

Rodrigo Nieto-Gòmez reflects on the impact of Marissa Madrigal's CHDS thesis, "Obsessive-Compulsive Homeland Security: Insights from the Neurobiological Security Motivation System."

By Rodrigo Nieto-Gòmez

During an interview with al-Jazeera in 2004, Osama bin Laden repeated something that he had spoken about before, with regards to his theory of the case behind the actions and operations of al-Qaeda: "We are continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy. Allah willing, and nothing is too great for Allah."¹

According to the mastermind of the deadliest terrorist attacks ever, America would not fall from the outside but from within. What could defeat the most powerful Nation-State in the history of humanity would not be the marching armies of a near-peer competitor conquering the District of Columbia, but the overreach of its reactions to acts of terror, a sort of an autoimmune disease, triggered by terrorism but delivered by domestic policies passed by the U.S. Congress.

There are many reasons why Marissa Madrigal's thesis is an important document, but the most important one is that it identified the mechanism that would deliver that autoimmune disease to the heart of the American polity if we are not careful. That vector would be an overreaching homeland security policy.

Madrigal explores how terrorists exploit our anxiety and fears to force us into policies that are costly and diminish freedoms by examining security policy in the post 9/11 era through the lens of the neurobiological threat detection system of the human brain. Terrorism aims to actively manipulate our media ecology, forcing us into becoming something that we do not wish to become. In order to protect us from threats, homeland security has to maintain a dual mandate: to protect us from terrorists while also preventing us from making the mistakes they want us to make.

As Marissa concludes: "We must use our knowledge of security motivation to strike a healthy balance between security to reduce our risk and promote other activities that support a healthy, resilient society. In other words, we must avoid being trapped by our enemies in a constant state of anxiety and obsessive-compulsive spending on security."²

About the Author

Dr. Rodrigo Nieto-Gómez is a geostrategist and defense futurist focused on the consequences of the accelerating pace of change in homeland security and policing environments. He is a research professor at the National Security Affairs Department and at the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School and has also worked as a certified facilitator and instructor for the Command College for the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) and a former instructor at the Executive Academy of the Emergency Management Institute. He is also a faculty member of Singularity University. For more than a decade, Dr. Nieto has taught hundreds of high ranking law enforcement, military, and homeland security leaders how to create and execute strategies to transform their agencies to meet the requirements of rapidly changing environments and threat profiles. As an innovation expert and an academically trained geostrategist, he has built a reputation as an expert on future threats to national security and policing and how to confront them. He has performed field research in multiple territories, including the totality of the U.S.-Mexico border. Dr. Nieto has multiple publications describing the adaptation capacities of global organized crime, the public policy challenges of innovation and intrapreneurship in government and homeland security, asymmetric warfare, and cybersecurity. He may be reached at rodrigonietogomez@gmail.com.

Notes

1. "Bin Laden: Goal Is to Bankrupt U.S." 2004. November 2, 2004. <https://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/11/01/binladen.tape/>.
 2. Marissa Madrigal, "Obsessive-Compulsive Homeland Security: Insights from the Neurobiological Security Motivation System." (master's thesis, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Naval Postgraduate School, December, March 2018), Naval Postgraduate School Monterey United States. <https://apps.dtic.mil/docs/citations/AD1052771>.
-

Copyright

Copyright © 2021 by the author(s). Homeland Security Affairs is an academic journal available free of charge to individuals and institutions. Because the purpose of this publication is the widest possible dissemination of knowledge, copies of this journal and the articles contained herein may be printed or downloaded and redistributed for personal, research or educational purposes free of charge and without permission. Any commercial use of Homeland Security Affairs or the articles published herein is expressly prohibited without the written consent of the copyright holder. The copyright of all articles published in Homeland Security Affairs rests with the author(s) of the article. Homeland Security Affairs is the online journal of the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS).