

PROTECTING CULTURAL MONUMENTS AGAINST TERRORISM: A REPLY

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An effective intervention against terrorism – in our case the rapid reconstruction of iconic monuments attacked – induces terrorists to substitute other activities for attacks on cultural icons. This is an important reaction and therefore the major point of Briggeman and Horpedahl's (2009, hereafter B&H) *Comment* to Frey and Rohner (2007) is well taken. The redirection of terrorists' activities must indeed be taken into account, and it is useful that the two commentators point this out.

There indeed exists considerable evidence (see for example Sandler, 2005, and more generally Llussa and Tavares, 2007; Enders and Sandler, 2006; and Frey, 2004) that terrorists are rational in the sense of turning to other forms and directions of their activities in order to reach their goals. The crucial issue is, of course, what are these changes exactly. Relatively little is known in this regard. It is therefore an important topic for future research to find out the exact conditions under which a particular new activity is chosen by terrorists. While B&H seem to think on the basis of some circumstantial evidence that the redirected activities are more deadly, it may well be that they are less harmful. In the latter case, the substitution effect affects the effective counter-terrorist strategy suggested by us only marginally.

Our paper focuses on the possibilities to reduce the benefits to terrorists of attacking cultural monuments by rebuilding them quickly. B&H downplay the fact that the benefit-cost ratio to potential terrorists will fall when our proposal is indeed put in place. When terrorists become aware that the initial target chosen is no longer as attractive as before, they have to turn to targets with a lower benefit-cost ratio. In the extreme, the ratio may even become negative for the next best targets, in which case the potential terrorists turn to peaceful actions. Provided terrorists are rational (which can well be assumed), the consequence of our proposal will be fewer terrorist acts. In other words: there is not only a harmful substitution effect.

B&H also present interesting cases concerning various aspects of our proposal but unfortunately for the United States, only. This is unwarranted as there are many more important instances of terrorism in other countries and continents. Moreover, it is mistaken

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to consider terrorism mainly as being committed by Muslim extremists. In fact, even in the US, a substantial number of terrorist incidents have been unconnected to Muslim extremists but have been committed by nationals, as the cases of Oklahoma and anthrax demonstrate.

References

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