the presumption that the government deploys resources to apply information gathering techniques regarding such threats. It is this faith in the efficacy of political institutions which valorize their authority and prompt individuals to act in compliance with warnings issued by the state. When trust is invested and guides behaviors it gives political institutions meaning. Despite its vitality, there exists a pervasive belief in the academic realm that political trust is in decline in the United States (Braithwaite & Levi 1998, Brehm & Rahn 1997, Gramson 1968, Hetherington 1998, Miller 1974, Putnam 2000). The unconventionality and ambiguity of the HSAS is reason to believe that the HSAS may foster future notions of political distrust or prompt no behavioral responses at all as trust in government is already quite low. According to the theory described below, which I have employed to look at the HSAS, this lack of trust may have detrimental effects on the structures of political institutions if it is affecting behavioral responses.

Giddens' model of the 'duality of structure' can laconically be described as such: Individuals have agency as they are always able to act in ways which differ from that which is excepted, but these acts are always situated within the institutional structures in which they take place. Simultaneously, through this process, these behaviors produce and replicate the institutional structures which enable, and bound, such action. "Structures are constituted through action, and reciprocally…action is constituted structurally" (Giddens, 1976: 160). Giddens sees institutions as combination of rules, resources, and modes of reasoning which constitute the specificity of the institution and endow it with the power that is necessary for

it to exist. Institutions can also be regarded as, "enduring and inclusive 'laterally' in the sense that they are widespread among the members of a community or a society" (Giddens, 1979: 80). Political institutions, such as the state, are of particular importance as they are granted a substantial amount of power which enables them to control populations and their exposure to divergent cultures. The modes of reasoning and norms which shape behavior within the frameworks of political institutions are dependant upon political trust. If actors do not trust the authority of political institutions they will act is ways which deviate from the situated practices that institutions are contingent upon. This is will facilitate a mutation of existing political structures and therefore enable change in the meanings, norms, and power which constitutes the legitimacy of government institutions. This is a circular and 'causal' relationship in which a change in behavior initiates change in structure, which then in return has an affect on successive behaviors (Ibid. 78). To apply this model to my investigation, this process may be initiated as an unintended consequence of action, or lack thereof, in responses to HSAS warnings.

Through my empirical research I found that the responsibility of taking preventative action against large scale risks, such as terrorism, may be shifting from the state to the individual. This becomes clearer when framed within the context of a thorough description of the HSAS which is provided in Chapter 2. In short, the HSAS administers blanket warnings that individualize responsibility regarding the terrorist threat. This presupposes political trust as discourse produced by the state, regardless of its specificity, is rendered as truth as it guides behaviors. Yet ambivalence may be paramount as individuals are torn between deep seeded notions of political trust and alternative courses of action which are grounded in rational frameworks. This ambivalence may be a common symptom of the 'post- modern' era, a concept which will be elaborated throughout the course of this work. According to the 'duality of structure' described above, this individualization of responsibility may not be isolated to the HSAS. As behaviors situated within the structures of political institutions become more individualized, the degree to which the state is held accountable for the well being of its citizens may undergo change. This would affect the power of the state in domains beyond the real of emergency management. These ideas will be described in greater clarity and supported with empirical evidence in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Power associated with the state is vital to defining the meaning of political institutions. This power is resultant of the effect the state is able to have on a wide variety of

outcomes which range from the mundane to the extraordinary. This power is evident in the ability of state officials to apprehend a murder suspect or regulate where and when one crosses the street while receiving little opposition. According to a Foucaultian model of state power, every time an individual acts in accordance with the regulations of the state they reinforce the power of the state. Thus, state power is a culmination of mundane interactions that take place at every level of the social spectrum, not something that is exercised from the apex of a political hierarchy. Discourse is the primary vehicle which facilitates this process. As dominant discourses produced by the state become embedded in commonsensical frameworks of rationality the power of the state is rendered as real, as it is the producer of knowledge which actors use to navigate through the social world. By exercising disciplinary strategies, state power is maximized as individuals unconsciously monitor their behavior to act in direct accordance with the demands of the state, a concept Foucault refers to as a 'technology of the self'.

If the HSAS is functioning as a 'technology of the self' it would entail individuals being extremely vigilant of possible terrorist activity and acting in accordance with the demands of the HSAS at all times. Discourse regarding the terrorist threat would be construed as truth as the power of the state would have increased. This augmentation of power would be the result of action and thought processes at the individual level which are unconsciously shaped by HSAS warnings. I have investigated this phenomenon at the individual level through my interviews to examine whether or not this is the case. By using a method of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyze interviews, a process which will be elaborated upon in Chapter 1, I have made transparent some of the latent assumptions regarding the terrorist threat and rational courses of action which are responses to HSAS warnings. It is through this process that I have examined the extent to which the tenets of the HSAS are unconscious motives behind action and prompting the development of a 'technology of the self'. If the tenets of the HSAS are becoming internalized it may be indicative of a paradigm shift in the way in which power is exercised and conceived. In contrast to old uses of power which were suited to a traditional model of cause and effect, power as it is exercised in the HSAS may equate power with the ability to efficiently adapt to a turbulent and ever changing world in which uncertainty is the new norm, an idea which is elaborated upon in Chapter 5. This would affect political structures as power is individualized with the supplement of knowledge regarding the terrorist threat.

The theoretical concepts described above will become developed as they are elaborated upon throughout Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5, are framed within historical context, and supported with empirical evidence. My methodology section will precede these sections as it is crucial for the reader to understand the process through which empirical material was obtained it order to grasp its significance and validity. Each chapter begins with an interview excerpt which is relevant to the subject matter of the chapter. I will close by reiterating the roles of political trust and power in the interpretation of HSAS warnings and discuss the possible influences behavioral responses to HSAS warnings may have on the structures of political institutions. I will also make recommendations for future directions in research. The primary purpose of this thesis is to approach the HSAS from a novel, and social theoretical perspective. My ambition is to examine how the HSAS is functioning at the empirical level to elucidate the roles of political trust and power in guiding behavioral responses to warnings. This will ideally put me in a position to theorize upon the influences these behaviors may have on institutionalized political structures in the 'post- modern' era.

# Chapter 1:
# Methodology

> "It seems that politicians have a tendency to say one thing and then turn around and do another."- Richard, Artist

## *1.1 Overview*

There is significant accord in the social sciences that language, and its constitutive practices, is one of the primary vehicles for the construction and reproduction of society. Thus qualitative methods of research, including interview techniques, are paramount to the social sciences. By means of employing a specific line of questioning the researcher can elicit descriptive, yet subjective, accounts of an event. These descriptions recreate events through subjective language which is discursive in context and skewed by ideological perspectives. Interviews provide the researcher with material that can either be perceived as an accurate account of an event which took place or as a strictly subjective account of an event from which statements can be analyzed to produce legitimate information. I feel a combination of both perspectives is most advantageous to the production of sound social research. While ardent proponents of positivism would reject such qualitative techniques for lacking in objectivity, it is the subjective nature of the interview which is of supreme interest. As interviewees' accounts are subjective by definition, it is that subjectivity which provides the interviewer with a venue to examine the latent meanings and taken for granted assumptions in statements. This process will be elaborated upon in greater clarity below. As researchers themselves can never be completely objective, self- reflexivity provides a novel dimension of analysis as it takes into consideration the researcher's biases in analysis (Baert 2005, Flick 2006). I have conducted ethnographic interviews to empirically investigate my theoretical propositions regarding HSAS warnings and behavioral responses. These interviews have provided me with actors' accounts of how political trust and power are at play in shaping behavioral responses to HSAS warnings.

All verbal interaction is founded upon assumptions of shared norms, meanings, and background knowledge. By conducting ethnographic interviews and dissecting interviewees' accounts of how they reacted to HSAS warnings, taking no assumptions for granted, I have attempted to explicate the ways in which notions of political trust and power are affecting

behavioral responses to HSAS warnings. In turn this will shed light on how institutional structures are being shaped and reproduced through unintended consequences of action. The majority of empirical research relating to political trust (volumes of ANES data1948-2007) and the HSAS (Knight 2005) have been strictly quantitative in origin. While methodologically sound in both sample size and objectivity, such research presents a somewhat banal and one dimensional overview of respondents' opinions. Predominantly survey based, this sort of quantitative data dramatically inhibits the scope through which respondents can express their feelings and shows statistical trends in contrast to intricate personal accounts. A qualitative approach allows for a more descriptive and multidimensional picture to develop through which the latent meanings and motives that guide and rationalize behavior can be elucidated. It is this type of data which can help "penetrate the frames of meaning which lay actors themselves draw upon in constituting and reconstructing the social world" (Giddens, 1976: 155).

### *1.2 Interview Respondents*

I have conducted twelve ethnographic interviews in the United States in the two week period between May 16th and May 31st 2007. My sample was relational to time constraints which I had to conduct my fieldwork in the U.S. and financial resources to compensate interviewees for their time. I interviewed friends of family and distant acquaintances whom I heard of through the proverbial grapevine. The aim of my fieldwork was to obtain descriptive accounts of individuals' behavioral responses to HSAS warnings and justifications of their actions. The interviews took place in casual settings such as the homes of the interview subjects, coffeehouses, and classrooms. I interviewed subjects from predominantly urban and suburban areas with similar middle class socio-economic backgrounds. Males and females were equally distributed as were the proportion of Democrats and Republicans. This will allow for comparisons across demographics to be drawn if findings show that such an investigation is warranted. The following is a comprehensive list of interview respondents including their age, profession, place of residence, and political affiliation.

- Matt: 27, Graphic Designer, Rosemont, Pennsylvania, USA. Republican.
- Lois: Middle Aged, High School Science Teacher, Radnor, Pennsylvania, USA. Democrat.
- Shannon: Middle Aged, Stay at Home Mother, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, USA. Republican.
- Thomas: 62, Retried Business Consultant & Former Private in the U.S. Army, Nags Head, North Carolina, USA. Republican.
- Marty: 41, Economic Analyst, New York, New York, USA. Democrat.
- Eleesa: 31, Retail Employee, Brick, New Jersey, USA. Democrat.
- Victoria: Middle Aged, Lawyer, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. Democrat.
- Stephen: 29, Bartender, Duck, North Carolina, USA. Republican.
- Andrew: Middle Aged, Art Curator, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. Democrat.
- Laura: 52, Florist, Belmar, New Jersey, USA. Republican.
- Rachel: 31, Sound Technician, New York, New York, USA. Republican.
- Richard: 42, Artist, Germantown, Pennsylvania, USA. Democrat.

### *1.3 Interview Technique*

Ethnographic interviews are founded upon questions which evoke descriptive responses of interviewees' recollections of events. I facilitated this goal by developing an interview construct in which the interviews mimicked a casual conversation in opposition to a rigidly structured and formal interview. This involved asking questions with the preface "tell me about" or "give me an example of," while avoiding questions to which "yes" and "no" responses may be construed as adequate. Such an interview process provided the interviewees with the opportunity to vividly recreate life experiences and include information which they felt was important to the intended area of study, while excluding that which they considered irrelevant. To secure this realization, I informed interviewees that they were being interviewed regarding their behavioral responses to HSAS warnings and that there were no "'right" or "wrong" answers. The concepts of political trust and power were not explicitly mentioned prior to the interview as this may have acted as a cue which would inhibit the scope through which respondents had to reply. Rather my line of questioning

steered the conversation towards the desired direction while concealing the overt motives behind my inquiry. All of the interviews were tape recorded with the respondents' consent that their responses would reappear in a completed copy of my thesis.

My interviews began with three free association questions. These were employed to gage subjective interpretations regarding my primary areas of interest. Respondents were asked to say the first things that came to mind in reaction to a word. These three topics were 1) Trust, 2) Government, and 3) Power. The remainder of the interview was loosely divided into two sections, one focusing of on recollections of behavioral response to HSAS warnings and the other rooted in questions concerning notions of trust in government and opinions towards the current administration. Questioning throughout each respective section tapered from the very broad to the more specific. For example, respondents were first asked general questions which tested their objective knowledge of the HSAS. These included an overview of what they knew about the HSAS and whether or not they were able to recite the spectrum of colors and respective threat conditions. Subsequently, questioning moved towards respondents' specific recollections of their behavioral responses to an elevation in threat condition. After obtaining a descriptive account of particular responses, probing questions steered the conversation in a relevant direction and encouraged respondents to justify their actions. It was in these portions of the interview where respondents articulated how they acted rationally in response to a HSAS warning. This is where the most intriguing and relevant data was obtained. In congruence, questions pertaining to political trust initially gave interviewees a substantially broad scope through which to reply while questioning became more acute as the interview progressed. This entailed posing questions which were open ended relating to generalized notions of trust at the onset of the interview. Probing questions steered these attitudes towards the political realm and normative expectations of sound governance as the interview progressed.

The major tenants of my interview technique were to avoid questions which suggested particular intentions behind action or the respondents' stock knowledge. This was done by encouraging respondents to elaborate themselves upon the motives behind their action as specifically as possible. In a 'normal' conversation such motivations would be taken for granted as notions of common sense to which verbal justification need not be attributed. Encouraging respondents to produce more thorough and in depth accounts broke the typical structure through which conversations take place and provided grounds for

empirical investigation. Above all, the aim throughout my interviews was to maintain a casual atmosphere and loose framework through which respondents were given the scope necessary to produce subjective and descriptive accounts of how they acted rationally in response to HSAS warnings. Interview excerpts are presented throughout my work in a format which mimics the conversational nature of the interview. The dialogue between the interviewee and I will be indicated on a first name basis.

### *1.4 Method of Analysis*

A verbal account of an event, such as that which is obtained through an interview, can be analyzed from a descriptive or critical standpoint. The descriptive approach assumes the account as an accurate and objective replication of an event which took place. A more critical approach of analysis derives data from the subjectivity which was implicit in the language used to describe the event. The former is grounded in empiricism while the later acknowledges that language is never neutral and implicates discourse as the object of paramount interest. It is epistemological conundrum to delineate between a right or wrong way to accurately analyze a verbal account of an event. I feel that an agglomeration of these two methods of analysis is most effective as it provides the researcher with an all encompassing portrayal of an event. I have chosen to employ a method of analysis which is a combination of both descriptive and critical techniques. This serves for particular methods of analysis to be employed as needed.

Examining an account from a descriptive perspective entails taking respondents' recollections of an event at face value. This is pertinent information as far as it is kept in mind that the account is laden with subjectivity. If an interview respondent says that they decided not to get on a flight because of an elevation in terror threat condition it is presumably true that they did not board the flight as a direct result of the fact that they became aware of an elevation in threat condition. Such a description shows how warnings are prompting action on the surface level. Of more significant and theoretical importance are the latent assumptions of background knowledge and shared ideology in descriptions of how respondents acted rationally. It is through critically examining the discourse, which is used to describe behavioral responses to HSAS warnings, from which I have attempted to deduct how notions of political trust and power are affecting interviewees' responses to

HSAS warnings. By analyzing some of the language which is used to describe responses to HSAS warnings, in culmination with descriptive accounts, I have obtained data to examine some of my theoretical inquiries at the empirical level.

CDA is aimed at elucidating naturalized ideological representations which are seen as common sense and are not visible to participants of conversation. These commonsensical frameworks underlie mundane interactions which are based upon taken for granted assumptions and background knowledge, norms, and meanings. It is these interactions, which are guided by institutionally naturalized ideological frameworks, that define institutions and valorize the rules and resources which are necessary for them to exist. By means of critically examining verbal statements, and more importantly the unspoken assumptions which presuppose and frame them, CDA makes clear the effects of discourse which remain unbeknownst to lay actors (Fairclough, 1995: 28). In doing so, CDA seeks to show how power relations and constitution of norms are evident in, and reproduced by, discourse (Mumby & Clair, 1997: 183). Fairclough (1995) sees institutions as containing 'ideological- discursive formations' (IDFs) which are exclusive to the speech community of a particular institution and are embedded with ideological norms that constitute discourse. It is these ideological underpinnings of statements which naturalize ideologies and render them equitable with common sense. Within the theoretical framework of Giddens' 'duality of structure' these IDFs enable behavior while simultaneously reproducing the institutional structures themselves. The goal of CDA is to make explicit the ideological underpinnings which render discourse and behavior to be commonsensical. In doing so, it becomes evident how specific discourse and action contribute to the reproduction of macro structures (Fairclough, 1995: 35).

By applying this method of analysis to my field of inquiry the ideological frameworks which are used to interpret HSAS warnings, in which notions of political trust and relational power are latently evident, become clearer. My interviews have provided me with verbal accounts of how individuals responded to HSAS warnings and subsequently justified their behavior as rational. These accounts are expressed through IDFs which shape behavior within the institutional context of a warning issued by the U.S. government. By analyzing the taken for granted assumptions of shared background knowledge in verbal accounts I have tired to develop a more comprehensive picture of the political structures through which HSAS warnings are being interpreted. Within these statements are latent assumptions, that

when held under a critical microscope, elucidate how political trust is shaping behavioral responses. Power relations also become evident as the commonsensical façade which conceals them begins to dissolve.

All in all, my interviews have provided me with a multi-layered model of what HSAS warnings are actually doing. Respondents have described specific instances of behavior which was prompted by a HSAS warning. These serve as descriptive accounts which can be looked at objectively within the context of the behavioral responses which warnings are evoking, analysis at the most rudimentary level. Further questioning linked these behavioral responses with feelings of trust in government. This allowed behavioral responses to be framed within the context of the political realm, adding another layer of complexity to the picture. Furthermore, by critically examining the language which was used to describe these accounts yet another element to analysis has been added. The model becomes fully developed as motives for action, which are perceived as commonsensical and are therefore normally omitted in verbal accounts of rational behavior, become evident. This multilayered model attempts to produce a thorough and analytical account of the structures though which HSAS warnings are being filtered. The aim of my fieldwork was neither to prove nor disprove a hypothesis or test a theory. Rather, I intended to support my theoretical claims with empirical evidence to produce a more intricate and developed representation of how notions of political trust and power are functioning in response to HSAS warnings. Interview responses holding both descriptive and critical merit have been interwoven throughout this thesis with the purpose of providing empirical examples to back theoretical claims.

Now that I have illustrated my methodological framework, a thorough description of the HSAS is in order. The following chapter overtly explains the function of the HSAS, the events which lead to its development, and opinions of both experts and lay citizens regarding the efficacy of the system. Theoretical concepts and interview excerpts are incorporated to frame the HSAS within the larger scope of my thesis. A systematic and detailed account of the HSAS is necessary to develop a sound argument of how political trust and power are related to the system and how the system may facilitate structural change.

# Chapter 2:
# Getting Acquainted With the Homeland Security Advisory System

> "Yes, I've heard of the color- coded warning system. It seems a bit paradoxical to me. The government is telling us that there is constantly a substantial risk of terrorist attack, but they don't back this warning up with any real advice. You would think that if they really knew that something was about to happen they would take definitive action. But all they really seem to be doing is assigning a silly color to very serious situation backed by very little advice"- Laura, Florist

## *2.1 Description of the Homeland Security Advisory System*

On March 12, 2002 the Homeland Security Advisory System was introduced to the American public under Presidential Directive 3 (PD- 3) by the presiding Assistant to the President for Homeland Security, Governor Tom Ridge. The system was introduced with much regalia and was framed as a necessary and proactive response to the novel and ever present terrorist threat which became salient to Americans following the events of 9/11. The system was an elaboration upon and solidification of two blanket 'terror alert' warnings which were issued following 9/11. The explicit purpose of the HSAS is to:

> "Create a common vocabulary, context, and structure for an ongoing national discussion about the nature of the threats that confront the homeland and the appropriate measures that should be taken in response. It seeks to inform and facilitate decisions appropriate to different levels of government and to private citizens at home and at work."
> (Bush, 2002 PD-3)

The HSAS serves to aid coordination and preparedness, in response to possible terrorist attacks, throughout government agencies and civic society. The HSAS is legally binding upon the executive branch of the U.S. government, but diffuses responsibility and allocates duties through a convoluted network of accountability which includes both private sector entities and individual citizens. HSAS warnings are communicated through a graduated, color coded, warning system which disseminates the perceived risk of imminent terrorist attack to the American public and public safety officials. 'Threat conditions', as they are officially referred to, are codified into a hierarchy to create a common vocabulary which allows risks and subsequent courses of action to be assessed from an objective point of view. Each augmentation in threat condition signifies an increased risk of terrorist attack. The warning system is comprised of five tiers. Each respective color- coded level is accompanied

by an assigned threat condition and a series of protective measures which are to be taken by lay citizens, and guidelines for state, local, and private sector authorities to follow. The primary specifications for citizens entail increased vigilance, attentiveness to surroundings, willingness to report any suspicious activity to authorities, and a plan which can readily be implemented in the case of a terrorist attack.

The spectrum range is as follows: Green (Low), Blue (Guarded), Yellow (Elevated), Orange (High), and Red (Severe) (See Figure A). The HSAS was set to 'Elevated' when it was initially deployed in March of 2002 and has been raised 8 times to present (August 10, 2007). The term 'HSAS warning' refers to an elevation in threat condition. The system is constantly functioning as it assesses threats and deploys the most current threat condition. According to the HSAS the U.S. is never officially void of a risk of terrorist attack. The prescribed threat condition has primarily fluctuated between 'Elevated' and 'High'. Never has the threat condition entered the lower 'Guarded' to 'Low' end of the spectrum. This means that according to the HSAS the nation is constantly operating at least at an Elevated risk of terrorist attack. Therefore, according to the authorities in Washington, fear and exposure to looming risks should be perceived as the new social norm if warnings are to be perceived as legitimate.

Figure A: Homeland Security Color- Coded Threat Condition System

To quote President Bush from Presidential Directive 3;

> "The world has changed since September 11, 2001. We remain a Nation at risk to terrorist attacks and will remain at risk for the foreseeable future. At all Threat Conditions, we must remain vigilant, prepared, and ready to deter terrorist attacks." (Bush, 2002 PD-3)

From a theoretical perspective this is an interesting statement which invites deconstruction. The statement is extremely profound as it blatantly declares that "the world is not the same" and that the nation will remain at substantial risk of the unknown for the unforeseeable future. This intensity and graveness is compounded with ambiguity and vague precautions which do not seem to be appropriate in light of the magnitude of the previous statement. If perceived as legitimate, one could hypothesize that these warnings would cause a significant change in citizens' perceptions of reality as they become cognizant of new and ever looming threats. The statement is situated within the context of a political institution, a reputable source which is traditionally responsible for producing accurate and precise warnings. As this statement does not fit the mold of that which one expects a government institution to issue, it is interesting to examine if it has been interpreted through the same frameworks which guide behavior in response to archetypal statements issued by the state. Trust in political institutions which are issuing the warnings is a factor in the way in which warnings promote specific courses of action and fuel subsequent notions of trust. It is fascinating to inspect the extent to which these warnings are being taken seriously and are enmeshing themselves into existing frameworks of rationality and political structures.

> "Raising the threat condition has economic, physical, and psychological effects on the nation; so, the Homeland Security Advisory System can place specific geographic regions or industry sectors on a higher alert status than other regions or industries, based on specific threat information."(DHS Website, Visited on 4/6/2007)

This statement asserts that HSAS warnings have a strong affect on the nation. In an attempt to avoid some of the unsavory and unintended consequences of an elevation in threat condition, threat conditions can be assigned by geographical region or sector in order to not cause panic in areas which are not at particular risk. For example the threat condition can be elevated to Orange for the mass transit systems of the New York metropolitan area while it remains at Yellow for the rest of the nation. The single instance that the threat condition was elevated to Red was limited to flights originating in the U.K. bound for the United States and was only maintained at this level from August 10, 2006 to August 13,

2006. While the threat condition may be elevated in regions which are particularly at risk, the majority of the nation has remained at an 'Elevated' risk of attack or higher.

The public is loosely informed of the measures which are to be taken by government officials in the event of an elevation in threat condition. The primary purpose of releasing such information is to prepare the public for delays which are the result of tightened security. Also, the specificity of the nature of the supposed threat remains fairly concealed. The constraints of classification inhibit the type and amount of information that can be disseminated to the public regarding a particular threat. On the DHS website lay citizens can find a vague description of the process through which changes in threat condition are made, a process which will be described below. While with a bit of research one can trace the network of government agencies which determine changes in threat condition, the actual information which prompts an elevation in threat condition is far less transparent. In the press releases which accompany an elevation in threat condition, justifications for the change gives vague reasons for the elevation, usually spurred by events in the Middle East, a holiday, or "creditable information from an intelligence source" (DHS Website Visited on 6/6/2007). For example, take this justification behind an elevation in threat condition from Yellow to Orange issued on March 17, 2003.

> "A large volume of reporting across a range of sources, some of which are highly reliable, indicates that Al-Qaida probably would attempt to launch terrorist attacks against U.S. interests claiming they were defending Muslims or the Iraqi people rather than Saddam Hussein's regime." (DHS Website, Visited on 6/6/2007)

The ambiguity of the reason behind the threat elevation, the "highly reliable sources" which obtained this information, and the location and nature of the threat presupposes a great deal of trust in government if one is to base dialectic courses of action from such a statement. Trust is evident in the "sources" which have obtained the information and the processes through which it was accumulated. Additionally, the vagueness of precautions which citizens are expected to take creates a situation in which shifts of responsibility may be expected, an idea which will be elaborated upon later.

Decisions regarding changes in threat condition are made by the DHS in congruence with the Homeland Security Council, which is comprised of twelve parties. These decisions are based upon information regarding terrorist threats which have been gathered by various intelligence agencies including the CIA, FBI, and DEA. Three primary methods are used to obtain information regarding a terrorist threat: Scanners, Watchers, and Synthesizers

(Nunn, 2005: 1). This information is compiled and sent to the DHS in the form of advisory reports. Decisions to administer a change in threat condition are based upon the following criteria which are stated in PD-3.

- To what degree is the threat information credible?
- To what degree is the threat information corroborated?
- To what degree is the threat specific and/or imminent?
- How grave are the potential consequences of the threat?

While the criteria that serve as the basis for determining the threat condition are explicitly stated, the answers to these four influential questions remains concealed. Again, this exemplifies political trust which is necessary for this information to hold relevance in the public realm. After the decision has been made to change the threat condition this information is communicated to state, local, federal, and private sector authorities. Each of these respective entities is responsible for devising and implementing a plan which effectively informs the public of the change in threat condition and helps safeguard the public in the event of a terrorist attack (Reese, 2005). Media outlets are also notified and are responsible for disseminating the information through their respective outlets. Changes in threat condition are communicated to the public primarily through the media while a more elaborate system is used to inform public safety officials. An elevation in threat condition will remain affixed to a corner of the screen throughout out the entirety of many television news broadcasts in addition to the standards of time and temperature. As the HSAS threat condition remains posted in proximate juxtaposition with information which has been established as legitimated knowledge, it provides no concrete information despite its color and title. It is the ubiquity and vagueness of HSAS warnings, compounded with the severity of their nature, which initially prompted my inquiry. It led me to ask how they are being interpreted by citizens and what the unintended consequences may be of their deployment. There are a number of reasons to raise these questions as the HSAS has come under vehement criticism and has been dissected from a variety of fields.

*2.2 Efficacy Comes Into Question*

Following its inception in March of 2002 there has been a plethora of work conducted regarding the HSAS from numerous fields of study. The HSAS has been praised, analyzed and scrutinized from divergent perspectives which focus on varying aspects of the manifest and latent effects of HSAS warnings on the American public and the system itself. These include both empirical and theoretical undertakings from fields such as economics (Amegashie & Kutsoat 2004), risk communication (Gray & Ropeik 2002, Wermuth 2004), psychology (Pang, Glen & Cameron 2006) emergency management (Aguirre 2004, Carafano 2004, Connor 2004, Reese 2004), social psychology (Willer 2004), and ideology formation (Beresford 2004). This is in addition to the slew of opinion based and editorial pieces which have criticized the HSAS and used it as an object of satirical ridicule (Flynn 2005, Haberman 2007, Pena 2002, Reynolds 2003). Each of these works is a piece of the mosaic which constitutes the larger picture of the effects, both intended and unintended, that HSAS warnings are having on the American public as well as on social and institutional structures. As I posit that warnings have reflexive consequences, beyond the latency period and realm of their inception, all of these perspectives are valuable in formulating an all encompassing model and analysis. Yet some of these works are more pertinent to my domain of theoretical inquiry than others. It is not within the scope of my project to summarize all that has been said or written concerning the HSAS. Information regarding the economic or financial effects of the HSAS is not of particular interest as it does not help tap the latent frameworks through which HSAS warnings are being conceptualized. What is relevant though is research which has been conducted regarding the unintended consequences of HSAS warnings, particularly that regarding behavioral responses and works which critique the efficacy of the system from scientific and social perspectives. It is also important to acknowledge that the HSAS has not been particularly well received by the public and the scholarly discourse surrounding the system frames it as ineffective and capable of producing unfavorable side effects. From the layman's perspective take the two following interview excerpts for example.

> "You hear on the radio that the threat condition has changed and then what? I don't really know what to do so I just kind of continue along unaffected" – Marty, Economic Analyst

&

> "As a tax payer the government owes me the responsibility to provide precise warnings if there is risk of a terrorist attacks. The Homelands Security Advisory System tells me a color and not much more"- Victoria, Lawyer

These comments are of particular relevance as they are grounds to postulate the HSAS is having negative and reflexive consequences if it is not perceived to be providing a public good. Academic opinions regarding the system echo the feelings of lay citizens, only supporting their positions with factual data regarding effective warning systems.

Within the realm of risk communication and emergency management there exists' a general consensus among experts that the HSAS is not an effective warning system (Aguirre 2004, Carafano 2004, Connor 2004, Gray & Ropeik 2002, Reese 2004, Wermuth 2004). After all, a warning system is only as effective as the extent to which it is capable of saving lives. In fact is has been said that the HSAS "violates the most central principles of a sound warning system" (Aguirre, 2004: 13). Other opinions serve to bolster such an ardent claim;

> "Public alerts must be credible, specific, understandable, and actionable by individuals. Arguably, the change in color code, which dominates public perception of what the HSAS represents, is none of these." (Carafano, 2004: 6)

Criticisms hail from the fields of emergency management, risk communication, and from political actors who are in a position of responsibility to develop an effective system which prepares the public for a terrorist attack. Logistically the HSAS has come under harsh criticism and has been berated for a number of its shortcomings. These include, but are not limited to;

- Vagueness of warnings: It has been asserted that HSAS warnings are too vague as they do not provide enough specific information in regard to action a lay citizen should take in response to an elevation in threat condition. Additionally, the nature of the looming threat as well as the time and place of its possible occurrence is considered to be quite ambiguous. This has caused a decline in the perceived creditability of warnings in the public realm and decreased the probability that warnings will prompt preventative behaviors (Barry 2002).

- Lack of coordination between State, Local, and Private Sector authorities: Explicit in its mission, the HSAS is intended to prompt autonomous sectors of civil service to cooperate with each other and formulate effective responses to crisis situations. The

HSAS has failed in this respect as State, Local, and Private Sector authorities are each responsible for developing their own response system without mandatory coordination. This creates a situation in which various emergency response systems operate independently of each other with little congruence.

- Ineffective communication of warnings: The HSAS has failed to develop an effective method of disseminating changes in threat condition to the general public and local authorities. The public is informed of changes in threat condition through media outlets, not through an Emergency Alert System (EAS) like that which is used in hurricane advisory systems (Reese, 2005: 8). Additionally, HSAS warnings fail to account for the psychological effects of warnings and how they affect the general public. It has been proposed that the public has been overly bombarded with warnings, fostering numbness and apathetic responses to HSAS warnings.

These criticisms were perceived as being well founded by government officials as they came to a head at a hearing before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations of the Committee of Government Reform on March 16, 2004. This hearing was an acknowledgement of, and response to, the notion that the HSAS was an ineffective warning system and needed to be revamped. The hearing served as a forum for research analysts and experts in the field of risk communication, national security, and emergency management to present their findings regarding the short comings of the system and subsequent recommendations for improvement. Michel Wermuth, Senior Policy Analyst at the RAND Corporation, stated the following in a prepared statement for the hearing;

> "The Homeland Security Advisory System has become largely marginalized. This may be attributed to a lack of understanding of its intended use as well as the absence of a well-orchestrated plan to guide its implementation at all levels of government." (Wermuth, 2004:4)

Mr. Wermuth's statement is an accurate representation of the general tone of discontentment with the HSAS which was consistent throughout the hearing. Others who were called to testify presented more developed criticisms and recommendations for improvement. Within the realm of emergency management Charles D. Connor, Senior Vice President of Communication and Marketing at the American Red Cross, addressed the issue

of vagueness and precautions which are to be taken in correspondence with each elevation in threat condition.

> "..the Red Cross has developed specific disaster readiness guidelines for individuals, families, neighborhoods, schools and businesses, and released a complementary set of guidelines. Each color- coded threat category was further expanded to provide recommended actions for each of these given different constituencies." (Connor, 2004: 6)

This example is indicative of the types of criticisms and recommendations which defined the hearing. Most criticisms were founded in vagueness of warnings and protective measures, lack of coordination between state, local, and federal authorities, and methods in which changes in threat condition are communicated to the public. These recommendations coalesced in a report issued by the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) which listed specific alterations which should be made to the system. The report stated that HSAS warnings should be; 1) communicated to the public through multiply methods, 2) communicated in a more timely fashion, and 3) should be more specific concerning the nature of the threat and protective measures which should be taken in response to the possible threat (GOA Report, 2004: 21).

It seems that most experts and lay citizens agree that the HSAS lacks in efficacy in comparison to more reputable warning systems which have been refined over the years. It is possible that the ineffectiveness of the HSAS may be attributed to the haste and lack of planning with which it was established in response to the events of 9/11. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2003 showed that almost 40% of those polled, sample size of about 1,000 from a controlled sample of the lay population, felt that the HSAS did not provide useful insight into the level of threat the nation faces (Rainie, 2003). This data gives large scale empirical credence to theories regarding the efficacy of the system described above. The fact that the study was conducted by a reputable institution which charts public opinion is an indicator that the efficacy of the HSAS is under question. It is not within the scope of my investigation to dissect the intricacies of the HSAS and make recommendations accordingly, although it has been suggested that a sociological perspective would greatly aid the development of a more effective system (Herring, 2003). Rather I intend to delve beneath the surface and examine the latent effects the deployment of HSAS warnings are having on the general public and how behavioral responses are shaped by notions of political trust and power. In order to do this it is important to frame the HSAS

within the context of that which may have been the impetus behind its development, as a pragmatic response to the nascent social problem of global terrorism in the United States.

### *2.3 A Response to a Social Problem*

Social problems are never objective, rather they are conceived as such by means of collective definition in a society. Social problems come and go as their dramas are played out in various 'arenas' and compete for the limited resource of public attention (Blumer, 1971: 300). The issues which are most successful are those that are dramatic, novel, deal with cultural biases, and are applicable in disparate arenas. They are promoted by actors who feel that a specific issue warrants the public's attention in a particular domain (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988: 53). Prior to the events of September 11th, 2001 there was little public discourse which construed terrorism as a prominent social problem in the United States, although there had been a gradual proliferation of terrorist related attacks in the decade prior to 2001. These include the initial bombing if the World Trade Center in February 1993, the bombing of the Okalahoma Federal Building in April 1995, and the string of explosive devices distributed by means of parcel post by the 'Unabomber' Theodore Kyzinsky. These events may have tendered various arenas, preparing them to be an environment in which global terrorism could thrive as a prominent social problem. Regardless, at 8:46 A.M. on September 11th, 2001 terrorism instantly became a major social problem and was immediately slingshot to the forefront of the political agenda. The horrific events of that day, which unfolded before a live television audience, were not framed as an isolated catastrophe. Rather they were framed as an attack on American ideology and the beginning of a new era in which Americans were constantly at risk of a terrorist attack. This was coupled by cultural conceptions regarding religion and ethnicity and the fact that the terrorist attacks were projected upon the public through poignant imagery on a grand scale. Social problems which are most successful are those which interact with other social problems in varying arenas (Ibid. 67). This was the case with global terrorism as it was amplified by social problems which had already established themselves. These included; Immigration, restrictions tightened following the events of 9/11 after it was discovered that the World Trade Center bombers had enter the U.S. on student visas; Public health, fear of a biological or chemical attack caused a frenzy regarding what preventive measures could be taken to

offset an airborne attack; and Civil Liberties, the USA PATRIOT Act was framed as a necessary bill which increased the surveillance capabilities of the state in order to thwart terrorism while arguably encroaching upon 4th Amendment rights. The culmination of all of these factors was the solidification of terrorism being conceived as a major social problem in the public and political realms. This was evident as phrases such as 'the war on terror' and 'post 9/11 world' became ubiquitous phrases which incessantly appeared in news broadcasts, newspaper headlines, and 'water cooler' conversations.

These developments precipitated a response by government officials to appease the fears of the public and devise a system which attempted to confront the social problem head on. To quote President Bush again from Presidential Directive 3:

> "The Nation requires a Homeland Security Advisory System to provide a comprehensive and effective means to disseminate information regarding the risk of terrorist acts to Federal, State, and local authorities and to the American people."(Bush, 2002 PD- 3)

It is a difficult task, which may be indicative of a paradigm shift, to develop an effective system which defuses the terrorist threat in a linear and predictable manner (a concept that will be elaborated upon in the subsequent section of this Chapter). Terrorist attacks come without warning and are driven by the ambitions of transnational actors who act under their own will, without direct affiliation with a sovereign nation. Thus, terrorism is a risk that can neither be calculated in a rational fashion nor can be neutralized through traditional systems of accountability. According to Ulrich Beck's model of the 'World Risk Society', in which the unintended consequences of the first modernity are coming to the fore, global terrorism is the Chernobyl of globalization (Beck, 2002: 47).

In response to these developments, the HSAS was constructed as a logical and preventative response to the social problem of global terrorism in the U.S. By codifying the perceived level of terrorist threat, and assigning recommended courses of action to each graduated threat condition, the system served to pragmatically confront the social problem. The explicit nature of the system was to make the public vividly aware of the issue and provide precautionary advisements for citizens to take at the individual level. This simultaneously defused the responsibility from the state to the citizens and countered the reflexive nature of terrorist threats with a convoluted accountability system.

As terrorism yielded significant success as a social problem during its initial appearance on the main stage of current affairs and the political agenda, it still had to

contend with a factor which often prompts the downfall of a social problem's success; that of loss of novelty and over saturation in the public domain. Even the most remarkable and relevant social issues become dedramatized as arenas are flooded by redundant messages which drive down the perceived value of a social problem (Hilgartner & Bosk 1988: 63). This is done by actors who are overly eager to keep a social problem on the agenda or excessive interaction with relevant social problems in other arenas. There is sound reason to believe that the public domain became over saturated with discourse that construed terrorism as a major social problem, while the issue continued to receive considerable attention through various outlets. The notion that the public had become fed up with discourse regarding the terrorist threat is evident in the cult like success of the movie "Snakes on Planes" (New Line Cinema 2006) which grossed $15.3 million in its opening weekend. The film is a satirical romp that portrays the terrorist threat, and measures to combat it, in an overly exaggerated and comedic light. Some purveyors have even tried to cash in on this atmosphere, offering a variety of products bearing a slogan which pinpoints the HSAS as an object of mockery (See Figure B).

Figure B:

It seems probable that HSAS warnings were gradually perceived as irritating messages that gave unwarranted attention to a social problem which had lost its prominence. This may beget a decline in political trust and a proliferation of the presumption that the HSAS is no more then political rhetoric which keeps the public at an elevated state of fear driven by motives for political gain and public support of the war on terror, a perception of the system which has most recently been expressed in *The New York Times* (Haberman 2007).

All of the negative discourse surrounding the HSAS can lead one's thoughts to become entrenched in conspiracy theories regarding the motives behind the development of a warning system which is almost unanimously perceived as ineffective. Take this gentleman's opinion for example.

> "The system is an attempt to keep us scared. The government thinks that the American public will support all military action which is aimed at combating the threat of terrorism if we are constantly in a state of anxiety"- Stephen, Bartender

As a social scientist, equipped with an array of theoretical tools, it important to step back from simplistic modes of analysis and look at such a system objectively from a social and theoretically inspired perspective. By doing so it becomes evident that a warning system such as the HSAS may be seen 'a sign of the times,' so to speak, in regard to the state of affairs in our 'post- modern' epoch of risk and governmentality. This is what is truly of interest to my research project and leads one to ask if the HSAS is a novel response to a nascent social problem. While government issued warning systems are not a completely novel phenomenon, the HSAS is unique in its form. The air raid warning of World War II provided distinct, and comparatively unambiguous, warnings regarding a very specific and concrete threat. In contrast, the HSAS disseminates a hierarchy of vague warnings which vary in severity and can be interpreted in a number of ways regarding a non-specific threat. The way in which individuals conceptualize such a change may effect how political trust shapes behaviors that take place within political structures and transform such structures as unintended consequences of action.

### *2.4 A Sign of the Times*

In our 'post- modern' epoch, or 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000) 'reflexive modernity' (Beck 1992), the world has been become increasingly complex and boundless. As risks, such as global terrorism, are no longer able be calculated in a traditional fashion the role of the state has undergone change as it has been forced to adapt to this novel paradigm.

> "States thus are forced to act as regulators, or *gamekeepers*, of networks and fluids predominantly generated through the unpredictable consequences of many other economic, social and political entities, including especially globally organized terrorist networks." (Urry, 2002: 67)

It has been hypothesized that the HSAS is a pragmatic response to, and acknowledgement of, the fact that political events no longer unfold in a linear manner (Massumi, 2005: 35).

The vagueness of HSAS warnings and their resistance to subside, even when there seems to be no terrorist threat definitely present, is an indicator of the turbulent state of affairs in contemporary society.

Bauman is accredited with developing the concept of 'liquid modernity' (2000), to which many parallels can be drawn to Beck's model of the 'world risk society' (1992, 1999). 'Liquid modernity' is Bauman's term referring to the constantly changing state of affairs in contemporary society. Notions of stability which demarcated the first modernity have given way to fluidity and perpetual change. According to Bauman, we need to abandon old routines and shift responsibility from traditional authorities to the individual. In a speech which Bauman gave in May of 2004 in Leiden, The Netherlands, Bauman explicitly pinpointed the three major tenets of 'liquid modernity' are, 1) uncertainty, 2) a condition of continuous risk which cannot by fully calculated, and 3) a shifting of trust; Those who are perceived as trustworthy today may be deemed as untrustworthy tomorrow. According to Bauman, "we need to develop the ways of behavior, the ways of contact which are fit for living in this constant state of change" (Bauman 2004). By accepting this view of contemporary society we see that the HSAS may be more effective and progressive than myopic insights frame it to be. In many ways the HSAS mirrors the key principles of a theory such as Bauman's.

The HSAS serves as an official acknowledgement by the state that the nation is constantly at risk of unpredictable threats and will be for the unforeseeable future. This is not to say that the HSAS was solely erected as an accountability system to "cover the ass" of government officials in the event of a serious terrorist attack, although it does effectively accomplish that task. Rather the proposition frames the HSAS as an effort to restore order and predictability to the realm of the uncertain and account for some of the ambiguity of the system which have been the object of harsh criticism. The vagueness and lack of specificity of HSAS warnings is analogous to the nature of the terrorist threat. Also of particular relevance in Bauman's model is a shifting of responsibility from once well established authorities, such as the state, to individuals. The HSAS individualizes the terrorist threat as it encourages the vigilance of citizens to be on guard against terrorist activity, in contrast to traditional sovereign models which protected the citizen. The following quote, which refers to Bauman's conception of 'post- modernity', clearly exemplifies the relationship between the citizen and the state in an increasingly individualized world.

> "…awareness of risk has increased. People in the West are forced to stop expecting that a caring state will protect them from cradle to grave. They must live with high levels of risk and make what arrangements they can to cope. The old safety nets have been torn to bits." (Smith, 1999: 9)

Beck similarly describes the paradox of "institutional individualism" in which individualism is brought about by top down approaches initiated by the state (Beck & Beck- Grenshien, 2002: 23). While both Beck and Bauman cite the welfare state as an indicator of this phenomenon, I feel that the HSAS is also a prime example of state initiated individualization. As the U.S. Government recognizes that terrorism cannot be predicted, nor accounted for, in a traditional manner the HSAS officially shifts responsibility from the state to the public. This raises the question of how the public perceives and responds to these warning, which are laughable in specificity compared to more traditional emergency warning systems. This proliferation of individualization pervades many facets of social life in the 'post- modern' era. Yet legal acknowledgments, such as the HSAS, are novel and operate outside traditional model of action which is taken by the state.

The American public is not particularly familiar with the new role of the state or the plethora of unpredictable and non- linear threats to which they are constantly exposed. Behind its facade of ambiguity I believe that the HSAS is an archetypal example of a new model of warning system which is a response to the proliferation of unpredictable threats. But as my perspective is the result of applied research, it is unlikely that the majority of the American public shares the same informed viewpoint. The method through which the American citizens are making sense of these warnings, and perceiving them as legitimate, is at the root of my investigation. Bauman indicates 'a shifting of trust' as a characteristic of the transient nature of contemporary society (Bauman 2004). As the HSAS shifts responsibility from the state to the citizen it may cause political trust to be allocated in new ways in response to the dissemination of non- traditional warnings. As previously indicated, HSAS warnings are not representative of traditional statements which are issued by the state.

Another one of Bauman's key concepts is an increased ambivalence in contemporary societies. He defines ambivalence as, "the possibility of assigning an object or event to more than one category" (Bauman, 1991. From Beilharz 2001: 281). It has been examined at the empirical level through my fieldwork whether this is occurring as individuals attempt to decipher HSAS warnings. People may be torn concerning how to categorize and respond to

a warning which is issued by a reputable source, such as the state, but provides little informative information. Through empirical research it has be explored the role that political trust plays in this process of categorization. This ambivalence may also pervade other facets of the political realm as citizens attempt to compartmentalize attitudes towards political actors and regimes. According to Bauman an acute discomfort is felt when one is unable to read a situation properly and choose between alternative actions (Ibid.). Through the process of analyzing interviews I will gauge the extent to which this conflict a categorization is taking place. Behaviors which are invoked by the HSAS, and the ways in which these actions are verbally rationalized, sheds light on how a progressive new warning system is affecting the masses. In order to make any sound judgments regarding the new ways in which trust is functioning in the political realm, it is necessary to be well acquainted with the historical origins of political trust in the United States settle upon a concrete definition of political trust.

# Chapter 3:

# The Importance of Political Trust

> "My expectations of government entail honesty, integrity, and humanity. To do what they say they are going to do, and do it in moral and ethical way. I feel none of these qualities are evident in the current administration. Deceptive means have been used to get us to where we are now. There are too many conflicting interests and ulterior motives behind action which is being taken in the Middle East. The current government cannot be trusted."- Lois, High School Science Teacher

## *3.1 Defining 'Political' Trust & Its Academic Origins*

Notions of trust are implicit in the affirmation of one's reality. They are omnipresent in the way discursive events are framed and in justifying how one acted rationally in response to them. Perhaps most importantly, trust allows actors to navigate through the world, and fulfill their daily obligations, without being overwhelmed by the anxieties of the innumerable outcomes of the unknown, which are begotten by the reliance upon mediated experience in contemporary Western society. 'Basic trust' is derived from "a sense of 'invulnerability' which blocks negative possibilities in favor of a generalized attitude of hope" (Giddens, 1991: 40). This sense of divine optimism and impartial ignorance allows actors to unquestionably accept subjective truths as reality as a method to make sense of the world[3]. Take the following example in reference to the lack of specificity of HSAS warnings;

> "I don't want to know more than I need to about terrorist threats. It is their [The U.S. Government's] job to worry about these sorts of things, not mine. I trust and expect that they will take care of the situation"- Rachel, Sound Technician

Concepts of trust are always relational and are invested in actors and institutions in specific domains, or what Foucault would refer to as 'fields of knowledge'. While I would trust a doctor to give a proper diagnosis in the field of medicine I would not trust him to file my taxes. This trust is founded in the hope that the doctor possesses more legitimate knowledge then I in the field of medicine and a faith that his actions will produce positive outcomes. I am also aware that there is a general consensus in my society that doctors are to be trusted in regard to health issues and that it is advantageous to act in accordance with

[3] Giddens conception ontological trust (1991), or ontological security, is the basic belief that the world as we experience it exists as such and is shared with the actors with whom we interact. Ontological security gives our lives order and meaning, while allowing people to live their lives without being overwhelmed by the innumerable possibilities of unknown outcomes.

their recommendations in order to stay healthy. These notions appease my deep seeded ambivalences regarding what course of action to follow and prompt my submission to the doctor's authority and justify my action.

` Implicit in the notion of trust is the possibility of betrayal, as trust implies an expectation that a particular party will follow a specific course of action (Levi & Stoker, 2000: 476). If the doctor gives me a false diagnosis which causes me hardship I will likely be more wary of all doctors and extricate myself from that particular relationship. In the political realm, notions of trust are far more complex but the paradigm remains constant. Unlike the simplistic example put forth involving a doctor and a client, a citizen cannot as easily remove themselves from a relationship with the state. A democratic state void of substantial political trust among the populace has a plethora of negative ramifications which manifest themselves in numerous domains. Albeit the majority of political scholars frame a lack of political trust in a negative light, these notions of distrust have the power to reshape the structures of political institutions which cater to the demands of the popular majority. These particularities will be discussed in greater depth in a subsequent portion of this chapter, but it is important to note that political trust has been addressed by scholars as a concept of paramount importance.

In the most general sense, political trust has been defined as an orientation towards government which is founded upon the extent to which the government is functioning in regard to the normative expectations of the public (Miller, 1974). The concept of political trust began to pervade the spheres of social and political science in the United States in the middle of the 20th century. This research was most likely prompted by recognition that feelings of trust in government were notably lower than they had been in the recent past.[4] As research techniques which attempt to chart political trust have undergone modification, the basic operational definition of 'political trust' has remained fairly unchanged. It has also remained quite broad and one- dimensional as it fails to acknowledge the origins of 'normative expectations' and account for more basic and ontological notions of trust. As I

[4] It is interesting to note here that research concerning trust in government, or the formal recognition that it was in decline, conveniently coincides with what many consider to be the dawn of the 'post- modern' era. This is probably not a coincidence. A lack of trust may have been brought about by the increased ambivalence which accompanies 'post modernity', as described by Bauman (1991). It is possible that individuals began to thoroughly question the legitimacy of political regimes, raising the question of how to categorize them. The fact that the issue became a topic of academic study may be characteristic of the desire to understand and control all aspects of social life, a trait which is associated with the 'post- modern' condition.

agree with the idea that the role of the state is undergoing change in the 'post- modern' era (Bauman 1992, 2000, Beck 1992, Giddens 1991, Lash & Urry 1987), I feel a more contemporary and multidimensional definition of political trust may be in order. The HSAS is reliant upon political trust if it is to evoke behavioral responses and work effectively. Yet as the HSAS is a novel response to threats which cannot be predicted in a traditional manner, and thus produces non- traditional warnings which reflect its nature, it provides a platform to examine the functionality of political trust in the 21st century. The following tracks the evolution of the characteristics which have been relegated to a recognized definition of political trust. Framed within a historical context and compounded with my empirical research, I have developed my own definition of political trust which is a culmination of relevant aspects of prior definitions from seminal works regarding trust in government.

Attitudes of trust in government are fundamental to constructing frameworks of rationality through which statements issued by the government are interpreted and spur behaviors. Theoretical and statistical courses of study have sought to chart levels of political trust and implicate reasons behind their findings since the 1950's in the United States. In 1962 Stokes developed the basic criteria for what would become National Election Study (NES) 'trust in government' questions. The purpose of these questions was to,

> "Tap the basic evaluative orientations towards the national government. The criteria of judgment implicit in these questions were partly ethical, that is honesty and other ethical qualities of public officials were part of what the sample was asked to judge. But the criteria extended to other qualities as well, including the ability and efficacy of government officials and the correctness of their policy decision." (Stokes 1962: 64)

These questions were geared towards determining whether respondents had 'favorable' or 'unfavorable' orientations towards government. The criteria put forth by Stokes, which pertained to ethics and efficacy, has evolved into stock questions which are used in American National Election Study poles (ANES), formerly the NES. The mission of the ANES is to provide comprehensive research on voting habits and better understand the "theoretical and empirical outcomes of elections" (ANES Website. Visited on 22/5/2007) and conduct national surveys on a biennial basis. These survey questions are of historical importance as they have served as the primary measures of trust in government from which a majority of empirical studies relating to political trust have been founded upon. A section of ANES questions are devoted to 'support for the political system'. This section is divided

into four sub- categories; trust in government, efficacy, government responsiveness, and civic duty. Particular questions elucidate aspects which are relevant to political trust in regard to my theoretical framework. These questions aid the development of a definition of political trust which is applicable to my course of study.

1. "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?"

2. "Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?"

3. "Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are (1958-1972: a little) crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked (1958-1972: at all)?"

4. "People like me don't have any say about what the government does"

(http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/gd-index.htm#3.Visited on 17/6/2007)

These questions have normative aspects, question 1 being a prime example in the most general sense; deal with ethical issues regarding the normative expectations of democratic institutions, questions 2 & 3; and address the subject of the responsiveness of government officials in relation to normative expectations which are implicit to a healthily functioning and fair democracy.

It can be deducted from these questions that 'normative expectations' , on the one hand, and 'trust', on the other, are inextricably linked, as political trust implies the hope that a party will act in a manner which is in congruence with an established set of normative expectations that yield positive results. Yet there are differences between the two, as trust in the most general sense is associated with faith in a positive outcome while normative expectations are of a more conditioned and transient nature. When a party takes action which is in accordance with normative expectations this is generally construed as a positive event, as ontological security is reinforced through behaviors which are expected. Of course when normative expectations are met this does not always assure that they will produce a positive result. Normal behavior can be malevolent and unethical just as easily as it can be righteous and morally sound; it is only a matter of frequency, routine, and domain which establishes the normative aspect. The origins of normative expectations of sound governance in the United States are predominantly grounded in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. For example take Matt's expectations of sound democratic polity in the U.S.

> *Jonathan:* What do your expectations of the government entail?
>
> *Matt:* To uphold order and the primary principles of the constitution. This basically means taking action which is in the best interest of the entire nation and making decisions as objectively as possible.

However, it is possible of course that the outcomes of past events may have fostered the development of normative expectations of government which are not so virtuous. The theory of 'videomalaise' (Robinson 1976) implicates the media as being the culprit of a proliferation in public cynicism towards the government by framing politics in a non-complimentarily light. According to this theory, the way in which politics have been framed in the media has spurred a decline of political trust and is characteristic of nascent political distrust. It may have also fostered the development of normative exceptions of the government which are founded in the belief that they will breach the constructs of political trust.

In light of academic research which has been conducted in the political realm, trust can be perceived as an augmentation upon expectation, as notions of trust are always associated with an expectation that an actor or institution will produce an outcome which is both normative and positive. The importance of trust cannot be denied as it an "*emotional inoculation* to existential anxieties" (Giddens: 1991: 39). Notions of trust are deeply imbedded in one's sense of identity, while normative expectations are based upon the patterns of outcomes of recent events. Thus, it is possible for internal conflicts to arise as individuals' perceptions of events are torn between trust and expectation. A citizen can possess varying degrees of trust, or faith, that the government will peruse courses of action which are in congruence with their ideals of democratic polity. It is essential for a citizen to possess at least moderate political trust in order to function in mainstream society without constantly being inundated with anxieties of who can and can't be trusted. The structures of political institutions are vast and shape behaviors of even the most obstinate anarchist. In concurrence with evident notions of political trust, a citizen can also subscribe to normative expectations of government which are laden with negative qualities, such as an expectation that the current government is corrupt and only run with a few particular interests in mind. Such an attitude is articulated through feelings of distrust, such as these expressed by Matt after he stated h is expectations of sound governance.

> *Jonathan:* Do you feel that current governmental institutions meet these expectations?
>
> *Matt:* No I don't. The foundations of our government are good and were founded on genuine principles…but today I feel that there is far too much corruption.

It must be noted that Matt explicitly acted in accordance with HSAS warnings; a behavior which is exemplifies political trust. This conflict stems from a clash between notions of trust which are intrinsic to one's sense of identity and ontological security conflated with the externally imparted notion that the government is not to be trusted. In response to these complexities I have formulated a definition of political trust that I feel is concise yet all encompassing and negates the ambiguity which was inherent in previous definitions.

> **Political Trust:** The degree to which one has faith in the government to consistently pursue courses of action which are in accordance with the normative expectations of sound governance that are derived from the primary ethos of the political system in that country.

This definition of political trust does not equate trust with a vague definition of normative expectation. Normative expectations in government are inextricably linked to political traditions that are exclusive to a particular nation- state. They can yield both positive and negative outcomes, while the concept of trust is inherently associated with hope in a positive outcome. Distrust is associated with an expectation that no positive outcome is to be expected. In a congruent definition of political trust, both notions of trust and expectation need to be aligned with the desired and expected result of a positive outcome.

To apply this definition of political trust to my research project I have examined the interplay of what citizens hope the government will do and what they expect them to do. I have examined how this axiom serves as a basis for dictating courses of action and therefore replicates political structures. By examining how political trust is shaping behaviors on the micro scale in response to state issued warnings I will be in a position to theorize upon the implications, or unintended consequences, the HSAS may have on future notions of political trust which define political institutions. In order to successfully do this it is essential that my argument is framed within the expansive literature and research which has been conducted regarding political trust in the United States. These include the variants of political trust that have been measured, the belief that political trust is in decline, and the greater societal and structural ramifications of low political trust.

### *3.2 Specific V s Diffuse Support for Government*

In the political realm trust is attributed, and is measured in regard to a vast typology which ranges from the broad to the acute (Critin 1974, Critin & Green 1986, Easton 1965 1975, Hetherington 1998, Miller 1974). Three major types of political trust have been the subject of empirical investigation. These include; notions of trust relating to the political system as whole, such as the constructs of democratic polity; a particular administration, the amalgam of incumbents who are currently occupying the higher offices of an administration; or specific political actors such as the President or Secretary of State. Easton has most notably highlighted the importance demarcating between specific and diffuse support. Specific support refers to satisfaction of outcomes regarding particular events and positive attitudes towards individual political actors. Alternatively, diffuse support refers to opinions regarding the political regime in its entirety (Easton 1965, 1975). For example, surveys which chart presidential approval ratings, i.e. Gallop polls and weekly surveys conducted by media outlets, generally measure levels of specific support. In contrast, surveys conducted by ANES produce results which are representative of notions of diffuse support.

It has been argued that measures of diffuse support, or trust, are inextricably linked with specific support for political actors. This argument is grounded in the notion that governments are comprised of a menagerie of separate institutions, which are headed by individual political actors, operating under the umbrella of the government institution as a whole. If trust in these separate institutions, and the figureheads who lead them, is in decline then the legitimacy of the entire political regime is called into question as a result. If opinions are drastically low for a specific political actor it can have negative ramifications for the entire political regime (Hetherington, 1998: 792). I agree that there is delineation between specific and diffuse support, yet I feel that the concepts are most certainly interrelated. Notions of political trust, as they shape behaviors, are collective. They are comprised of attitudes towards specific political actors and the outcomes of past relationships between the citizen and government institutions as a whole. While it is possible, and even necessary, to demarcate between specific and diffuse support from a scholarly perspective, I am skeptical that a clear division is drawn between the two in praxis as individuals' notions of political trust guide their behaviors.

I have chosen to employ diffuse support as the variety of political trust to incorporate in my work. I am interested in the ways in which notions of political trust, regarding the current administration in the United States, are affecting the way in which HSAS warning are being interpreted, and in turn are reflexively shaping subsequent notions of trust and power in political structures. I feel this in an appropriate choice as HSAS incorporates a wide range of government institutions and was initiated under the current administration.

### *3.3 The Ebbs and Flows of Political Trust in the United States*

Political trust is vital to a healthy democracy as it is the umbilical between citizens and the government which represents them and legitimizes the norms, meanings, and power associated with political institutions. Trust in government endows political actors and institutions with the political capital necessary to make effective decisions and reciprocally constitutes the rationale which prompts citizens to act in compliance with the demands of the state (Gross, Aday & Brewer 2004: 50, Tyler 1990). It is a relatively uncontested concept that political trust is crucial to upright democratic institutions (Braithwaite & Levi 1998, Brehm & Rahn 1997, Gramson 1968, Hetherington 1998, Miller 1974, Putnam 2000). It is also an equally uncontested notion that political trust is in decline (Braithwaite & Levi 1998, Brehm & Rahn 1997, Brody 1991, Gramson 1968, Hetherington 1998, Miller 1974, Putnam 2000, Rosenstone and Hassen 1993). This is of interest to my theoretical undertaking as it frames my study within the assumption that political trust is already quite low despite its vitality to democratic polity. By examining how notions of political trust are affecting behavioral response to HSAS warnings I may be able to help show why and how political trust is important in practice on the micro scale in the 'post- modern' era. Perhaps it will even demonstrate that political trust is not as low as survey results frame it to be. Additionally, the fact that political trust is perceived as being in significant decline leads one to believe that this may have an effect on the way in which HSAS warnings are being interpreted and prompting behaviors which take place within political structures. Of paramount interest is the phenomenon of sudden increases in political trust followed by equally abrupt and drastic declines. These trends, which will be shown in this section, allude to the possibility that there might be different variants of political trust which become

evident in particular situations. One that is the product of mediated knowledge and another which is more deeply seeded and may serve as the impetus behind behavioral responses to HSAS warnings.

Political trust is not just in decline in the United States, in fact political trust seems to be in decline in most, if not all, industrialized societies around the globe (Catterberg & Moreno 2005, Inglehart 1999, Listhaug & Wiberg 1999, Pharr 1997, ). The documentation of a decline in political trust conveniently coincides with the time period which is implicated as the beginning of the 'post- modern' era, a concept which will be elaborated upon. Regardless, a momentary glace at the research which has served as a barometer to gage political trust in the United States will show that claims which state that political trust is in decline are well founded. While trust in government has proven to fluctuate through the decades, a downward trend is undeniable (See figures C & D). ANES data, which has served as the most comprehensive source of public opinion of government and electoral behavior since the late 1950's, shows these trends most vividly. Average trust in government index scores have decreased from 49 in 1958, the inaugural year the studies were conducted, to 37 in 2004. Trust in government index scores dropped into the range of the 20's during the early to mid- Nineties. While 'trust in government index' scores provide a general orientation towards government, other questions delve into varying degrees of confidence within the hierarchy of attitudes towards government. Responses to the question;

> "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right—just about always, most of the time or some of the time?"
> (American National Election Studies Website 2007. Visited on 5/6/2007)

show a general diffusion from unfettered confidence in government towards ambivalence and disillusionment.

An average of 15.6% of the respondents trusted the government to do what was right 'Just about always' between 1958 and 1966, no data was collected between 1958 and 1964. This is in stark contrast to the sample mean of 4% which felt the same between 1996 and 2004. There has also been a notable reallocation of respondents who trusted the government to do what was right 'Most of the time' to the less trustworthy category 'Some of the time'. In 1964 62% of the survey population trusted the government to do what was right 'Most of the time' while 22% felt that they could only trust the government 'Some of the time'. Thirty years later in 1994 the model had become radically inverted, yielding

responses from a mere 19% of the population which felt the government could be trusted 'Most of the time' while 74% felt that they could trust the government to do what was right 'Some of the time'. This trend of inversion also supports itself over a longer time interval. Between 1964 and 1974 the ratio of those who trusted the government 'Most of the time' to 'Some of the time' was 48.83% to 39.16%.

Figure C:

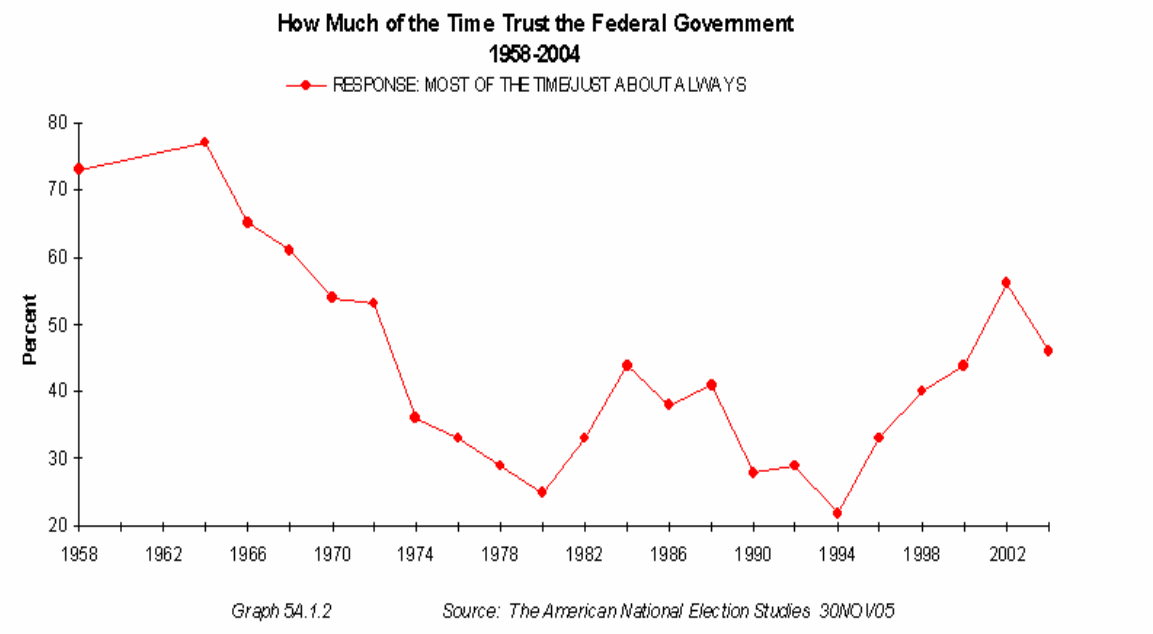
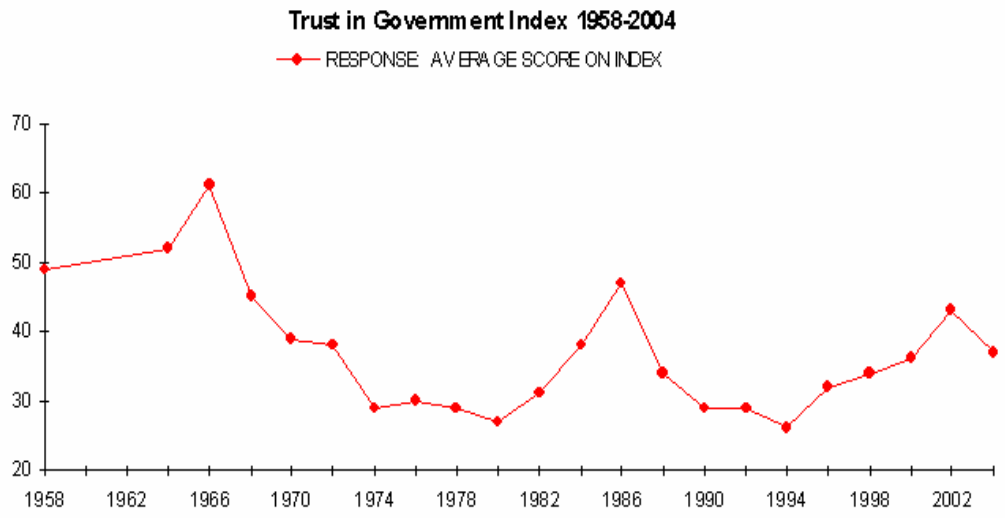



Figure D:




*Graph 54.5.1* *Source: The American National Election Studies 30NOV05*

A trend of pessimism is evident as results to the same question from 1994 to 2004 show the opposite, with a trust in government average of 36.5% for 'Most of the time' and 58.16% of the respondents implicating the response 'Some of the time'.

There are a plethora of theories which attempt to pinpoint the cause for this gradual decrease in political trust, each implicating a different culprit. To revert back to the concept of 'videomalaise' mentioned earlier, Robinson (1976) argues that anti- institutional themes and the way in which stories are framed in the media promote a cynicism towards political life in general. Research of a more social scope demonstrates a strong correlation between a decline of social and political trust in the past half century (Brehm & Rahn 1997, Fukuyama 1995, Levi, 1997, 1998). Thus, the proliferation of an increasingly misanthropic society may be in part the cause of low trust in government, as well as in society in general. Of course it can be argued that the inverse is true as well, that low trust in government has contributed to a decline of social trust. Miller (1984) feels that declining political trust is the result of an accumulation of political injustices and scandals over the years which are gradually coming to a head. While Hetherington (1998) believes that political distrust grows exponentially, as an environment which is rife with political distrust creates a milieu in which it is difficult for political leaders and regimes to succeed.

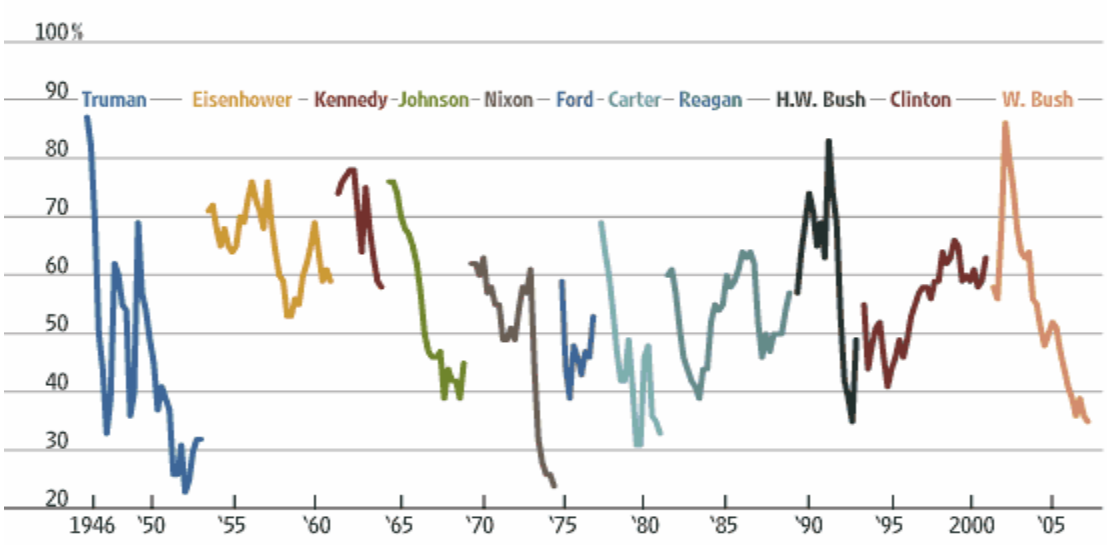
In the broadest sense, the decline of political trust can be perceived as another symptom of the 'post-modern' condition which is characterized by radical individualism and

a de-institutionalization of society. Structural changes and novel modes of thought have lead to a proliferation of ambivalence in decision making processes. Attitudes towards political authorities may be an amalgam of personal experience and mediated knowledge which creates an atmosphere that encourages the development of political alternatives. Regardless of the precise cause of the decline, it can firmly be asserted that political trust is necessary for democratic institutions to function effectively and has substantial effects on the way in which citizens behaviors are situated within discursive contexts.

ANES survey results offer measures of diffuse support which are geared towards a general orientation towards the current administration. This is the measure of support which I feel most accurately represents opinions towards governments within the context of how these feelings affect the way in which government issued statements are perceived. Levels of specific support, such as presidential approval ratings, show trends which are sensitive to both domestic and foreign affairs and fluctuate more sporadically. This may be in large the result of the higher frequency in which polls relating to specific support are conducted in contrast to measures of diffuse support. I adhere to the belief that measures of specific support and diffuse support are virtually inseparable and that the former is inherent in the latter. Despite the ebbs and flows of presidential approval ratings, it can be asserted that political trust is in decline. By looking at presidential approval ratings in the United States of incumbents of the past half century two general trends are evident. 1) Approval ratings at the beginning of the incumbent's term are commonly higher than those when they leave office; and 2) Threats to national security evoke sharp, but apparently fleeting, increases in approval (See Figure: E). The first trend may be attributed to an accumulation of grievances which have surmounted over the course of an incumbent's term, or terms, in office. This is based upon Miller's theory which states that the same can account for the more diffuse measures of declines in political trust over the past few decades (Miller, 1984, 840). It is the second trend which is of greater theoretic interest and applicability to my course of study.

Figure E:

'A look at U.S. presidents' job approval ratings 1945- 2006'




Source: Gallup, AP, WSJ.com Research.

George W. Bush and his administration experienced an unprecedented spike in support following the events of 9/11 and the subsequent implementation of the HSAS. According to Gallup polls, Presidential approval ratings jumped from 51% on September 10th 2001 to 86% on September 15th 2001 following the events of 9/11 (Willer, 2004:1). An analogous measure of more diffuse support elucidates the same trend. In March of 2001 the *Los Angeles Times* conducted a poll which indicated that only 29% of the public trusted the government to do what was right 'Just about always' or 'Most of the time'. The next comparable poll, conducted by the *Washington Post*, after 9/11 in March of the following, indicated that 64% of the American public felt the government in Washington could be trusted 'Just about always' or 'Most of the time' (Chanley, 2002, 469). Gradually though, such approval ratings have fallen into substantial decline. NBC News/ Wall Street Journal polls which gage opinions towards Presidential job performance indicate such a trend. A poll released on November 11, 2001 indicated an average approval rating of 88%, in contrast to the same poll which reported an approval rating of 29% in June of 2007.

History has shown conflict often begets unity, especially when prompted by fear of an external threat, and it appears that this is the case as much now as it ever was.

> "A lot of people seem to feel the government's response to the events of 9/11, such as the invasion of Iraq and the PATRIOT Act, were too drastic. I completely disagree with these opinions. Now more than ever the nation needs to stick together and support the decisions of our leaders"- Thomas, Retried Business Consultant & Former Private in the U.S. Army

According to German sociologist Ulrich Beck, referring to the turbulent state of affairs which define our epoch, "Fear has proved to be the last–ambivalent- resource for making new bonds" (Beck, 2002: 14). Such circumstances foster an environment in which 'rally round the flag' mentalities become commonplace, increasing national cohesion and unity while granting unfettered support to political leaders who are perceived as vanguards who have the power to thwart off impending doom. It appears that in the contemporary era, and for the unforeseeable future, societies are exposed to a plethora of unpredictable large scale risks, such as global terrorism, nuclear fallout, and environmental disasters, all of which evoke feelings of fear. One may predict that the type of political trust which flourishes in the wake of crisis situations may proliferate with the novel role of the state in protecting the public from such threats. It is also possible that feelings of fear supersede the ambivalence which is associated with feelings of trust in political authorities; prompting decisiveness and willingness to unquestionably act in compliance with the demands of the state. Academic research has been conducted to try and account for the dramatic increase in political trust following 9/11 and its subsequent fall from grace.

Some scholars are proponents of the idea these sudden, but brief, increases in political trust can be attributed to the social psychological theory of terror management theory (TMT)[5] (Dunkel, 2002, Landau Et Al. 2004, Willer 2004). Willer (2004) conducted a study of particular relevance, demonstrating a positive correlation between elevations in terror alert threat condition and increases in presidential approval ratings, attributing his findings to both TMT and social identity theory[6]. Brief, yet dramatic, increases in political support and feelings of nationalism which are begotten by fear of external threats are not a novel phenomenon. Throughout history this model has proven to repeat itself and at times has been exploited as a political tool to mobilize the public towards support for political action, as some have implicated the HSAS of being an example of case and point (Beresford 2004, Haberman 2007, Schneier 2004). What is interesting is the fact that these increases in support, in the face of exogenous threats, only become manifest in survey results for a brief

[5] TMT is a concept developed within the field of social psychology which states that humans are unique as they are conscious of their own mortality and therefore adopt strategies to cope with anxieties related to death. The tenets of TMT posit that individuals are more likely to unquestionably follow leaders when they feel their mortality is being threatened (Greenberg Et. Al. 1990).

[6] Social identity theory is grounded in the belief that humans possess an innate tendency to categorize groups as opposites. When an individual feels that they are at risk they are apt to embrace group solidarity in opposition to that which poses a threat. This 'Us vs. Them' mentality produces a binary distinction between the American citizen and the fundamental terrorist in this particular case (Tajfel & Turner 1986).

period of time following a crisis situation. This raises a number of interesting questions regarding how political trust affects individuals' behavioral responses to HSAS warnings and constitutes larger political structures.

Firstly, violently dramatic increases of political trust in response to external threats as described above cause one to wonder why it is that fear evokes feelings of trust. Secondly, is there a difference between elevated notions of trust which are directly brought about by impending threats and those of distrust which seem to become manifest in survey results? I postulate that there is an ambiguity to the concept of 'political trust' which is too multi-dimensional to thrive under the umbrella of a single definition. Radical trust, which is brought about by fear, is representative of the characteristic of political trust that is associated with a hope that the state will take action which will cause a specific outcome to occur. It is this type of trust which is granted in a crisis situation with the hope that the government will use its resources to protect the citizen from harm, recall Giddens concept of Ontological trust. Trust of this sort is latently embedded in the structures that enable human agency and legitimize the authority of political institutions. The other variation of political trust is representative of the more transitory notion of normative expectation and is associated with trust in government to make decisions objectively in accordance with the normative expectations of democratic polity. The latter is dependant upon the former to guide action and induce structural change. It is in this sense that notions of trust which are derived from expectation are situated within the context of more permanent institutional structures.

In the following chapter I will dissect these variants of political trust, relate them to behavioral responses to HSAS warnings, and subsequently theorize upon the structural ramifications these behaviors may have for political institutions. I postulate that it is the interaction between two distinct notions of political trust which is vital to the integrity of institutional structures in the political realm. By breaking down a generalized definition of political trust into its variants I will be constructing theoretical tools which will allow me to dissect my research question more effectively. The HSAS issues statements framed within the context of traditional government institutions. Yet these statements are not congruent with that which is expected of warnings issued by the state as they are extremely vague and ambiguous. This clash between that which is being produced, and that which is expected, provides a forum to examine how trust in the institutions which produce the statements is

affecting their categorization. The following chapter will expand upon these ideas and provide empirical examples to demonstrate how political trust is incorporated into schemes of mundane reasoning which citizens employ to make sense of HSAS warnings.

## Chapter 4:

## Political Trust in Practice: Mundane Reasoning and Homeland Security Advisory System Warnings

> "I trust that the government knows more then I do about issues of national security. It does not matter if warnings are vague, I don't want them to tell me more than I need to know. So when there is an elevation in threat condition I don't ask any questions and try to do as they say." -Lois, High School Science Teacher

### *4.1 Redefining 'Political' Trust & Forging Theoretical Tools*

According to my definition given in the previous chapter, "political trust" entails a congruence between faith that the government will pursue an outcome which is both positive and in congruence with normative expectations of sound governance. But this does not necessarily mean that this type of trust is particularly common. Citizens may possess unfledged support for political institutions to do what is right in times of crisis but not necessarily perceive the administration as the most trustworthy entity in regard to taking

action which is in accordance with the normative expectations of sound governance on a consistent basis. It may be the case that political trust in the 'post- modern' era is founded upon a combination of these two separate, but interdependent, notions of political trust. In this sense, political trust as it prompts behaviors to HSAS warnings may be an agglomeration of the two. The interaction between these two distinct variations of political trust is of vital importance to the ways in which behavioral responses to HSAS warnings are facilitating the interplay between meanings, norms, and power which constitute institutional structures and actions which they enable. I shall dub theses two varieties of political trust, 'Alpha trust' and 'Beta trust". These two variations of political trust serve as additional theoretical tools which are forged to intricacies of my endeavor. They will be utilized to further, and more thoroughly, dissect the process through which political trust affects behavioral responses to HSAS warnings at both the theoretical and empirical level. They will also help excavate the ambivalence which may be present as citizens try to categorize and ascribe meaning to HSAS warnings and political regimes alike.

Alpha political trust is an ardent faith that the government will take action to protect its citizens in times of crisis. This eases anxieties by means of diffusing feelings of fear through the resilient hope that the government will protect the individual from the looming threat of terrorist attacks. Take the following interview excerpts for example.

> "No matter what people say about the Bush administration I trust the government is constantly looking out for the best interest of the entire population. I am adamantly against the current administration but feel that Homeland Security Advisory Systems warnings are well founded and I take them pretty seriously"- Andrew, Art Curator
>
> &
>
> "When there is a terror alert warning I presume that government will take care of the situation. They have a lot of experience in this department. It is their field of expertise." - Richard, Artist

Without the supplement of precise information, citizens act in accordance with the demands of HSAS warnings as a reaction to a serious threat. Trust of this sort is a somatic response which is deployed to assign an optimistic finality to an unknown outcome, allowing the individual to carry on with the mundane aspects of their life virtually unaffected. The feelings of nationalism and cohesion which have been shown to flourish in the wake of an external threat can be attributed to this type of trust, as it is shared amongst the populace through the processes of inculcation and shared attribution of meaning. It is alpha trust in this sense which reinforces ontological security and is profoundly evident in the structures of

political institutions. Alpha trust is latent in the attribution of meanings to discursive statements, as it underlies justifications of how individuals explain their reasons for acting in a specific way within the constructs of an institutional framework. I feel that it is alpha trust which is most essential to maintaining homeostasis and equilibrium in the structures of political institutions. If alpha trust ceased to be evident, or rapidly decline, statements issued by the state would lose their meaning and the power of governmental institutions would dissolve. It is alpha trust which is most prominent in guiding behavioral responses to HSAS warnings. There is a sense of determinism to alpha trust, as it is significantly influenced by existing structures. When a citizen becomes aware of an elevation in threat condition it is alpha trust which valorizes the legitimacy of that warning and sparks behavior that is in compliance with the demands/ recommendations of the state. Life experience has demonstrated that more often than not the government can be trusted to provide fruitful warnings to which it is advantageous to abide by, especially in a crisis situation. It was alpha trust which flourished in the wake of 9/11 as fear was appeased by deep seeded notions of trust which assigned a positive finality to an unknown outcome. Beta trust manifests itself in different, but substantially important, ways as it influences the interpretation of HSAS warnings and replication of structures of political institutions.

Beta political trust differs from alpha trust as it is of a more fleeting nature and is derived from external sources. Interactions between actors and institutions which have divergent perspectives on the political system have significant influence on each other. Through interaction, actors impart upon each other knowledge and outcomes of past experiences. Information which is obtained through these interactions constructs a rational framework through which actors weigh the possible outcomes of a particular event. Discourse is the medium through which this information is shared and becomes synonymous with truth as it is embedded in commonsensical frameworks. Foucault used the term discourse to describe "a group of statements that belong to a single system of formation of knowledge" (Foucault, 1972: 107). In this sense statements regarding the normative expectations of government are given meaning and are constitutive of truth regarding the political system.

> "Yes, I trust the government because I don't really have any other choice not to. But when you hear so much slanderous talk about politicians every time you turn on the news makes you wonder how much they can be trusted"- Eleesa, Retail Employee
>
> &

> "I equate trust with honesty. In regard to trust in the government or trust in any relationship. You always hear on the news about this or that scandal or breech of ethical conduct about politicians. It's not all true of course but I can't help but let this information make me think less of the government"- Shannon, Stay at Home Mother

These two accounts exemplify negative expectations of government which are the product of the dogmatic opinions of others. Discourse which has been produced regarding the lack of efficacy of government has been rendered as truth.

Beta trust is contrived from mediated knowledge which is obtained through secondary sources as opposed to alpha trust which is developed through one's own first hand experiences. The media is guilty of implicating political actors of being untrustworthy, as are politicians themselves in pursuit of enhancing their own self image. These external views of the political system, which predominantly frame politics in a negative light, constitute the normative aspect of beta trust. Beta trust is founded in normative expectations which are framed as truths and are imparted upon the individual through mediated sources of information. To reiterate, alpha trust and beta trust can be differentiated by the following characteristics.

> **Alpha Trust:** Ardent faith that the government will take action which will protect the citizen in a crisis situation. This faith is internal and a somatic response based upon one's own past experiences. It constitutes the legitimacy of political institutions and the structures which give meaning to discursive events.
>
> **Beta Trust:** Generalized trust in government to take action which is in accordance with externally constructed normative expectations of sound governance. It is developed through mediated knowledge and is apparent in modes of guiding behavior in modes of rational choice.

In response to a HSAS warning, beta trust which is rational is compounded with alpha trust, which is more empirical and structurally situated, with the end result of the production of a behavioral response. The individual weighs internal notions of political trust, which are based upon experience, against external notions of normative expectations, with the end result of behavioral reaction to a discursive event. This is by no means meant to imply that alpha trust and beta trust are entities that should be perceived in opposition to one another. It is the interplay between the two that sculpt behaviors and replicate the structures of political institutions, although there is most certainly a sense of ambivalence at both the conscious and subliminal level. Conventional notions of trust in the political system are clashing with attitudes towards the novel role of the state in contemporary

society. The culmination of these two distinct notions of political trust is not exclusive to the way in which a HSAS warning prompts an individual to follow a particular course of action. Rather this paradigm is applicable to all action which takes place within the realm of political institutions. The way in which HSAS warnings are interpreted and produce action is an isolated example to demonstrate the importance of political trust to the continuity and structural integrity of political institutions.

Throughout my interviews there was a consistent trend regarding the ways in which behavioral responses to HSAS warnings contrasted with vocalized opinions of low trust in government. These findings serve as empirical examples which reinforce Bauman's thesis regarding the increased ambivalence that is symptomatic of the 'post- modern' condition. When asked, people generally stated that they currently have very low political trust and cited examples to justify this claim. But this mentality did not appear to hold significant merit in shaping their behaviors in response to HSAS warnings, as the majority of respondents described how they acted in direct accordance with the HSAS. This could be because notions of political distrust are being imparted upon citizens from outside sources, such as the media, while fewer actual first hand experiences have constructed a belief that the government cannot be trusted. The following excerpts present a developed example of the interplay between alpha and beta trust in shaping behavioral responses to HSAS warnings.

Matt, who has been introduced previously in this work, is a 27 year old graphic designer from Rosemont, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. He is republican by political affiliation but does not consider himself to be "all that into politics". I interviewed Matt on a hazy, late spring afternoon at his residential apartment in the company of his calico cat Leon. After establishing what Matt's expectations of government entailed it became evident that his feelings towards the current administration were deeply entrenched in disillusionment.

> *Jonathan:* I'm going to say a word and you tell me the first thing that comes to mind: Government…
>
> *Matt:* Corruption.
>
> *Jonathan:* What do your expectations of the government entail?
>
> *Matt:* To uphold order and the primary principles of the constitution. This basically means taking action which is in the best interest of the entire nation and making decisions as objectively as possible.

*Jonathan:* Do you feel that current governmental institutions meet these expectations?

*Matt*: No I don't. The foundations of our government are good and were founded on genuine principles…but today I feel that there is far too much corruption. I think that the interests of top campaign supporters who donate large sums of money are often the priority. Also the financial ties of politicians which are in positions of power, such as Dick Cheney, are the ulterior motives behind action.

*Jonathan*: What do you mean by ulterior motives?

*Matt:* Actions which are motivated by outcomes that are in the best interests of the political elite and not in the best interests of the entire nation.

It is evident in these statements that Matt does not seem to have trust in the current administration as he does not feel that the government is functioning in accordance with his normative expectations of sound governance. It is interesting to note that none of these negative opinions towards government were based upon first hand experiences with the government. All of these notions of political distrust were the result of mediated knowledge and opinions of others regarding the inner workings of government. According to my typology of variants of political trust, Matt's distrust in government as expressed through his feelings of corruption and deception are indicators of beta trust in practice and constitute his framework through which notions of trust are the product mediated knowledge, not first hand experiential knowledge.

As the interview progressed the topic of conversation shifted towards his behavioral responses to HSAS warnings and the justifications for his actions.

*Jonathan:* Have you heard of the Homeland Security Advisory System?

*Matt:* I think so…could you be a little more specific?

*Jonathan:* The color- coded system…

*Matt:* Oh yeah, I've heard about it on the news and on the radio. When the threat condition goes up you hear all about it on the radio and TV pretty much constantly. They are never specific but they tell you to be extra careful in public places and be more watchful of suspicious activity.

*Jonathan:* When you became aware of a looming terrorist threat by means of a HSAS warning were you apt to follow the instructions from government officials?

*Matt:* Yes, for the most part. Sometimes you have to improvise and take actions into your own hands…They don't know everything, but they might know what is best for you.

*Jonathan:* Why?

*Matt:* Experience, previous happenings

The respondent's statement of how and why he reacts to HSAS warning is an example of alpha trust in praxis. According to his statement government does not possess all knowledge, but past experiences have endowed government institutions with the knowledge to identify what is best for the safety of the citizen. The government is perceived as a single entity which continues to retain its structure and accrue experiences while political actors in office and political regimes undergo substantial change. This means that in the eyes of the respondent the U.S. government in its entirety is greater than the sum of its parts. The statement, "They might know what is best for you", and the way in which it was phrased implies political trust. While the respondent previously rattled off a laundry list of reasons why he distrusts the government his statements and behaviors are rooted in the trust that warnings issued by the government have the best interests of the citizen in mind. This may be the result of past experiences through which the respondent has learned that the government can be trusted in times of crisis. Alpha trust of this sort is evident in behaviors which automatically take place without rational deliberation and foster ontological security in the presumption that the government knows what is best and will take action which will protect its citizens from harm in times of crisis.

A sense of ambivalence is omnipresent as deep seeded notions of political trust, which foster ontological security and are founded upon outcomes of past experiences, come into contention with negative views of government which are being imparted upon citizens from external sources. The novelty of a system such as the HSAS, which is a response to the unpredictable natures of threats in contemporary society, intensifies this ambivalence as citizens attempt to categorize the severity of a possible threat as well as the legitimacy of government authorities who produce the warnings. Throughout my interview there seemed to be an a rhythmic juxtaposition of, A) respondents accounts of how they responded to HSAS warnings in accordance with the guidelines explicitly stated in the warnings, followed in rapid succession by B) a negative statement regarding politics or the current administration. It was as if respondents felt foolish or guilty admitting that they so compliantly acted in accordance with the guidelines put forth by the state. This may be indicative of a proliferation in the belief that it is illogical to trust the government and politicians, yet this belief is yet to be internalized and become manifest in a commonsensical framework. This again exemplifies the interplay between alpha trust which is internal and

beta trust which is derived from external and mediated sources of knowledge. Alpha trust, which attributes significant trust to the government in times of crisis, seems to be the driving force behind responses to HSAS warnings. This is evident in the ways in which respondents acted in accordance with HSAS warnings despite their wavering trust in the current administration to take action which is in accordance with normative expectations of sound governance. It is important to distinguish between these two variants of political trust when establishing the role of political trust in guiding behavioral responses to HSAS warnings. Notions of alpha trust come to the fore and are the impetus behind behavioral responses to HSAS warnings. It appears that alpha trust is still quite strong although notions of beta trust, which are expressed through surveys and polls, frame political trust as being in detrimental decline.

As individuals act in accordance with HSAS warnings which are supported by minimal factual information they are demonstrating a great deal of faith in the competence of government officials to effectively handle crisis situations. Paradoxically, as citizens increase their vigilance of possible terrorist activity and alter their mundane practices to the specifications of HSAS warnings they are accepting top down methods of individualization which are being initiated by the state. It can be said that these behaviors are resultant of political structures in which behaviors are situated, while the behaviors themselves reproduce these very structures in a reciprocal fashion (Giddens, 1976. 1979, 1984). This may be reason to believe that the HSAS, despite the ambiguity which is a product of its intended nature of combating unpredictable threats, is gradually reshaping political structures. Of course it can also be said that political structures have already undergone change and that the HSAS is the effect, not the cause, of structural modification.

According to Giddens' 'duality of structure' all action is shaped by the structures in which it takes place, while action reproduces these structures which are the arena for behavior (Giddens, 1976: 160). This process takes place in conjunction with what Giddens' refers to as 'reflexive monitoring of action'. Through this process actors monitor the behaviors of themselves and others as they acknowledge the context in which behavior takes place (Giddens, 1979: 55). To apply this model to the structural effects of behavioral responses to HSAS warnings, we see a shift in the way statements issued by the state regarding the terrorist threat are perceived. As the authoritative role of the state in mediating catastrophic situations subsides, and individualization increases, political structures

may transmute as they shape behaviors within and beyond the realm of emergency management. These changes raise the question of what ramifications action may have upon the structures of political institutions as unintended consequences of action. This section served elucidate the role, and variants, of political trust to better demonstrate how it functions in guiding behavioral responses to HSAS warnings. The following section serves to speculate upon some of the structural changes which may be resultant of the HSAS system, or the HSAS is an indicator of.

### *4.2 A Structural Analysis of The Homeland Security Advisory System and Its Consequences*

> "It is a post- 9/11 world today. The cold truth is that the world is not as safe now as it was a couple of decades ago…As a result of these circumstances everyone needs to be a little more on guard and take matters into their own hands."- Marty, Economic Analyst

It has been a repetitive theme throughout this work that the HSAS individualizes the terrorist threat. Subsequently this individualization may pervade many spheres in which action takes place and have significant structural ramifications upon political institutions. The responsibility of taking preventative measures regarding terrorism has been imparted upon the citizen by the state. The HSAS delegates lay citizens responsible for constantly being on guard and wary of terrorist activity as the nation is constantly operating at an 'Elevated' risk of terrorist attack or higher. It becomes evident that this individualized transference of responsibility, and realization of an ever looming terrorist threat, has been internalized by examining interviewees' responses to HSAS warnings.

> "Although I do think that the color- coded system is a bit silly I am more watchful of suspicious activity when I hear that there is an elevation in threat condition"- Stephen, Bartender
>
> &
>
> "I mean, you never know what to expect these days…Sometimes you have to improvise and take actions into your own hands [Referring to behavioral response to a HSAS warning]"- Matt, Graphic Designer

Although many respondents verbally expressed their doubts regarding the efficacy of the HSAS, they exercised vigilance and accepted the responsibility of confronting the terrorist threat through their behavior. Often, these actions were justified as being logical responses to the state of affairs in contemporary society which is more dangerous and unpredictable than in the past. This is highly apparent in Matt's statement "you never know what to except these days" and in Marty's proclamation which opened this section, "It is a

post 9/11 world today. The cold truth is that the world is not as safe now as it was a couple of decades ago." These perspectives echo the statements of President Bush while explaining the necessity for an advisory system which confronts the terrorist threat.

> "The world has changed since September 11, 2001. We remain a nation at risk to terrorist attacks and will remain at risk for the foreseeable future. At all Threat Conditions, we must remain vigilant, prepared, and ready to deter terrorist attacks." (Bush, 2002 PD-3)

As individuals reflexively monitor their behaviors in regard to how they should respond to a HSAS warning they do so under the assumption that the nation is constantly at risk of terrorist attack. This justifies behavior as a logical response to a statement issued by the state. Additionally, these behaviors render discourse produced by the state as truth, which according to a Foucaultian model solidifies the power of the state. This paradigm of power legitimization through discourse will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

These behaviors may be reshaping the structures of political institutions towards individualism as unintended consequences of action. To use Giddens example, by uttering a sentence in English I am contributing to the reproduction of the English language, although by no means was this the intention behind my motivation to speak (Giddens, 1979: 77). As citizens accept the individualized responsibility of combating the terrorist threat, and the belief that the nation is constantly at risk of terrorist attack, they are reshaping political structures. These behaviors take place within the political realm as they are direct responses to statements issued by government officials. This structural deviation may lead to the role of a more individualized citizen in the eyes of the state in domains beyond emergency management. This may entail increased personal responsibility of citizens as the state is no longer able to combat unpredictable threats in a traditional manner.

Notions of alpha trust allow this transference of responsibility to effectively occur. Citizens trust that it is in their best interest to abide by the tenets of HSAS warnings, as the state possesses superior knowledge regarding the terrorist threat than the lay citizen. Although the state provides very little information regarding the nature of the threat, or specific action which should be taken in response, citizens trust that the threat is real and thus take action accordingly. It seems that political trust in practice is not as low as survey results frame it to be. With the proliferation of state initiated individualization techniques, in response to unpredictable threats, political structures may undergo change. This could involve a shift from a state which is liable for protecting its citizens from all external threats

to a novel state which realizes it is no longer possible to guarantee this security and in turn provides its citizens with generalized warnings regarding threats. The HSAS is a solidification and archetypal example of such a paradigm shift.

As trust in political institutions allows the HSAS to induce structural change, power is also a relevant concept which is implicit in political institutions. Power is evident in how HSAS warnings are interpreted and is of significant importance to maintaining institutionalized political structures. I have shown the role of political trust in shaping behavioral responses to HSAS warnings and will examine power in the same light. As touched upon before, as discourse is rendered as truth the power of the party that produces the discourse becomes solidified. This will be examined at the theoretical and empirical level in the following chapter. My aim is to elucidate how power guides behavioral responses to HSAS warnings and speculate upon how state power may be reconfigured in political structures which are responding to the novel dynamic of 'post- modern' society.

# Chapter 5:

# Legitimization of State Power and the Homeland Security Advisory System

> "Sometimes I find myself thinking like a terrorist in regard to places which they might consider as targets. You know, what would be a good target that would really make an impression."- Lois, High School Science Teacher

## *5.1 Defining Power*

Implicit in the notion of power is the ability to act. Every social encounter which has taken place over the course of humanity can be construed within the context of power relations. Power is synonymous with, and defines, agency as it endows an actor with the ability to purposely cause an effect. It is evident in the ability of an actor to act in a way which is in opposition to an expected course of action (Giddens, 1984: 14). In conjunction, it can be defined as the ability to secure an outcome which is dependent upon the agency of other actors. Before I present my theoretic framework of how power functions in regard to

the HSAS I must first settle upon a definition of power which will remain constant throughout this section. I feel Anthony Giddens definition of power is highly applicable to my theoretical undertaking and shall provide some congruence as I am examining notions of political trust through his model of the duality of structure.

> **Power:** "the capability of actors [or institutions] to secure outcomes where the realization of these outcomes depends upon the agency of others" (Giddens, 1979: 93).

When applying this definition to my field of inquiry, power relates to the ability of the government to mobilize citizens to take action which is in accordance with HSAS warnings. This entails acting with vigilance and without reluctance to report any 'suspicious' activity to authorities when citizens could have acted otherwise. Furthermore, power in this sense becomes maximized as citizens constantly act in accordance with the tenets of the HSAS with an elevation in threat condition. If this is the case, these behaviors have reflexive consequences as they reinforce the institutional power of the state and the production of truth and knowledge. This phenomenon is most lucidly exemplified through Foucault's concept of power/ knowledge and 'technologies of the self', which will be elaborated upon at greater length. There are a number of points of contention between the theories of Giddens and Foucault in regard to power, particularly in perception of the 'other'. Foucault is a proponent of the concept of binary distinctions, for example to understand black is to understand white, while Giddens feels that it is necessary to move away from such dichotomous juxtapositions. Nonetheless Foucault's theories, which perceive individuals as deployable subjects of knowledge and power, are both evident in and applicable to my study.

### *5.2 Power and the State*

State power is an expansive topic which houses a number of theoretical propositions that attempt to explain it. The domain of my study is not the venue to develop a grand theory of state power. The power of the state in my line of inquiry is however associated with the ability of state to secure outcomes which are dependant upon the agency of others and how these actions resultantly replicate the institutional structures of the state which discursively frame the statements they produce. It is power which gives institutionalized structures meaning and is constitutive of the discursive nature of events which take place

within them. Power relations are constantly being replicated and reconfigured, as action which is situated within structures is influenced by power relations.

The power of political institutions, or the power the state, has been a topic of theoretical interest as it is perceived to be an entity which has an effect on an exorbitant number of outcomes. These outcomes are secured through the structures which endow government officials with the power to legitimately obstruct and interfere with mundane aspects of citizens' lives. It is the agency of the state in this sense which is being expressed as it secures outcomes by employing citizens who assume positions which endow them with the power to affect outcomes on the micro scale. This is by no means intended to frame the state as a tyrannical entity at the apex of a power hierarchy. Rather power is granted to the state by the people under the stipulation that power will be deployed in the benefit of the majority of populace. In brevity, the power and agency of the state is evident and valid only to the extent which it is accepted as such.

Power, like political trust, is most certainly evident in the ways meaning is attributed to HSAS warnings and the behaviors which they initiate. These actions reinforce the power of the state as they are situated within the constructs of political institutions. An elevation in HSAS threat condition prompts a sequence of events, all of which have unintended consequences. HSAS warnings set into motion heightened security measures in which government officials are more apt to conduct random searches and tighten security measures. The power of the state is re-legitimated as citizens complacently heed to such demands and permit searches and seizure of private property.

> "I remember this one instance when there was an elevation in threat level. I was trying to get into the city [New York] and they were randomly searching cars as they crossed the bridge. This caused a huge traffic jam, but there wasn't anything we could do but wait it out"-Rachel, Sound Technician

Such is an example of how state power is wielded and reproduced at the surface level. More nuanced theories of state power demonstrate how the power of the state is reproduced through discourse and self monitoring. It is the power of the state in this sense which is of most relevance to my course of study in regard to HSAS warnings and is eloquently articulated in the work of Foucault.

### *5.3 Looking at the Homeland Security Advisory System Through Foucaultian Spectacles*

Foucault does not see the state as a thing or an entity. Rather, in the Foucaultian sense, the power of the state is an agglomeration of "micro-relations that take place at every level of the social body" (O'Farrell, 2003. 100). Therefore, power is neither a commodity nor something which is exercised over a population from the apex of a social hierarchy. Power is always relational to specific fields of knowledge and is legitimated through micro interactions at multiple levels of the social spectrum (Foucault, 1979: 94). It is these interactions which constitute the much larger power structures of the state. The power of the state therefore is valorized by behaviors which are rationalized and guided by knowledge, or true discourses, which are produced by the state. ""Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it…a regime of truth" (Foucault, 1980: 133). As HSAS warnings are shaping behaviors, thought processes, discourses, and constructs of rationality they are being perceived as truth and are ossifying the power systems through which they were legitimized. In this sense 'truth', within the field of knowledge relating to issues of national security which is in the purview of the state, can be defined as the fact that the nation is constantly at risk of terrorist attack and that citizens should take precautious accordingly. As these notions become perpetuated through discourse and embedded in commonsensical frameworks, knowledge is legitimated as is the power of the institution which produced the dominant discourse.

> "[The HSAS] is intended to create a common vocabulary, context, and structure for an ongoing national discussion about the nature of the threats that confront the homeland and the appropriate measures that should be taken in response" (Bush, 2002 PD-3)

This except from PD-3 exemplifies how the HSAS's success is dependent upon sustaining a consistent discourse regarding the terrorist threat. The terms "common vocabulary" and "structure for an ongoing national discussion" are rooted in the concept of discourse. The HSAS strives to create a framework through which terrorist threats will be discussed. This framework consists of numerous 'truths' regarding the terrorist threat which become legitimized as they are perpetuated though discourse which frames them as being synonymous with uncontested knowledge. If the HSAS is successful in doing this it will serve to reinforce the power of the state according to the Foucaultian model.

My interviews have provided me with empirical accounts that demonstrate how the tenets of the HSAS are becoming internalized and are fostering the development of uncontested truths through discourse. This 'truth' pertains to the belief that the United

States is perpetually at considerable risk of terrorist attacks and that it is a civic responsibility to combat that threat. This is evident by critically examining what is implicit in interviewees' statements of how they acted rationally in response to a HSAS warning. Also descriptive responses support these claims on a more observable level.

Shannon is a middle aged republican and a stay at home mother. I interviewed Shannon on the porch of her large Victorian home while her one year old son was taking a nap inside. Unlike the majority of my interview respondents she is fairly content with the current administration. The following account shows how discourse produced by the state and expressed through the HSAS is being perceived as truth and shaping behaviors.

> *Jonathan:* Can you recall a particular instance when you remember there being an elevation in threat condition?
>
> *Shannon:* Yeah, about a year ago. I remember hearing that the threat condition had been raised on the morning news while I was getting ready for work. I don't really remember why it was raised but I do recall being a little nervous about it. But to tell you the truth I'm generally an anxious person.
>
> *Jonathan:* Did you do anything differently that day in light of hearing this news?
>
> *Shannon:* Actually yes, and this is why I think I remember that instance so clearly. I was a little more watchful of suspicious behavior and saw a man at the train station who looked a bit strange put a suitcase down and then walk away from it. There were some other people around him who looked a little odd also, so he could have been leaving it with them. But I wasn't sure so I told a policeman what I saw on my way out of the station.
>
> *Jonathan:* What looked particularly strange about this man who put the suitcase down?
>
> *Shannon:* I don't know, he just looked disheveled, was wearing loose old tattered clothes, had long hair and a beard, he looked like he was of Middle Eastern descent. I don't hold any biases and try not to stereotype people, but to be completely honest, in retrospect, I don't think that I would have acted the way in which I did if he didn't look Arab. Additionally, I think that I did what I did because I was in a train station and all. You never know these days and a train station seems like it would be good place for a terrorist to attack.

Shannon's account of how she modified her behavior in response to a HSAS warning is an example of how discourse which is related to the HSAS is rendered as truth. She was increasingly suspicious of possible terrorist behavior and this notion became manifest as she reported activity which she deemed suspicious to a state official. The statement "You never know these days" and "a train station seems like a good place for a terrorist to attack" are prime examples of HSAS discourse being rendered as truth and shaping behaviors accordingly. Shannon justified her behavior with the statement "you never know these days". This implies that the world is more dangerous than it once was and thus she feels

obligated to remain on guard and is not hesitant to report activity which she perceives as suspicious. Discourse produced by the state regarding the terrorist threat enabled an outcome, the report of suspicious activity to state officials, which was dependent upon Shannon's agency. This event which took place on the micro- scale increased the power of the state as an unintended consequence of action.

If discourse relating to the HSAS was achieving its optimal goal of "creating a common vocabulary for an ongoing national discussion about the nature of the threats that confront the homeland and the appropriate measures that should be taken in response" (Bush, 2002 PD-3), the hierarchy of threat conditions would be memorized and internalized by the masses. An elevation in threat condition to level 'Orange' would engage the American public, as the nation would adopt a shared mentality which would be exclusive to the particular threat condition. This was not evident in my interviews as respondents were generally unaware of the specific hierarchy of color- coded threat conditions. Rather the HSAS seems to be successful in producing a generalized discourse regarding the fact that the nation is at heightened risk of terrorist attack. To revert back to Marty's statement from the previous chapter we see this to be true.

> "It is a post- 9/11 world today. The cold truth is that the world is not as safe now as it was a couple of decades ago…As a result of these circumstances everyone needs to be a little more on guard and take matters into their own hands."- Marty, Economic Analyst

This discourse is synonymous with truth as individuals are altering their behaviors and thought processes in response to elevations in threat condition. This exemplifies how the HSAS is reinforcing the power of the state. Not only does this reinforce the general power of the state, it reinforces the individualization of the terrorist threat. As individuals act in particular ways, which are framed to be both beneficial to the self and the nation as a whole, the system can be perceived as a technology in the Foucaultian sense. The analysis of discourse elucidates power relations which are evident through speech; 'technologies of the self' become apparent by examining the unconscious motivations behind action which are resultant of the tenants of a dominant discourse.

Foucault sees disciplinary power as a 'technology' which is aimed at;

> "how to keep someone under surveillance, control his conduct, his behavior, his aptitudes, how to improve his performance, multiply his capacities, put him where he is most useful: that is discipline in my sense" (Foucault, 1981: 191. From O'Farrell, 2003: 102)

Foucault traced such techniques of control back to early Christian societies in which sexual behavior and codes of ethics were shaped by 'obligations of truth' (Smart, 2004; 104). As individuals unconsciously act in ways which are in accordance with the demands of a particular doctrine, these behaviors are a prime example of Foucault's concept of 'docile bodies' or 'technologies of the self'. In this sense actors are deployable subjects or objects of knowledge. People monitor their behavior and instinctively act in ways which are deemed most effective to securing the goals of an institution (Foucault, 1977a: 138). Without omnipresent surveillance or threat of punishment, individuals act in a manner which they construe as both rational and logical. These actions are linked to a 'true' discourse which has become embedded in frameworks of rationality. Giddens' definition of power, the ability to secure outcomes which are dependent upon the agency of others, is analogous to Foucault's concept of disciplinary power in this sense.

If the HSAS is functioning as a 'technology of the self', citizens will be acting as sentinels for the state who are highly attuned subjects on the lookout for suspicious behavior in areas which are deemed as being at heightened risk of terrorist attack. Citizens may not perceive such behavior as a causal response to the tenets of the HSAS. Rather they would see their behavior as being a commonsensical response to a risk situation. This rationality is based upon the circulation of a true discourse which defines 'suspicious activity' and an acknowledgement that the nation is constantly at risk of a terrorist attack. Discourse would be rendered as true and the basis for justifying behavior. This would not be the result of political rhetoric or some grand strategy to increase the power of the state. Rather power would be the result of circulation of true discourses regarding a terrorist threat which prompted specific actions as these notions became construed as commonsensical truths. Beresford (2004) has applied Zizek's model of ideology (Zizek1994) to chart the development of a Homeland Security ideology in America. In this sense ideology refers to a "system of [shared] beliefs that develops and reproduces through discourse and serves as a basis for opinions, decisions, and actions" (Beresford, 2004: 8). This Homeland Security ideology is built on a doctrine of autonomy, strength, and patriotism, but hinders the development of deviating thought processes which enable political alternatives to been seen and realized (Ibid. 16).

My interviews yielded various examples in which such notions were the unconscious impetus behind action. This was predominantly evident in instances in which interviewees

indicated adopting a proxy terrorist mentality in order to combat the terrorist threat. The following examples show how individuals put themselves into a mindset which is similar to that of a terrorist in order to maximize their efficacy in taking preventative measures against terrorism.

> "Sometimes I find myself thinking like a terrorist in regard to places which they might consider as targets. You know, what would be a good target that would really make an impression."- Lois, High School Science Teacher
>
> &
>
> "…a train station seems like it would be good place for a terrorist to attack."- Shannon, Stay at Home Mother

As the HSAS individualizes the terrorist threat, it seems to subliminally be encouraging citizens to think like a terrorist in regard to locales and situations which terrorists are liable to perceive as prime targets. When these frameworks of rationality become internalized citizens become highly attuned and deployable subjects who are wary of possible terrorist activity. This reinforces and legitimizes the power of the state as it is the producer of the dominant discourse regarding the terrorist threat. The following example demonstrates the degree to which the tenets of the HSAS have been internalized and serves as a basis for justifying rational courses for action. It also serves as a strong example of the attunement between the state and the citizen, such as that which is described by Massumi (2005).

Thomas is a retired business consultant from Nags Head, North Carolina. I interviewed Thomas on the porch of his beachfront home while I was in the area for a family wedding. Thomas served in the U.S. Army for a brief stint during the late 1940's and has crossed party lines throughout his life, although he currently affiliates himself with the Republican Party. Thomas has positive opinions of the current administration in regard to the way in which they have handled the situation in the Middle East following the events of 9/11.

> "I know that the nation is at serious risk of a terrorist attack…so when there is a terror alert warning I just kind of go onto high alert my self."- Thomas, Retried Business Consultant & Former Private in the U.S. Army

Firstly, Thomas states that he "knows" the nation is at risk of a terrorist attack. This initial statement implies significant political trust. Thomas's sense of "knowing" is grounded in trust that statements issued regarding the terrorist threat are real. Thomas does not possess specific knowledge regarding possible terrorist plots. Rather his sense of "knowing" at the individual level is representative of the extent to which he feels a connection with the state.

The strength of this union between the citizen and the state becomes clearer as Thomas indicates that he goes "onto high alert himself" when the threat condition is raised. Discourse regarding the terrorist threat produced by the state has been internalized to the extent to which Thomas's behaviors and mentality fluctuate in accordance with variations in the HSAS. This grants the state a great deal of power as discourse is rendered as truth and becomes embedded in commonsensical frameworks.

Throughout this work a number of examples have been cited in which interview respondents produced statements which are in congruence with the demands of the HSAS. Yet these views were framed as being commonsensical responses to a situation and not necessarily a direct reaction to a HSAS warning. This is reason to believe that the HSAS is successfully functioning as a 'technology of the self' and has increased the power of the state. It is not all that surprising that the HSAS is operating as such, as similar methods of disciplinary power have been exercised for centuries. What is interesting however is the way in which power is exercised through the HSAS to individualize responsibilities which used to fall under the duty of the state. The paradigm shift which has been discussed throughout this paper regarding the role of the state in 'post- modern society' applies to power as well. By means of examining the HSAS as a novel power strategy provides grounds to theorize upon the larger ramifications the HSAS may have on political structures.

### *5.4 Novel Power Strategies & Structural Change*

By using implementing his method of genealogy, which was greatly influenced by Nietzsche (Foucault 1977b), Foucault has notably charted the transition from sovereign power to disciplinary power throughout the course of history (Foucault, 1967, 1977a). Some scholars feel that power in 'post- modern' societies is about avoidance and mobility in contrast to more traditional notions of power, which are defined by the ability to secure outcomes which are dependant upon the agency of others (Bauman, 2000:11, Urry 2002). To once again refer back to the conceptions of 'post- modernity' put forth by Bauman and Beck, contemporary societies are riddled by the negative and unintended consequences of the first modernity. These include nuclear fallout, chemical spills, global economic crises, and global terrorism. Such risks cannot be calculated in a traditional manner, are ever present and may strike without warning at any moment. Is this sense, according to Bauman,

power in contemporary societies is defined by the ability to be able to quickly and effectively adapt to the ever mutating constructs of society. Power associated with the HSAS may be an example of a combination of both disciplinary and 'post- panoptic' uses of power. The HSAS was constructed around the novel recognition that power is now about evading incalculable risks, while it utilizes concepts of disciplinary power to help secure outcomes beyond its control. When speaking of "evading risks" I am referring to the ability of the state to deflect issues of accountability associated with these 'incalculable risks' as well as citizens' ability to be in an elevated state of preparedness to proactively avoid the detrimental consequences of unpredictable threats. Beck has referred to terrorism as an 'individualization of war', as individuals now launch assaults on nation states in contrast to recognized political collectives (Beck, 2003: 260). Such a risk cannot be calculated in a traditional manner nor can blame be allotted as acts of terrorism are often inflicted by transnational actors who act under the radar of established nation states. The HSAS exemplifies the state's rebuttal to an 'individualization of war' with an 'individualization of responsibility' in combating the global terrorist threat.

Traditional uses of disciplinary, or panoptic, power produce citizens who acted in productive ways. These behaviors are considered productive as they are relative to a stable and predictable model of optimal behavior which can be defined to increase functionality. By feeling as if they are always being observed, individuals monitor their own behavior and solidify norms and power relations through their actions, as described previously according to Foucault's conception of 'technologies of the self'. The HSAS conditions citizens to always be vigilant and expect the unexpected. In this sense the HSAS could be a novel example of how disciplinary and 'post- panoptic' uses of power have coalesced. In the traditional sense, the HSAS uses disciplinary power to produce citizens who act in accordance with the tenets of the HSAS system, therefore rendering them productive. In the 'post- panoptic' sense HSAS warnings encourage citizens to recognize that risks can no longer be calculated in a traditional fashion and to expect the unexpected. The HSAS may be an example of how power is being used to produce citizens who are well adapted to the transitory nature of contemporary society in contrast to more traditional uses of panoptic power which are based upon a more stable and predictable model.

The "radicalized individualization", in response to the reflexive nature of risk in the 'post- modern' era, could result in a structural change of basic institutions. Of course in

keeping with Giddens' duality of structure, this individualization is enabled by a structural shift which is taking place in congruence with structurally situated action. As decisions are still backed by traditionally rational thought processes, the role of the basic institutions such as the state have and will continue to undergo change (Beck & Lau, 2005: 532). State power is evident as it initiates structural change by individualizing the terrorist threat according to the doctrines of the HSAS. In this sense the HSAS serves to avow the power interests of the state as it deflects responsibility from the state to the lay citizen. Affirmation of this power is evident in empirical observations which indicate that the tenets of the HSAS are acting as a 'technology of the self'. Additionally, discourse regarding the terrorist threat is being rendered as legitimated truth as it rationalizes and justifies specific courses of action.

My empirical research indicates that the HSAS is successfully reinforcing the notion that the United States is at constant risk of terrorist attack. As this discourse is rendered as truth the state is likely to receive minimal civic opposition to tactics which increase surveillance and debatably impinge upon 4th Amendment[7] rights. According to Beck there are currently two types of states emerging in response to the global terrorist threat, "cosmopolitan states" and "surveillance states". Cosmopolitan states recognize the importance of developing progressive policies in cooperation with outside nation-states; while surveillance states aim to construct an increasingly authoritative fortress in which measures to combat the terrorist threat supersede ideals such as democracy and freedom (Beck, 2003: 266). It appears that the U.S. is heading in the direction of becoming the later. The most recent indicator of this Orwellian development is President George W. Bush's approval of a law which broadly expands the U.S. Governments ability to eavesdrop on international phone calls and read emails of American citizens without warrants. This legislation is an explicit tactic to gather information about terrorists (Risen, 2007). The discourse of the HSAS stimulates a civic environment which is rife with fear and suspicion of terrorist activity and allows for the authoritative power of the state to increase.

Increases in state power, such as that which is resultant of the HSAS, may induce structural change as a result of the way in which power is exercised and statements issued by the state are perceived. Traditional models of statehood equate warnings issued by the state with precision backed by reason. The HSAS issues warnings which lack in specificity and

[7] The Forth Amendment of the United States Constitution guards against unreasonable searches and seizures of private property.

are still expected to inspire particular courses of action. The rigidness of political structures may become de-bounded and more malleable as statements issued by the state become increasingly ambiguous yet retain their traditional discursive meanings. Statements issued by the state, and the behaviors which they evoke, were once quite dialectic and linear but are now becoming more individualized and open to interpretation. This may lead to a shift in political institutions from those which were once largely responsible for the well being of the populace to institutional structures which shift responsibility to the individual while maintaining their authoritative position. This reallocation of responsibility and proliferation of individualization is legitimated as discourse, regarding the fact that the terrorist threat is constant and unpredictable, is accepted as an uncontested truth and rationalizes behavior.

## Conclusion:

The HSAS is an acknowledgement of the fact that the risks, such as the global terrorist threat, cannot be calculated in a traditional manner in 'post- modern' society. As societies move away from traditional modes of risk appraisal and causality, the role of the state is changing to cater to this novel paradigm. The HSAS individualizes the terrorist threat, which in turn may facilitate the transmutation of institutionalized political structures. This structural change would come about as citizens act in ways which are in accordance with HSAS warnings that deviate from actions which traditionally take place within institutionalized political structures. As individuals follow the tenets of vague and non-specific warnings it also presupposes significant political trust. Trust is evident in the assumption that the state possesses greater knowledge regarding the terrorist threat than the lay citizen and thus it is advantageous to heed to the call of government officials. This also serves to avow the power interest of the state as discourse produced by the state is rendered as truth and individuals act in ways which are of optimal efficacy according to the economic model constructed by the state. My interviews provide some grounds, however limited, to believe that the HSAS might be successfully prompting structural change which is defined by a shift of responsibly from the state to the citizen. I postulate that the power of the state has increased and that political trust in practice is not as low as survey results frame it to be. The

structural change of political institutions should not remain isolated to the realm of emergency and risk management. Rather it is likely that a proliferation of individualization will pervade numerous spheres of interaction which take place within institutionalized political structures.

My theoretical analysis and empirical research regarding a public affair has provided me grounds to theorize upon answers to my initial research question of how political trust is shaping behavioral responses to the HSAS and the structural changes of political institutions which may be brought about as a result of these behaviors. Or according to a dualistic model, an analysis of a system which is indicative of changes which have recently taken place. By no means do I intend to frame my findings as definite conclusions. Rather they are the result of a social theoretical analysis of a public affair and may serve as points of departure for future research. My conclusions are tri-fold regarding three major elements of structural change which may be occurring as a result of the HSAS. These changes are in regard to:

I) Increased individualization,

II) The function of political trust in facilitating individualization and in categorizing non-traditional statements issued by the state, and

III) How state power is functioning in the 'post- modern' era and shaping relations between the citizen and the state.

My speculations regarding each of these possible structural changes are reiterated in the sections below.

*I. The Proliferation of Individualization*

Beck and Lau (2005) describe the concept of boundary transcendence. While there were once strict delineations between fields of responsibility, these boundaries are fraying as the concrete is becoming more abstract in the 'post- modern' era. Threats to national security were once bounded within the confines of the responsibility of nation- states which were held accountable for action through established international laws and rules of engagement. As global terrorism is often carried out by transnational actors who act under their own accord, nation- states cannot be held responsible for such atrocities under traditional accountability systems. Thus, as global terrorism transcends traditional boundaries of accountability, responsibility becomes de-bounded from the political realm

and imparted upon the citizen by the state. I believe that increased individualization has spawned from such a paradigm.

Individualization is brought about as the tactics of the HSAS are accepted at the empirical level as it shifts responsibility, and diffuses accountability, from political actors and institutions to the lay citizen. This is done by issuing non-specific statements regarding a possible terrorist threat and vague precautions which should be taken in response. As these statements are framed within the discursive context of a knowledgeable state they are accepted as truth despite their ambiguity. This prompts behavioral responses in which individuals become increasingly wary of possible terrorist activity. This is grounds to postulate that warnings issued by the state may continue to become generalized and reliant upon the agency of lay citizens to secure outcomes. My empirical research has demonstrated that this individualization is coming to fruition and that structural change may be inevitable or is already taking place. Allow me to revert back to examples which were presented previously in this work to reinforce this point.

> "It is a post 9/11 world today. The cold truth is that the world is not as safe now as it was a couple of decades ago…As a result of these circumstances everyone needs to be a little more on guard and take matters into their own hands."- Marty, Economic Analyst
>
> &
>
> "I mean, you never know what to expect these days…Sometimes you have to improvise and take actions into your own hands [Referring to behavioral response to a HSAS warning.]"- Matt, Graphic Designer

This increased individualization of responsibility may hold lay citizens accountable for confronting unpredictable threats, not exclusively in regard to global terrorism, instead of the state. In a similar light we may be witnessing a change in the accountability systems which are implemented by the state. It is liable that political institutions will be held less, or at least differently, accountable for providing solutions to large scale global catastrophes. In order for such a model to achieve success, trust in the political institutions which initiate such a change must be apparent.

## *II. Fear and the Death of Ambivalence*

In Chapter 3, I charted the rise of political trust to its position of theoretical prominence in the academic realms of the social and political sciences. I also indicated the relatively uncontested idea that it was in decline. I additionally pointed out the radical

undulations in levels of political trust in the United States in the wake of 9/11. This showed astronomical and unfettered amounts of support for political authorities immediately following a crisis situation, only to see this trust consistency fall back into decline following the months and years following September 11, 2001. This phenomenon inspired me to look more closely at a generalized notion of political trust at the empirical level. Form this process I developed the concepts of alpha trust, which is founded upon ontological security and prompts acts of compliance with government issued warnings in the face of crisis situations, and beta trust which is derived from external sources and becomes manifest in verbally expressed attitudes towards government and survey results. I found that it was alpha trust which flourished in the face of exogenous threats. My empirical results served to reinforce this theoretical proposition. Take the two following interview excerpts for example.

> "I trust that the government knows more then I do about issues of national security. It does not matter if warnings are vague, I don't want them to tell me more than I need to know. So when there is an elevation in threat condition I don't ask any questions and try to do as they say."
>
> &
>
> "No matter what people say about the Bush administration I trust the government is constantly looking out for the best interest of the entire population. I am adamantly against the current administration but feel that Homeland Security Advisory Systems warnings are well founded and I take them pretty seriously"- Andrew, Art Curator

In this work I also touched upon the idea that ambivalence is characteristic of the 'post- modern' condition and theorized upon the effects this ambivalence may have on notions of political trust. I will remind the reader of Bauman's definition of ambivalence; "the possibility of assigning an object or event to more than one category" (Bauman, 1991. From Beilharz 2001: 281). If citizens were torn between how to categorize statements issued by the state, and thus how to transfer this categorization into appropriate courses of action, it seems that feelings of fear eradicate this ambivalence and inspire decisive courses of action which are in direct accordance with the demands of the state. If the state is able to keep the public in an elevated state of fear and anxiety, alpha trust will be the driving force behind behaviors which take place within institutionalized political structures. To revert back to Beck's quote which was cited earlier; "Fear has proved to be the last–ambivalent-resource for making new bonds" (Beck, 2002: 14). In retrospect, it might be more appropriate to say that fear may be the state's last resource in eliminating ambivalence and

engendering feelings of trust in government. Alpha trust, which appears to be bountiful, may then allow structural change to occur while the state maintains its authoritative position. This would allow structural change towards individualization to occur in which citizens are responsible for confronting unpredictable threats such as terrorism. Additionally, if the public is kept in an elevated state of fear the power of political institutions may increase as the public will express little opposition to authoritative measures which are taken to confront the terrorist threat.

### *III. Towards New Power*

Discourse regarding the terrorist threat is being rendered as truth as behavioral responses cater to the demands of the HSAS, a claim which the following example bolsters.

> "I know that the nation is at serious risk of a terrorist attack…so when there is a terror alert warning I just kind of go onto high alert my self."- Thomas, Retried Business Consultant & Former Private in the U.S. Army

This development serves to increase the power of the state according to the Foucaultian model. Political power, as it functions in traditional institutional structures, enables the state to mobilize its citizens to act in ways which are advantageous to the interests of the entire nation. The HSAS is successful in this respect as citizens have become increasingly vigilant and eager to report suspicious activity. The HSAS also appears to be effective in reallocating responsibility regarding the terrorist threat from the state to the citizen. It was mentioned previously in this work that power in the 'post- modern' era is about the ability to effectively adapt to an ever changing and unpredictable model of causality. The HSAS mirrors this scenario and is a pragmatic response to such a situation. In this regard, the HSAS endows citizens with power as it reinforces an unpredictable model of cause and effect, encouraging citizens to abandon traditional modes of threat appraisal and embrace the fact that it is advantageous to expect the unexpected. Such transference in the way in which power is perceived and deployed, may lead to a piecemeal reconfiguration of the way in which power functions in the structures of political institutions. If neo-power is about ability to effectively adapt to transitory notions of truth and causality, the structures of political institutions may become more malleable. Structures which were once quite rigid and reliant upon strict authoritative and bureaucratic means to maintain homeostasis may become more flexible. As behavioral responses to HSAS warnings embrace and legitimize

such changes there is reason to believe that structural change towards the ability to evolve and adapt may be upon us.

As described in my introduction, my mission as a student of Social Theory & Public Affairs was to examine a social issue using the tools of social theory to portray the issue in a novel light. In the course of this thesis, I have attempted to show how the HSAS is a pragmatic response to the state of affairs in the 'post- modern' era, or a "sign of the times" so to speak. The HSAS mirrors the reflexive nature of constant exposure to risks which cannot be calculated in a traditional fashion, global terrorism of which is a single example. This perspective differs from the majority of research that has been conducted concerning the HSAS which critiques its efficacy according to more traditional standards of risk appraisal and emergency management. While admittedly meager in size, my fieldwork examined the issue at the empirical level to investigate how people are responding to HSAS warnings and the role political trust plays in categorizing statements issued by the state and shaping behavioral responses. Through this process I found that fear supersedes ambivalence which is the product of non- traditional statements that are issued by the state and engenders both political trust and compliance. I have also attempted to frame the HSAS within its larger social context to provide me with a vantage point from which to theorize upon the ramifications the HSAS may have on institutionalized political structures. Ideally this work will stimulate a dialogue between scholars of typically dissimilar fields of study to better conceptualize the effects of the HSAS and political trust on institutionalized political structures in the 'post- modern' era.

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