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Thinking with Ulrich Beck: security, terrorism and transformation

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ABSTRACT

Ulrich Beck is considered to be one of the most innovative and provocative social science thinkers of the last 50 years. His landmark contribution, Risk Society: Toward a New Modernity (1992), sought to capture the underlying dynamics of the late twentieth century, drawing attention to the anthropogenic dangers generated by capitalist modernization. First published in Germany in 1986 under the title Risikogesellschaft, the best-selling book was translated into several languages and thrust Beck into the academic spotlight. The social and institutional critique presented in Risk Society (1992) caused ripples that spread way beyond academia, with the risk society thesis becoming the subject of widespread debate. However, in the field of risk research, Beck's work has received a mixed reception. While some scholars have contested the foundational claims made in the risk society thesis, others have actively deployed the framework to analyze various incidents, processes, and transitions. Rather than seeking to cast judgment on the value of Beck's overall contribution to studies of risk in the social sciences, this article seeks to actively deploy three concepts developed by Beck over the course of his career: staging; organized irresponsibility, and emancipatory catastrophism. In order to elucidate the explanatory capacity of these concepts, the phenomenon of terrorism is used as a touchstone for discussion. Following on from this – and as a means of extending appreciation of Beck's work in risk studies – key areas worthy of further excavation are identified.

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Introduction

The acclaimed sociologist Ulrich Beck has played a pivotal role in the emergence and development of risk as a unit idea in the social sciences (see Elliott 2002; Mythen 2004). Beck's groundbreaking book *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (1992) produced sizeable impacts in the academy, inspiring scholars to adopt and adapt the risk society framework to understand salient problems and issues in the modern world (see Mythen 2014; Sznaider 2015). Beck was also considered to be a public intellectual, engaging with policy-makers, politicians, journalists, and civic leaders. Always keen to translate his ideas to as wide an audience as possible, Beck took his role in the public sphere seriously, readily engaging in open discussion and frequently writing thought pieces for international newspapers (see Gross 2016, 386; Kaldor and Selchow 2015). While here is not the place to document the innumerable achievements of a man considered by his colleague Anthony Giddens (2015, 1) to be 'the greatest sociologist of his generation', it is important to recognize the catalytic impact of Beck's work on the field of risk studies. This article is not intended to demonstrate the panoramic range of Beck's contribution, nor to trace the fields of risk

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research in which his work has produced the greatest impact. Aside from the significant theoretical contribution – and the sustained international dialog Beck's work has generated among scholars – it is important to appreciate the originality and depth of specific concepts that he developed over the course of a distinguished career (Selchow 2016). Following this tact, I wish to isolate three key concepts in order to elucidate some of the ways in which Beck's legacy enables us to continue to grapple with the dilemmas of the modern epoch. To avoid lapsing into the realm of generality, I will put these concepts to work in relation to a specific example, that of terrorism. In so doing, it is not my intention to assess the general applicability of the concepts. Rather, I wish to show how particular aspects of Beck's *ouevre* can assist us in shining a light on the communication, representation, and management of risk. Applied in the context of (inter)national security, discussion will be oriented toward the ideational construction and regulation of the terrorist threat. As opposed to simply accepting or rejecting Beck's macro theoretical narrative of risk society, it is important instead to work with the analytical tools that he devised in order to stretch and grow knowledge in risk research and, more broadly, within the social sciences. The article falls into four interconnected sections. First, the key dimensions of Beck's groundbreaking risk society thesis are sketched out, as a means of both introducing and locating the concepts to be utilized. Second, the points of articulation between the risk society perspective and the contemporary terrorist threat are identified. Third, three focal concepts developed by Beck are utilized to illuminate aspects of the mediation, regulation, and impact of terrorism. Following each application, I indicate discrete gaps in knowledge that remain, suggesting future points of empirical entry.

The risk society perspective: contours and dimensions

Beck's thesis is founded on a series of interconnected claims about the proselytizing character of risk in the modern world. The risk society thesis draws distinctions between 'natural hazards' deemed to be prevalent in pre-industrial cultures and 'manufactured risks' that threaten human security in contemporary society. Beck (1995) avers that natural hazards – such as earthquakes and flooding – are, in effect, visited on society by nature. These natural hazards tend to dominate in pre-industrial cultures and are steadily supplanted in significance in 'industrial society' by accidents that primarily result from human error. While modes of safety regulation and prediction have the capacity to reduce accidents in industrial society, the motion into a 'risk society' is heralded by the emergence of a series of unmanageable humanly generated threats, such as nuclear accidents, global warming and international terrorism (Beck 1992, 2009, 2016). Beck's argument is built on four assumptions about risk in the modern age. First, he postulates that the anthropogenic character of manufactured risks renders them unique. Rather than being understood as threats generated by the gods or nature, manufactured risks are perceived to be a consequence of human decisions and choices. While the goals and ambitions of capitalist modernization may be based around a positive logic of acquiring 'goods', this process itself generates unpredicted and unpredictable 'bads' (Beck 1992, 48). Thus, risks emerge as routine 'side effects' of economic, technological, and scientific development (Beck 2009, 18). Further, Beck argues that harms resulting from side effects cannot ultimately be avoided. Here, he alludes to 'boomerang effects' whereby the risks generated by advanced, affluent nations come back to haunt them, threatening human security and well-being (Beck 1992, 36). Second, Beck is keen to emphasize that the scale of danger presented by manufactured risks is hitherto unknown. The ultimate end point of environmental risks such as global warming is a planet that will be uninhabitable (Beck 2015, 76). The magnitude of the risks unleashed by capitalist techno-scientific and economic development is thus considered historically novel. Third, modern manufactured risks are delocalized in character (Beck 1992, 1995). The geographical impact of manufactured risks is far greater than natural hazards which tended to be locally or regional bound. Manufactured risks are global and universal and this presents major challenges in terms of delimiting threats. Fourth, again in contrast to natural hazards which can be to some degree institutionally foreseen and managed, manufactured risks are unpredictable and beyond regulation: 'it is not the quantity of risk, but the quality of control or – to be more precise – the known uncontrollability of the consequences of civilizational decisions, that makes the historical difference' (Yates 2009, 68). For Beck, the scale of

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JOURNAL OF RISK RESEARCH   3

the risks that the world faces, coupled to an institutional incapacity to deal with them, produces a climate of indeterminacy in which attempts to map and plan safe futures are perpetually thwarted (Beck 2002, 40). In a context of generalized uncertainty, State agencies must act – or choose to remain intransigent – on the basis of partial, incomplete, and often contradictory information. For Beck (2009, 115), such a condition of not knowing is often a direct result of the application of scientific and technological principles, rather than an absence of them: 'living in risk society means living with ineradicable non-knowing, or *nichtwissen*, to be precise, with the simultaneity of threats and non-knowing and the resulting political, social and moral paradoxes and dilemmas. In contrast to the modern era, it cannot be overcome by more and better knowledge, more and better science; rather precisely the opposite holds: it is the *product* of more and better science'. The problem of incomplete knowledge produces tangible problems so far as agencies involved in risk communication and risk governance are concerned. While technological and scientific advances enable detection of a greater range of harms – often at earlier points of gestation – the residual uncertainties that may remain about the scale, geography and effects of risk, mean that risk regulation is an arduous endeavor (see Wardman and Mythen 2017). This dilemma is captured well in the much maligned – but otherwise perceptive – remarks made by the former US Secretary of Defense, Rumsfeld (2002) regarding institutional knowledge about the terrorist threat: 'as we know, there are known knowns; there are things that we know that we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don't know we don't know'. The various states of partial knowledge and non-knowledge captured in this conundrum places institutions responsible for the security of citizens in something of a dilemma. As Beck (1999, 78) posits: 'the ultimate deadlock of risk society … resides in the gap between knowledge and decision: there is no one who really knows the global outcome – at the level of positive knowledge, the situation is radically 'undecideable' – but we nonetheless have to decide … so risk society is provoking an obscene gamble, a kind of ironic reversal of predestination: I am accountable for decisions which I was forced to make without proper knowledge of the situation'. Aside from the interesting philosophical issues that this quandary raises, it is evident that pressures to acknowledge residual uncertainties in situations of risk have impacted heavily on social institutions from law, criminal justice, policing and the intelligence services to medical health, politics and finance (see Nielsen and Sorenson 2015). While strategies developed to manage, regulate and communicate uncertainty vary across and within sectors, the catastrophic potential of 'worst imaginable accidents' means that the stakes cannot be higher for regulatory institutions (Beck 2002, 9). Insofar as uncertainty is a characteristic property of risk situations, Beck avers that the quality of that uncertainty has become more pronounced at the very time that the magnitude of harm has increased. In effect, the 'old risks' are being replaced by 'new risks', which threaten not only to derail the system, but, moreover, possess the capacity to render human life extinct (Beck 2009, 19). We can thus see a dualism in Beck's approach to risks which are considered to be at once socially constructed yet also real. Indeed, while Beck has been criticized for oscillating between constructivist and realist paradigms in his treatment of risk, he has consistently defended his blended approach, rejecting what he calls the 'either/or' and embracing the principle of 'and' (Beck 1999, 2016)

In refining the risk society thesis, Beck (2009, 2015, 2016) focused on three axial areas of analysis: environmental, economic, and security risks. For analytical purposes, it is the latter that will be considered in the remainder of this article, using the threat of terrorism as an axis for debate. Before illustrating the potential of Beckian concepts, it is first necessary to provide a capsule account of the key dynamics of the threat.

Terrorism: through the risk society lens

Despite being historically omnipresent, terrorism has featured as a focal political issue in Western nations over the last two decades. The events of 9/11 in particular, set in train wide-ranging transformations in military practices, counter-terrorism legislation, data gathering, and modes of policing (see Amoore 2013; Beck 2002). While the focus of intelligence has shifted from the risk posed by individuals

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associating with al Qaeda to those taking up arms on behalf of the Islamic State (IS), fears about attacks conducted by individuals attaching to radical groups have been high on the security radar in Europe, following on from serious incidents in France, the UK, Germany, and Belgium (see Abbas 2017; Mythen and Walklate 2016). Although the present political and security focus is trained on individuals that have become radicalized through engagement with proponents of IS, it is fair to say that the shock generated by the 2001 attacks in America continues to reverberate in public discourse and at the level of policy. Post 9/11, the clamor to try and understand these grisly happenings led not only to common assumptions crystallizing around an apparent sea change in the level of threat, but also the consolidation of an ideology fixed on transformations in the nature of terrorism. This trend steadily gathered momentum in politics, the media and security industries, being underpinned by academic work focused on the emergence of 'new' or 'postmodern' terrorism (see Martin 2014, 268; Morgan 2004). While the roots and causes of the contemporary threat remain a source of heated debate, it has commonly been assumed by analysts within the media, politics, policy and intelligence circles that the contemporary threat of terrorism is of a qualitatively different nature and a quantitatively higher order of magnitude in comparison with previous epochs (see Hoffman 1999; Malesevic 2010, 213). Although the discourse of 'new terrorism' came to be dominant post 9/11, it is interesting to observe that debates about the changing nature of terrorism preceded the 2001 attacks on the United States. Laqueur (1996, 26), for instance, writing some five years before 9/11, argued for a reconfigured understanding of political violence, stating that 'current definitions of terrorism fail to capture the magnitude of the problem worldwide'. While Laqueur's ideas initially elicited a limited degree of interest among intelligence experts and media commentators, his conception of a new paradigm of terrorism was taken up with vim after 9/11.

In many respects, the task of governing terrorism has become increasingly difficult over the last two decades as a result of a number of interconnected factors, including the stretched geography of threats, violence enacted by so-called 'clean skins' and 'lone wolves' and the widening variety of modes of attack. Due to advances in the identification and detection of risks, we are now cognizant of the interconnectedness of potential harms and the complexities involved in establishing interconnections within networks (see Mennen and van Tuyll 2015). Identifying and managing threats in a globalized world is a challenging business for States, international organizations, scientific experts indeed citizens themselves (see Cantelli, Kodate, and Krieger 2011). Indeed, what are often considered 'positive' aspects of globalization – notably the enhanced mobility of people, information, products and services – can, paradoxically, aid the fluidity of security risks. But to what extent has the terrorist threat transformed the landscape of security? Moreover, how can Beckian concepts facilitate an appreciation of the nature and regulation of political and religiously motivated violence?

Having sketched out the general contours of the contemporary security landscape and considered the testing conditions within which risk-regulating agencies must operate, I now wish to show how the risk society thesis can illumine aspects of the social construction and institutional management of the terrorist threat. If we consider the key dimensions of the risk society thesis, it is easy to see why Beck (2016, 59) considered terrorism to be a prime example of manufactured risk in contemporary society. In the first instance, the threat is indubitably anthropogenic. The conflicts and disputes that motivate individuals to commit to organized violence are rooted in human culture, religious narratives, political standpoints, and shared histories. If we reflect on the roots of the current threat to Western nations posed by Islamist radical groups, it is clear that formerly colonialism and, latterly, aggressive neoliberal economic expansion and cultural imperialism have generated the violent 'boomerang effect' of terrorism, which also emerges partly as a 'side effect' of the global expansion of turbo capitalism. Further, the tools created and wielded by terrorist groups are themselves the products of technological and scientific advances, from use of the internet as a vehicle for propaganda to the propagation of chemical and biological substances for malevolent use. Second, in addition to being anthropogenic in nature, the terrorist threat is representative of a category of high consequence risks that Beck (2016, 69) flags as emblematic of the modern age. In comparison with historical precursors, the 'high-lethality' attacks launched by modern terrorist networks result in large numbers of human casualties (Hoffman 1999). Although civilians were frequently killed in attacks by traditional terrorist organizations such as the IRA

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and ETA, their strategic objectives were primarily geared toward destabilizing the State by damaging infrastructure and disrupting capital accumulation. In sharp contrast, the attacks executed by new terrorist groups seek to maximize on harm to human life (see Laqueur 1996, 32; Walsh 2016, 6). Over 15 years on from 9/11, concerns continue to be expressed by security and intelligence experts about the
5 dire consequences of chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear attacks by extremist groups (Sheldon 2012, 171). Third, aligning with Beck's thesis, it can also be argued that the contemporary terrorist threat has global reach (see Bowling and Sheptycki 2013, 29; Malesevic 2010, 84). To illustrate this point, The Global Terrorism Database shows that 92 countries suffered terrorist attacks in 2015 (Institute for Economics and Peace 2016, 13). The permeability of borders in the modern age – intensified through
10 the articulation of various facets of globalization – serves only to accelerate the liquidity of risks (Beck 2016, 7). In as much as twentieth century conflicts involving religious and politically motivated violence were relatively local in terms of both actor involvement and sites of attack, the modern terrorist threat is global, involving networks of individuals 'acting beyond and across borders' (Beck 2016, 9). While traditional terrorist groups such as the IRA and ETA operated with a clear local command structure,
15 new terrorist groups inspire individuals located within transnational networks to conduct attacks (see Burke 2005; Morgan 200). The globality of the threat is exemplified by the cross-continental attacks executed by individuals affiliating with the Islamic State. In as much as the turn to religious fundamentalism is considered by Beck (2016, 10) to be a response to the fragmentation and uncertainties of the risk society, it is clear that ideological conflicts that were once local or regional have become global,
20 with State and non State actors entangled in sporadic 'risk wars', involving multiple parties (Beck 2009, 149). The current situation in Syria acts as a prime example of this type of messy conflict involving a range of international actors and producing global effects in terms of insecurity, migration and portable violence (Chulov 2015). The inability of governments, nation states, military institutions, and international peace keeping organizations to effectively resolve situations such as Syria is symptomatic of the AQ6
25 challenges of a post insurance society in which tried and tested forms of regulation fail: in effect, 'there is no institutional answer' (Beck 2015, 68). As we shall see, rather than intervening with the expectation of positive impact, Beck argues that institutional actors are instead bound up with a dramaturgical performance of risk management.

The representation and management of terrorism: stretching Beckian concepts

30 Although Beck himself was never a proponent of the new terrorism thesis, it is striking how many overlaps there are with the risk society thesis in terms of the global nature of the threat, the relative powerlessness of regulatory structures and the potentially catastrophic scale of the problem. In this regard, the risk society thesis does provide us with a feasible framework for conceptualizing the contemporary terrorist threat. Nevertheless, it is important to keep sight of continuities in the use of religious and/or
35 politically motivated violence as well as elements of transformation (see Copeland 2001; Walklate and Mythen 2015). While the problem of terrorism would seem to have a neat fit with the major tenets of the risk society thesis, there are also fault lines. In a somewhat febrile environment in which citizens are encouraged to 'think security' (de Lint and Virta 2004), there is a need to keep sight of the probable risk of being a victim of a terrorist attack, as opposed to the hypothetical possibility. Despite recent attacks
40 in the UK, Belgium, France, and Germany, there have been very few large-scale terrorist incidents in the West since 9/11. Against the backdrop of a sharp rise in global fatalities as a result of terrorism since 2012, the death toll in Western Europe has actually decreased steadily since the early 1990s (see Barr 2016). Data compiled by The Global Terrorism Database, for instance, show that while terrorism may be transnational, it remains a geographically concentrated form of violence (Institute for Economics
45 and Peace 2016). The large majority of deaths resulting from terrorism in 2015 can be attributed to just four Islamist militant groups: Islamic State, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, and the Taliban. Further, almost three quarters of total fatalities occurred in just five countries: Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nigeria (Institute for Economics and Peace 2016, 3). In as much as these data give us a sobering view of the uneven global spread of the terrorist threat, the idea that Western nations are especially vulnerable

to attack remains ubiquitous in media, political, and intelligence circles. Of course, the recent spate of terrorist attacks in London between March and May of 2017 may be a harbinger of an intensified cycle of violence. Nevertheless, it is necessary to disentangle the past and the present from the potentialities of the future. In as much as the risk of chemical, biological, or radiological attacks has been well publicized, it is important to differentiate worst-case fears from concrete probabilities. Noting the general caveats above, I wish now to drill down to a deeper level of specific analysis, drawing on the conceptual tools that Beck bequeathed the social sciences to further our understanding of security issues in the modern world. While there are multiple possibilities in this regard, I wish to concentrate on just three concepts that have the capacity to be put to wider use in risk research: staging; organized irresponsibility and emancipatory catastrophism (see Beck 1995, 2009, 2016).

Responding to criticisms that the role of the media in the social construction of risk was under developed in *Risk Society* (1992), in later work, Beck developed the concept of 'staging' to explain how risks are pre-emptively brought to the attention of the public (Beck 2009, 2016). For him, the 'staging of risk' (2009, 10) has become an increasingly common feature of the modern multi-media landscape and one which involves a variety of institutions and actors. Staging represents an attempt to publicly play out future risks through processes of pre-visualization. For Beck (2009, 157), 'the globalization of the expectation of terrorist attacks' has impacted markedly on public perceptions of security. Yet staging is much more than a practice of imagining the future. Rather, forms of representing potential harms of the future generate both ideational and material effects: 'it is not the terrorist act that destroys the West, but the reaction to its anticipation' (Beck 2009, 157). The contemporary penchant for staging in relation to terrorism – politically, culturally, and socially – can also be indexed to the 9/11 attacks. Since 2001, consideration of hypothetical attacks that may transpire in the future has indubitably accelerated. The 9/11 Commission (2004) itself concluded that tried and tested modes of risk assessment and horizon scanning previously utilized by the security and intelligence services were insufficient to deter a determined and diffuse enemy. The 2001 attacks on America were – in the words of the Commission – constitutive of 'a failure of imagination' (see Cornwell 2011). As Beck (2009, 10) observes, the communication of security strategies post 9/11 has involved exhortations to envisage the aforementioned 'worst imaginable accidents'. What he is keen to highlight is that frequent discussion and visualization of hypothetical attacks in the mass media generates a climate of concern around terrorism: 'the 'reality' of the terrorist attack is the product of missionary self-promotion in the mass media and omnipresence of the obscene images of violence' (2009, 72). Public acknowledgment of the uncertainty gap facing security providers may well be a positive development in terms of encouraging vigilance, but focusing intently on this gap has induced a plethora of techniques of imagining, ranging from documentaries playing out the possible effects of 'dirty bomb' attacks, to coverage of emergency service dry runs of responses to a chemical attack on underground transport networks. Crucially, the mediation of possible attacks is not an activity which has remained confined within broadcast media, political, and security communities. It also occurs with frequency in the realm of popular culture, where a variety of fictional security futures are played out in popular television dramas, such as *24, Homelands,* and *Spooks*. It is difficult to calibrate the impacts of these types of cultural representations on people's perceptions of the threat level, save to say that it is unlikely to be nil. For Beck, the perceived threat of terrorism has the capacity to be productive in terms of conducting progressive change: 'global risk is not global catastrophe. It is the anticipation of catastrophe. It implies that it is time to act … global risk is the day-to-day sense of insecurity that we can no longer accept' (Beck 2016, 42). As we shall see, Beck (2016, 67) is generally sanguine about the political possibilities of staging and the capacity of the media to 'socially explode' threats. Yet, there are reasons to be cautious about the potentialities of the media for social enlightenment. Without doubt, the mass media – and social media platforms – have the capacity to inform and educate citizens on issues of risk and security. Nevertheless, history shows distinct possibilities for misrepresentation, distortion, and misinterpretation (Mythen 2014, 94). To this end, more critical approaches to 'pre-mediation' have been developed by security studies thinkers, keen to emphasize the disciplinary impacts of such forms of representation (see Amoore and de Goede 2008; Grusin 2004). While raising awareness of the terrorist threat may be a positive process in terms of encouraging public

vigilance, a sense of proportion is necessary, coupled to an appreciation of the likelihood of being a victim relative to other risks. It is not always the case that institutional actors involved in risk communication clearly convey that terrorist attacks may be high consequence in terms of impact, but – despite recent events – remain low in terms of frequency of occurrence (see Barr 2016; Mythen 2016). Thus, the overall utility of staging as a mode of preparation and preparedness remains the subject of debate. In as much as one would expect the security services and those involved in emergency planning to be horizon scanning and evaluating resource capacity to respond to a range of potential threats, staging can also intensify anxieties around national security and may fuel a climate in which particular groups are uniformly labeled as risky and dangerous (Walklate and Mythen 2015). While encouraging reflection on safety and promoting preparedness is not a bad thing in and of itself, the melding together of tangible threats and feverish worst-case scenarios, can make it difficult to separate out rumor from truth. One standout case is that of the alleged 'foiled plot' to bomb Old Trafford football stadium by Islamist extremists during a Manchester United football match. Despite frenetic media reporting, no such plot existed and the 'suspects' who had been arrested were subsequently released without charge. It later transpired that the 10 men detained were Manchester United supporters that had collected and displayed ticket stubs and club souvenirs. This, it seems, had aroused police suspicion and the imagined plot was then leaked by a police officer to journalists (see Sheldon 2012, 156).

In what is being dubbed a 'post-truth' world, the media–politics nexus is a particularly crucial distributive channel of (mis)information. The Republican Party led by Donald Trump has already underscored this point since coming to power in America in November 2016. At a public rally in Florida, Trump recounted a terror attack in Sweden which was fictitious, while his campaign manager Kellyanne Conway, asserted that the travel ban imposed on visitors from seven Muslim-majority countries was justified due to incidents such as the 'Bowling Green massacre', conducted by two Iraqi immigrants to the United States (Phipps 2017). In reality, two Iraqi men currently living in Bowling Green, Kentucky were arrested in 2011 and convicted of shipping weapons and money from the United States to Iraq. Yet there was no 'massacre' and no charges of planning a terrorist attack were heard in court. Such examples may seem inconsequential, but they are actually important in terms of the shaping of public knowledge about terrorism. The State has a responsibility to act proportionately to keep the public safe, but it also has a responsibility to allay rather than ratchet up public anxieties. Of course, there is nothing novel about the political harnessing of fear, which can be traced back to the times of Machiavelli and before (see Furedi 2005, 132; Walsh 2016, 1). Nevertheless, in the case of modern terrorism, it is probable that the range and depth of the uncertainties – allied to the potential magnitude of the threat – have served to advance the possibilities of managing through fear. Arguably, Beck's thesis is not sufficiently attuned to the ways in which discourses and representations of risk can be wielded for instrumental ends by powerful institutions and actors. In accentuating the collective possibilities of 'bads' in terms of galvanizing counter measures to combat threats, Beck somewhat overlooks extant power relations. Awareness of the deleterious consequences of global risks does not mechanically translate into effective direct action, less still progressive social change. Instead, a variety of factors interrupt – and potentially prevent – this possibility, including resource capability, State coercion, and intervention by economic stakeholders. Of course, different people, in different contexts will perceive different threats differently. Nevertheless, the net result of various forms of staging of terrorist attacks post 9/11 is a climate of uncertainty in which calls for more stringent 'security measures' by the State can be more confidently pitched. To this end, neo-Foucauldians have drawn attention to the ways in which the neoliberal State is capable of governing through terrorism, growing infrastructures of social control (Aradau and van Munster 2008). As Crawford and Hutchinson (2016, 1039) posit: 'by voicing security, things that might be ordinarily untenable become not only thinkable but acceptable, including the introduction of extraordinary or exceptional new legislative powers or special measures'. Thus, we can chart nodal connections from staging (via discourse and/or image) to the more material forms of risk regulation that become embedded in policy initiatives, legislation, and police interventions. While the route from representation to practice is far from linear, it is nonetheless important to reflect on the relationship between discourse, policy formation, and preventative practices. As Hudson (2013, 3) suggest:

'fear of terrorist attacks has led the citizens of the affluent countries of the West to support infringements   AQ7
on liberties … fear has also led to increased surveillance of social groups thought to be the source of
the terrorists, to increase detention without trial of terrorist suspects, increased immigration controls
and even to tolerance of torture'. All of this suggests that further exploration – and refinement – of the
concept of staging would be beneficial within risk studies. Indeed, there are several intriguing questions
that fall out of the discussion above. How powerful are media representations of risk in structuring
public understandings of terrorism? To what extent and how do 'factual' and 'fictional' representations
of terrorism commingle in people's mental maps of the terrorist threat? What is the balance between
raising awareness and generating moral panic in communicating the terrorist risk to and what are the
mediating factors in this regard? Such questions are indicative of but some of the untapped areas of
research that might be profitably mined in future.

   While staging throws light on the ways in which institutions bring future threats into view, the
concept of 'organized irresponsibility' describes the stage management of risk (Beck 1995, 61). Beck
argues that organized irresponsibility effectively equates to a bluff, enacted as a means of demon-
strating a semblance of control. Epitomizing the maxim that there is 'no institutional answer', organ-
ized irresponsibility describes how and why regulatory agencies 'simultaneously work and fail' (Beck
2016, 141). For Beck, organizations responsible for safety and security operate in a context in which
effective risk management is often impossible. A combustible combination of the global nature of
risks that transcend national boundaries, the volatility of hazards and residual uncertainties about
the impacts of risk being aired in the public sphere leaves risk regulating institutions in a position of
relative powerlessness: 'institutional power holders are rendered accountable for making decisions in
a miasma of imperfect information and incomplete knowledge' (Beck 1999, 78). Nevertheless, despite
the uncertainties surrounding risk such as terrorism, institutions must still be *seen* to be acting in the
interests of public safety. Thus, various forms of obfuscation, deflection, and mystification which seek
to 'symbolically detoxify' risks ensue (Beck 1992, 65). What Beck is seeking to illuminate through the
concept of organized irresponsibility is the apparent mismatch between the force of manufactured
risks and the safety capability of contemporary institutions. In effect, security providing institutions
designed to deal with twentieth century hazards are unable to prevent the spread of volatile risks in
the modern world: 'faced with manufactured not knowing about existential risks to humanity, the
nationally bounded and grounded juridical or legal standards and the universal scientific norms of
causality simultaneously function and fail' (Beck 2016, 98). While being impotent against the mobility
and potency of contemporary risks, social institutions must perform various forms of calibration and
surveillance: 'the restless search for lost security begins through measures and strategies that lend
the appearance of control and security instead of guaranteeing them' (Beck 2009, 156). In as much
as organized irresponsibility captures well the issues faced by institutions bound up with countering
terrorism, to understand the shifting dimensions of risk management, it is also important to grasp the
salience of what neo-Foucauldian thinkers have dubbed 'responsibilisation' (see Garland 2001; O'Malley
1992). This process describes the steady devolution of responsibility for risk from the State to citizens
observable across multiple domains, ranging from national security and crime control through to edu-
cation, health, and welfare support (see Crawford and Hutchinson 2016; de Lint and Virta 2004; O'Malley
2009). In as much as practices of organized irresponsibility constitute the performance of control, it is   AQ8
also important to focus on the broader divestment of State responsibility for security threats and the
process of transference of risk management to private individuals. If the public can be encouraged to
think about future modes of attack, risk awareness can be enhanced and the public can be informed
about counter-measures that might be taken to reduce risk. Thus, both staging and organized irrespon-
sibility are wedded to modes of responsibilization through which citizens are encouraged to partake
in security seeking behavior for themselves, their communities and the State. If individuals, groups,
and communities can be encouraged to develop resilience against terrorism, the security burden of
the State is ideationally, materially, and economically reduced (Walklate and Mythen 2015). In the UK
responsibilization around terrorism takes many forms and is embedded in government-funded projects
based among communities in which young people 'at risk' of radicalization live, advertisements that

RJRR 1362028
9 August 2017

Initial

CE: XX   QA: XX
Coll:XX   QC:XX

JOURNAL OF RISK RESEARCH   9

invite citizens to look out for suspicious behavior on public transport and the issuing of emergency advice booklets to educate the public in how best to prepare for large-scale attacks (see Kearon, Mythen, and Walklate 2007; Thomas 2016). Beck is certainly not blind to the privatization of risk management, but the transference of responsibility from the State to the individual is arguably more pronounced in neoliberal capitalist contexts than he was willing or able to acknowledge. While concentrating on the everyday effects of cosmopolitanization steered Beck toward accentuating the need for collective international responses to global security problems, the atomizing and individualizing processes characteristic of neoliberal capitalism are understated. This does leave open some interesting avenues of empirical inquiry within risk research around political economy and the operation of power that may reap dividends. How do actors within institutions conceive of their relative power (lessness) in terms of risk management strategies? In risk incidents, how much information regarding residual uncertainties should be shared with the public and why? Can distinct types of uncertainty be codified and to what extent do people react differently to different types of not knowing (see Gross 2016, 397)? Is resilience a tangible facet of human durability to be championed, or simply a cynical policy construct operationalize to facilitate transfer responsibility for risk management?

Having discussed the explanatory potential of staging and organized irresponsibility, it is now necessary to turn to the concept of 'emancipatory catastrophism', developed by Beck (2016) in his final piece of work on metamorphosis. In a nutshell, the theory of metamorphosis is intended to capture the dramatic changes that have swept through the modern world, impacting both human security and the lived environment. Beck stresses at length that metamorphosis is not commensurate with social change. Rather, the metamorphosis of the world generates consequences that are global and seismic (Beck 2016, 4). Vitally, these consequences serve to catalyze progressive social and political action. Nested within the broader theory of metamorphosis, Beck (2016, 146) shines a light on what he calls 'the emancipatory side effects of global risk'. To this end, his reasoning is that contemporary security threats possess the capability to generate revamped normative horizons that disrupt the narrow limitations of closed, national perspectives. Balking at inward looking national approaches to security management, Beck (2015, 76) forwards instead a 'cosmopolitan perspective where the unit of research is a community of risk, which includes what is excluded in the national perspective: that is, the decision makers and the consequences of their decisions for others across time and space'. The promise of metamorphosis is that it opens up the possibility that – given broader and deeper public involvement – social institutions can transcend practices of organized irresponsibility (2015, 75). Metamorphosis is thus both a value-driven normative process and a form of institutional reflexivity (Beck 2016, 134). While world risk society theory focuses on the negative environmental side effects of the production of goods, metamorphosis reveals the positive side effects of bads that are capable of catalyzing 'common goods'. Crucially, it is the staging of risk that provides the possibility of galvanizing transnational action: 'media portrayals of globally shared risk scenarios … give rise to the emergence of new cosmopolitan affiliations of risk' (Beck and Levy 2013, 7). To capture the emancipatory side effects of global risk, Beck (2015, 75) argues that (mediated) exposure to a range of transgressive and distressing incidents and episodes, produces cultural jolts which serve as turning points: 'anthropological shocks occur when many populations feel that they have been subjected to horrendous events that leave indelible marks on their consciousness, will mark their memories forever, and will change their future in fundamental and irrevocable ways' (Beck 2016, 122). Importantly, anthropological shocks can be experienced remotely as well as proximately, leading to reflection on moments of 'moral violation' (Beck 2015). Importantly, these violations have the capacity to reset ethical and moral compasses: 'it is … identification with the suffering of others, that triggers an anthropological shock capable of abruptly changing the political landscape' (Beck 2016, 128). Not only do such anthropological shocks impact on and re-orient worldviews they have the capacity to drive forward progressive and radical change (2015, 80). In Beck's view, extreme 'bads' harbor the potential to create normative horizons of common goods, stimulating reflection on questions of justice. This process of 'social catharsis' can facilitate the development of new normative horizons and has the potential to reconfigure cultural practices. While Beck is keen to emphasize the wide-ranging effects of global bads, he also draws attention to the routine nature of the process: 'the metamorphosis of the

RJRR 1362028
9 August 2017
Initial
CE: XX   QA: XX
Coll:XX   QC:XX

10   G. MYTHEN

world is happening' (2016, 150). In many respects then, emancipatory catastrophism is the flipside of organized irresponsibility, in that it brings to the fore problems and issues which institutions have previously tried to conceal. For Beck (2016, 134), the metamorphosis of the world – driven by (mediated) exposure to bads – is inexorable: 'you cannot log out of public bads. There is no escape'. It is clear to see how emancipatory catastrophism builds on the architecture of the risk society thesis, remodeling the goods/bads dichotomy and drawing on the previously develop notion of social explosiveness. As his thought evolved in line with changing real-world conditions, Beck's attention shifted from considering attempts to avoid 'bads' to exploring their emancipatory potential. It is the universal and global nature of risks that have intensified and become transnational, producing 'moments of shared fate' (Beck 2016, 59). It is possible to see how the notion of 'emancipatory catastrophism' could serve as an anchor for further research in risk studies. To what extent and in which contexts are risk incidents deemed to transgress publically acceptable levels? Which kinds of risk incidents are likely to induce moral violation and why? To what extent do social bads generate fresh horizons of common goods? What is the role of social media in galvanizing public opposition to global risks? Are people cognitively able to 'log out' of public bads? If so, is this a result of desensitization, compassion fatigue, or other economic and socio-cultural factors?

Conclusion

It has been demonstrated here that Beck's risk society thesis provides us with a theoretical entry point through which to appreciate the changing dynamics of politically and religiously motivated violence. Using the construction and management of the terrorism risk as a hanger for discussion, we have elucidated the explanatory potential of three Beckian concepts. Broadening out from this narrow endeavor, it is clear that the concepts discussed – organized irresponsibility, emancipatory catastrophism, and staging – have portability across a range of domains and are ripe for future exploration. Notwithstanding the potentialities of applying these concepts to the undulating modern habitat, it is also important to draw inspiration from Beck's critical but optimistic spirit and to promote the tradition of curious intellectual inquiry that characterized his work. Beck always refused to be categorized and constrained by conventional disciplinary boundaries. His was a restless project and he embraced his role as a *querdenker*, championing provocative, and lateral thought (see Kaldor and Selchow 2015). To the end, Beck remained sanguine that the 'politics of visibility' (2016, 126) could serve to galvanie the progressive types of action required to counter risks to human security. For him, the social sciences in general – and risk researchers in particular – have a vital role to play in raising awareness of the positive possibilities of risk and advising on strategies to improve decision-making in the context of uncertainty and non knowledge: 'this state of reflexive unawareness poses key challenges not only to risk research … it is much more than that. It is the coincidence, the coexistence of not knowing and global risks which characterizes the existential moments of decision not only in politics and science but also in everyday life situations' (2016, 104). In line with the trajectory of this Special Edition, the primary ambition of this article has been to bring into purview aspects of Ulrich Beck's contribution to risk research and to explore the promise of Beckian concepts for future inquiry. In addition to showing how the concepts devised and developed by Beck can illumine social problems and processes, it is important to consider how risk researchers can pick up and run with the gauntlet that Beck carried so capably and diligently throughout his academic career. While Beck's intellectual quest was unfinished, his legacy provides ample opportunity for exploration and academic adventure. One of Beck's driving motivations in his later years was to energize and inspire a cadre of international scholars to push forward with theoretical development and empirical analysis of theories of risk, cosmopolitanization, and individualization. In this he succeeded and the ample fruits of his labors will continue to be harvested in coming years.

Disclosure statement

AQ10

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AQ11

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RJRR 1362028
9 August 2017

Initial

CE: XX   QA: XX
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12   G. MYTHEN

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