

perspective and understand how they go about their tasks of planning and carrying out attacks. By uncovering the decision-making processes and identifying the factors that influence their decisions, we can find points of weakness—ways in which we can interfere with the decisions they make. We know that they may be too strongly committed to their cause to allow us to change their mind. But we can use the information we get from their actions (which reveal their choices) to devise preventive strategies and, perhaps, weaken their resolve if we can cause them to repeatedly fail (see Chapter 6). In doing so, we need to understand what leads them to select a particular kind of terrorist action over another. Is this choice dictated by their overall objectives, their access to particular tools and weapons, or by the vulnerability or strategic importance of particular targets? Answers to these questions will help us to take preventive actions of our own. We should always “think terrorist” when trying to answer these kinds of questions. In doing so, we would meet the need identified by the 9/11 Commission “to find a way of routinizing, even bureaucratizing, the exercise of imagination” in dealing with the terrorism threat.¹³

The Key Role of Opportunity

In This Chapter

- ✓ > Research demonstrates that opportunity plays a large part in such deeply motivated acts as suicide and homicide.
- > Opportunity also plays a key role in terrorism because of the large number of suitable targets for attack and the easy access to tools and weapons.
- > We need not protect every target, only those that offer the most rewarding opportunities for the terrorists.
- ✓ > Protecting these targets will not simply result in terrorists choosing other targets (displacement) because these alternative targets are not as easy or as rewarding.
- > Reducing successful attacks will result in fewer copycat attacks by other terrorist groups.

THIS CHAPTER IS about theory. We deal with practical issues in later chapters. Academic theorizing might seem to be a low priority when faced with the deadly, practical task of defeating terrorism, but theory is important because, without its underpinnings, policymakers are likely to reject situational answers because of incorrect presumptions.

There are two main intuitive objections to protecting targets from terrorist attack rather than applying our energies elsewhere: ① we cannot possibly protect every potential target; and ② if we cannot protect them all, the terrorists will simply switch their attention from protected to unprotected targets.

These objections lead automatically to the view that our responses to terrorism must be limited to killing or capturing them, to defeating their aims or ideals so they have no more recruits, and to cleaning up as effectively as possible after they have struck.

Much the same objections are raised when dealing with other social problems—that it is people, not circumstances, stupid—and we should mention one example in particular: road accidents. When serious attention was first devoted to reducing accidents, everyone “knew” that the most urgent need was to improve driving skills; after all, it is drivers that cause highway accidents, not highways or vehicles on their own. In fact, this supposition proved

to be quite wrong. Dramatic reductions were achieved in accidents and deaths (see Box 3.1) and almost all of them were won through improving cars and roads (i.e., through situational means). Of course, it might be much easier to help people avoid accidents than to stop them from engaging in acts of crime or terrorism, which they are determined to commit. But whether a terrible thing happens through carelessness, recklessness or cunning, people's disposition is only part of the equation that makes up the event.

In this chapter, we will explain why it is possible to deny terrorists opportunities for achieving their preferred attacks and how we can prevent their success or at least diminish it. We will explain more about why displacement is less inevitable than people assume and point out that even a displaced terrorist activity is at least likely to delay the terrorists and diminish their success. First, however, we need to explain why a terrorist's *motivation* is not necessarily the overriding factor in calculating how best to defeat him or her.

OPPORTUNITY AND TERRORISM

It is natural for people to see opportunity as subsidiary to motivation. After all, we are conscious every day of trying to fulfill our various goals and objectives, and we are aware of all the choices we make, big and small. We therefore tend to see ourselves as in control of our destinies. This is especially the case in the United States where everyone is encouraged to believe they can become rich or be elected president. However, we generally are not aware, on a daily basis, of the determining effects of the opportunities that structure the choices we make. For example, at the cafeteria at work we might take pleasure in choosing a meal that is enjoyable and healthy, but we might not notice the limited choices available to us in terms of all possible meals. We know that we would not find filet mignon or lobster mayonnaise, but we tend not to consciously think about that fact. We therefore might have made a good choice—something that we like to eat and that is good for us—but only among the limited opportunities provided by the menu.

This might be true of small decisions about meals, but what about the much larger choices we are concerned with in this book, decisions to mount an ambush or a suicide attack? Surely, we might think, choices with such momentous consequences are not governed by opportunity? Is not the primary driving force behind such acts the hatred felt by the terrorists? Should we not therefore be focusing our efforts on ways to reduce this hatred of our country and way of life? This might seem a compelling argument, but the truth is that any behavior is the outcome of an interaction between organism and environment. This means that the causes of crime, suicide, alcohol abuse and any other form of deviance, including terrorism, lie in a complex interaction between motivation and opportunity. Indeed, terrorism is committed in part because it is possible and, when terrorists succeed, they make the possibility

Choice is
constrained
usually

Box 3.1 Reducing Road Accidents by Reengineering Cars and Roads

The benefits of seeking to reduce opportunities rather than dispositions are vividly illustrated by an analysis of traffic safety policy in the United States. Six times as many people drive today in the United States as in the 1920s, and the number of motor vehicles in the country has increased more than tenfold to well over 200 million. The number of miles driven is also 10 times higher than in the mid-1920s. Despite this steep increase in travel, the annual death rate has declined from 18 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in 1925 to less than 2 per 100 million 70 years later.

This remarkable achievement, mirrored in other parts of the developed world, was primarily the result of measures to improve the safety of cars and highways. Systematic motor-vehicle safety efforts began in 1966 with laws that authorized the federal government to set standards for motor vehicles and highways. Many changes in vehicle and highway design quickly followed. Vehicles were built with new safety features, which included head rests, energy-absorbing steering wheels, shatter-resistant windshields and safety belts. Roads were improved by better delineation of curves (edge and center-line stripes and reflectors), use of breakaway sign and utility poles, improved illumination, addition of barriers separating oncoming traffic lanes and guardrails. Graded speed limits were also introduced suitable to road conditions.

The results were rapid. By 1970, motor-vehicle-related death rates were already decreasing rapidly, and this decrease continued until the end of the century. While these changes were reinforced by laws requiring the use of safety belts, child safety seats and motorcycle helmets—and were accompanied by the enforcement of laws against drunk driving, speeding and underage drinking—the improvements to cars and highways were the key factors in driving down death rates. If road accident policy had focused exclusively on driver education or enforcement of traffic rules, and had not reengineered cars and roads to make them safe, the dramatic reduction in road deaths would never have been achieved.

These changes in design of cars and roads required a considerable change of mindset—perhaps equivalent to the change we are seeking in ways to prevent terrorism. The mindset among law enforcement, the car manufacturers and the general public was “bad drivers, not cars, cause accidents.” In 1965 a General Motors vice president told the *New York Times*, “If the drivers do everything they should, there wouldn't be any accidents, would there?” The discovery by William Haddon that a large portion of deaths in road accidents was caused by a “second crash”—that is, by the impact of the driver or passenger hitting some part of the interior of the car—led eventually to the compulsory fitting of seat belts in all cars, which has contributed to saving countless lives. If you reside in the United States, there is a better than 70 percent chance that you wear your seat belt when you drive. If you live in Australia, there is a better than 95 percent chance that you will buckle up. Seat belt legislation was passed in the face of vocal opposition from car manufacturers (would cost too much) and the public who complained about infringement on civil liberties.

Source: Centers for Disease Control (1999).

more obvious to others who are tempted to try their hand. We would go further and argue that if we make terrorism less rewarding by protecting the targets that produce the greatest rewards for any given effort, the terrorists will not switch wholesale to attacking other much less rewarding targets. Some of the more determined terrorists will persist in their attacks, but these will result in less harm for society. Many others will be discouraged from the cause and divert their energies toward more personally rewarding activities.

We cannot demonstrate these points through research because the relevant studies of terrorism have not been undertaken, but they rest on a sound foundation of theory and research in situational crime prevention. Throughout the remainder of the book we will turn to this body of work to support our arguments. In this section, we will review evidence showing that opportunity is an important cause of suicide and homicide—two behaviors with considerable relevance for terrorism.

SUICIDE AND HOMICIDE

Both suicide and homicide are commonly regarded as deeply motivated acts, committed only by determined or desperate individuals. Suicide, in particular, is thought to be an act so extreme that it can only be the result of a deep drive for self-destruction. However, many people become suicidal as a result of a recent misfortune, such as bereavement, disappointment in love or failure at work. They may be preoccupied by thoughts of suicide for a while, but in time such depression usually lifts and they get on with their lives. Conversely, if an acceptable means of suicide is available, they might kill themselves before their despair lifts.

Many studies have shown that reductions or increases in suicide result from changes in everyday life. Thus, the most common form of suicide in the United States used to be poisoning, but now, as a result of the increased ownership of handguns, it is shooting. The introduction of emission controls, which removed deadly carbon monoxide from car exhaust gases, led to a reduction in suicides by this method. In fact, it is now almost impossible to commit suicide by using the exhausts of modern cars.¹ A more recent example is that suicides have fallen in Britain as result of a government requirement that painkillers cannot be supplied in packets of more than thirty-two. This requirement was intended to reduce the likelihood of impulsive suicides, and it appears to have worked.²

It might be thought that the reduction or removal of the means to commit suicide, such as car exhaust gas, would simply result in suicide victims choosing some other way to kill themselves. This assumes that all methods of death are equally available or equally acceptable to people considering suicide—but this is not the case, as shown dramatically by the results of detoxifying the gas supplied to homes in Britain between 1958 and 1977.³ In 1958, "putting one's head in the oven," to use the common expression, was the

most frequent method of suicide in Britain with almost half of the 5,298 people who killed themselves in that year using this method. Changes in the manufacturing process for gas during the 1960s substantially reduced the amount of carbon monoxide in domestic gas. This was followed in the 1970s by the replacement of manufactured gas by natural gas from the North Sea, which completely removed carbon monoxide from the gas supply. Overall, suicides were 25 percent lower in 1977 than in 1958 and only 0.2 percent of the 3,944 suicides in 1977 made use of domestic gas. This means that, while there was some displacement to other means of suicide following the changes to the gas supply, many people who otherwise would have killed themselves did not do so. The reasons lie in the unique combination of advantages of using domestic gas as a method of suicide. It was readily available in everyone's home. It required little preparation, older people could readily make use of it and it involved no pain, blood or disfigurement, which are all features that made it an attractive method of suicide.

It is also the case that homicides are not always deeply motivated, carefully planned acts. Many are committed spontaneously when someone, who may be intoxicated, explodes with rage as a result of a dispute. If a weapon is at hand, such as a handgun, it is likely that it will be used. In fact, it has been shown in many studies that homicide rates are higher when guns are readily available. Perhaps the clearest evidence comes from a comparison of the homicide rates between England and Wales and the United States. It is well known that the homicide rate is higher in the United States and widely believed that the much greater availability of guns there (a situational variable) provides the explanation. However, it is the details of the comparison that make a compelling causal argument. A study of the two countries conducted in the 1980s showed that the overall rate of homicides in the United States was 8.5 times higher, the gun homicide rate was 63 times higher and the handgun homicide rate was 175 times higher than in England and Wales. Most telling of all is that the average number of handgun murders for the United States in the mid-1980s was a little over 9,300; that for England and Wales was just under 12.

For those who wanted to deny the causal role of handguns in homicide, it was possible to argue in the 1980s that the United States was a much more crime-ridden and violent society than England and Wales. This argument, however, is no longer credible. Steady declines in crime in the United States have resulted in crime rates for most common offences now being lower, sometimes markedly so, than those of England and Wales. More notable, comparative victimization surveys, not available in the 1980s, show that the rates of assault in England and Wales are higher than in the United States.⁴ While rates of homicide have declined in the United States, they are still six times higher than in England and Wales and greater handgun availability still provides the explanation. This does not mean that the availability of a weapon is the sole determinant for homicide, but it clearly establishes that opportunity

is a powerful cause of homicide. If this is true of homicide, it must also be true of the remainder of crime, and terrorism as well.

Findings such as these lead us to conclude that opportunity plays a vital role in eliciting criminal behavior. We do not deny that dispositional factors make the offender more prepared to break the law, but we insist that the perception of crime opportunities (temptation) also motivates the offender to commit crime. There are two main ways that opportunity elicits criminal behavior (and thus, terrorist behavior):

- ①. Criminally disposed individuals will commit a greater numbers of crimes if they encounter more criminal opportunities. Regularly encountering such opportunities could lead these individuals to seek even more opportunities.
- ②. Individuals without preexisting dispositions can be drawn into criminal behavior by a proliferation of criminal opportunities and temptations and the perception that these can yield rewards.

It seems likely that these propositions hold true for terrorism. Terrorism is learned behavior that is made possible by the vulnerabilities of our society to terrorist attack. This is why our antiterrorism policy must pay as much attention to reducing opportunities for terrorism (through protecting vulnerable targets and controlling the tools and weapons of terror) as it now pays to taking out individual terrorists and dismantling terrorist organizations. Terrorists do respond to opportunities, they are encouraged by their own successes and those of other terrorists, and ordinary individuals become terrorists because they are attracted to the rewards.

PROTECTING THE TARGETS OF TERROR

Criticisms of our approach are most apparent in relation to targets, so we will concentrate in this chapter on targets rather than on tools and weapons. Even if it is accepted that opportunity, in the form of vulnerable targets, plays an important role in terrorist attacks, the difficulties of protecting these targets might seem insuperable. The initiative rests entirely with the terrorists, which means they can strike where and when they want. How can we possibly protect every school, train station, shopping mall, town center, bridge and reservoir in the country?

The answer is that we do not have to—or, rather, that we do not have to protect every target to the same level. We know this to be true of crime, because thieves are only attracted to a small proportion of manufactured goods—in general, those that are CRAVED: concealable, removable, available, valuable, enjoyable and disposable (see Chapter 7). This means that shoplifters do not prey on furniture stores, but they do steal from stores that sell cigarettes, cassettes, condoms and fashion jewelry.

It seems likely that the same general point holds true for terrorism. Although the evidence is not yet as clear as for theft (the research has not yet been done), not all targets are of equal value to the terrorists. Terrorists have limited freedom of maneuver, limited resources and limited capabilities. They want to make the best use of what they have by inflicting the greatest possible damage each time they act. This is why they would prefer to plant a bomb in a shopping mall in Washington, DC, than in a general store in Iowa or Arkansas. A bombing in the nation's capital would suggest that terrorists could strike when and where they wanted. Attacking Washington would also receive wider media coverage simply because of the concentration of media resources in the capital city. Similarly, if the terrorists wanted to crash an airliner into a large building (as they did on 9/11), they would prefer to attack one in a busy city with many people than one in an isolated spot occupied by few people, such as a power station or a trash incinerator. This is true because killing people results in much greater levels of fear than merely destroying structures. If terrorists wanted to take out an electricity generating station, they would prefer to attack a nuclear-powered one than one fired by coal, once again because this would cause much more fear. In Chapter 7, we develop these arguments and identify the parameters that guide the terrorist's choice of targets, which enables us to prioritize potential targets for protection. But what if we protect only some targets or protect them differentially? Will not the terrorists simply strike elsewhere?

✕ THE RISK OF DISPLACING THE ATTACKS

One of the main reasons that situational prevention continues to meet with resistance from academics, police and policymakers is the crime displacement hypothesis. This hypothesis states that, faced with reduced opportunities, criminals will simply displace their attention to some other time, place or target; will change their methods; or might even begin to commit some other form of crime. This has always been an overblown argument, based on the assumption of predisposition that "bad will out." This argument ignores the fact that much crime is highly opportunistic and, that which is not, depends heavily on opportunity factors. Certain crimes emerge as a serious problem because offenders discover they are rewarding and easy. Their successful commission encourages more people to try their hand at committing the crimes. When the authorities act to reduce the opportunities for the crimes, the increased risk or effort needed to commit them elsewhere, or in some other way, might not be judged worthwhile. When crime is made less rewarding or more difficult and risky, there is no necessary reason for people to commit or continue committing crime.

It is also becoming increasingly clear from experience that it is possible to entirely eliminate categories of crime without displacement. For example,

gradual improvements in technology have now made safe-cracking an extinct art.⁵ And guards, bullet proof screens, cameras and cash reduction policies have, with rare exceptions, rendered obsolete bank robberies committed by organized gangs. The most usual form of bank robbery nowadays is committed by a lone offender, often a drug addict, who waits in line and hands the teller a note that demands money and says he has a gun or bomb. The cash haul is usually small, limited to what the teller has in his or her draw, perhaps as little as \$50 or \$100. Carefully designed research studies have shown that little displacement results from the successful implementation of situational prevention measures. These measures have reduced many different forms of crime, including robbery, burglary, fraud, car thefts and drive-by shootings with few displacement costs. (See Chapter 17 for a more complete list of these crime prevention successes.) In the most recently published review of displacement research, it was concluded that no displacement had occurred in 22 of the 55 studies examined after the introduction of opportunity-reducing measures, and that only limited displacement was found in the remainder.⁶ In fact, it has been found that opportunity-reducing measures can have wider benefits than expected because criminals often believe that more targets or a greater area have been protected than is the case.⁷

It could be claimed that this research has questionable relevance to terrorism because most crime is much more opportunistic and less well-planned than terrorist attacks. However, improved security has largely eliminated the bank heists and safe breakings that were committed by organized criminals. We have also seen that when the gas supply was detoxified in Britain there was only limited displacement to other methods of suicide. The fact is that every form of crime and terrorism depends on the opportunities presented by everyday arrangements of society. These arrangements are appraised and acted on by terrorists and organized criminals, just as much as they are by ordinary burglars and robbers. When we reduce these opportunities, terrorists have to reconsider their positions. They can try to find ways around the new barriers and might persist with these attempts even if they fail more often. This may be the case with suicide bombing in Israel, where there is evidence that more attacks have been launched despite a higher failure rate (see Box 3.2). But, it

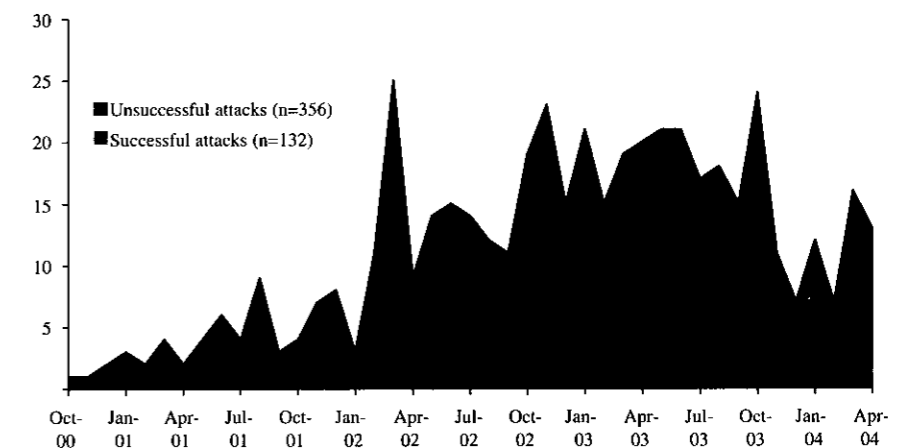
Box 3.2 Successful and Unsuccessful Suicide Bombings in Israel

The Israeli Defense Force chart displays the number of successful suicide bombings in Israel contrasted to "thwarted" suicide bombings. The latter are defined as those thwarted by Israeli authorities and incomplete bombings, such as detonation too early or other "accidental" detonations. Thwarted attacks include targeted killings by Israeli forces of operatives involved in the preparation of the attacks and raids on terrorist hideouts to seize explosives and avert anticipated bombings. This means that the increase in "thwarted attacks" could reflect an increase in proactive measures being

taken by the Israelis between October 2000 and April 2004 and that "thwarted attacks" is not a pure measure of the terrorists' motivation. This important caveat aside, this chart holds some useful lessons:

- * (1) Operation Defensive Shield began in March 2002 when the number of successful bombings was at its highest. It consisted of the erection of fences, walls and barriers; the placing of guards at entrances of potentially targeted locations; and the use of intelligence to identify handlers of bombers. Following its introduction, the number of successful bombings declined rapidly from the high of 17 between January and April 2002 to an average rate of roughly 2 per month in 2004. This suggests that the defensive shield was very successful in thwarting the suicide bombings.
- (2) The shield seems not to have been successful at deterring the bombers from *attempting* to carry out their attacks—while the number of successful attempts declined, the number of thwarted attacks considerably increased (once again this assumes that "thwarted attacks" is not just a measure of a more proactive Israeli policy).

If the number of attempts did in fact increase, the reasons are unclear. It could be that the more the bombers were thwarted, the stronger their commitment became to try even harder. That is, the interventions might have made the bombers even more determined. Or they might have been forced into using more risky approaches that were more vulnerable to being thwarted. Or, those controlling the bombers might have decided that the rewards obtained from the successes (although these were fewer) were great enough to justify the effort of mounting more attacks. In other words, it could be that sending in more bombers imposed relatively few costs on the organizations established to mount the attacks routinely.



Source: Adapted from Israel Defense Forces (2006).

is not beyond our capacity to make some acts so difficult as to prevent most terrorists from trying to repeat them. As we shall show in the next chapter, this was the case for airliner hijackings, which were almost eliminated from America during the last 15 years of the twentieth century.

Lest this sounds complacent, we should recognize that even if we can successfully introduce opportunity-reducing measures that curb terrorist attacks with little resulting displacement, other terrorists will in time find ways to defeat the initially successful measures (as was tragically demonstrated by the 9/11 airliner hijackings). In the crime prevention literature, this phenomenon is called "adaptation." It differs from displacement, which is the term reserved for the short-term reaction of the offenders whose crimes resulted in the introduction of the preventive measures and who then have to solve the problem of "What do we do now?" Adaptation refers to a longer-term process whereby the offender population, constantly on the lookout for new crime opportunities, subsequently discovers weaknesses in the defensive measures or is presented with some new technology that could defeat the measures, and is then able to begin committing the crimes again. The process of adaptation has been likened to arms races in which rival states continually have to improve their offensive and defensive weapons to match their enemy's developments. If only in this one respect, the metaphor of the war on terrorism is an apt one.⁸

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have shown that substantial research in the fields of public health and criminology support our theoretical premise that opportunity plays a major role in terrorism. In the following chapters, we begin to address the practical demands of uncovering the opportunities available for each type of terrorist act and to think through each step of these acts from initial planning to their cataclysmic ends. We show that it is possible to identify and protect the most vulnerable targets. And we show it is possible to cut off the terrorists' access to the tools and weapons that make their task easier.

These are very difficult tasks, however, requiring considerable resources and determination to see them through. We know also that we can never eliminate terrorism entirely. Our enemies are too cunning and determined. Even if we exhaust the energies of one particular group or organization, others will try to defeat our defenses and impose their political demands upon us. However, we can and we must make their attacks more difficult. In doing so, we can reduce their frequency and deadliness and discourage others from copying the attacks.

Airliner Hijackings: The Lessons of Reducing Opportunity

In This Chapter

- ✓ Passenger and baggage screening introduced in U.S. airports in 1973, together with an agreement reached in the same year between the United States and Cuba to deal harshly with hijackers, sharply reduced hijackings of U.S. airliners.
- ✓ Hijackers did not displace their attacks to airliners in other countries—the growth in airline hijackings elsewhere is mainly the result of new conflicts.
 - The antihijacking measures did not cause terrorists to switch to sabotage bombing of airliners.
 - The 9/11 hijackers exploited loopholes in passenger and baggage screening and in the antihijacking training given to airliner crews.
- ✓ These findings suggest relatively little short-term displacement in terrorist attacks, but some longer-term adaptation in the face of defensive measures.
 - The possibility of displacement should not deter us from putting defensive measures in place, but we must try to anticipate the forms of longer-term adaptation.

IN CHAPTER 3, we began to examine the "displacement hypothesis," the idea that in the face of increased protective measures terrorists will simply displace their attacks to different targets or will adopt different approaches. We argued that this hypothesis ignores the powerful role of opportunity in facilitating and encouraging terrorist attacks, and it also ignores the effect of successful attacks in encouraging their repetition. In this chapter, we develop and expand these arguments by examining the effect of preventive measures to reduce airline hijackings. We begin by looking at hijackings since World War II and at the effectiveness of the preventive measures that have been introduced. We conclude that these measures have been highly successful in reducing hijackings and that the changes that have occurred in the pattern of airline hijackings are not the result of displacement, but rather are the result of changes in the pattern of conflicts giving rise to terrorist action. We then examine

whether terrorists have switched to sabotage bombings of airliners in the face of the increased difficulties of hijacking and whether they are likely to make more use of surface-to-air missiles. We conclude that the former does not appear to have happened and that the latter is unlikely to occur on a large scale. As shown by the events of 9/11, this does not mean that we can be complacent about airline security. In fact, the authorities have been forced to rethink the premises of airline security now that hijackers have shown they will commit suicide to ensure the success of their attacks.

Before proceeding, we repeat some points about the displacement hypothesis covered in Chapter 3, starting with the fact that research has generally found much less displacement than predicted by the critics of opportunity reduction. We mentioned that the most recently published review of displacement findings concluded that no displacement had occurred in 22 of the 55 studies examined after the introduction of opportunity-reducing measures, and that only limited displacement was found in the remainder. In fact, opportunity-reducing measures can have wider benefits than expected, because criminals often believe that more targets or a greater area have been protected than is the case. At the very least, when displacement does occur, it obliges the terrorist to abandon the sought-after target and go for one that is less favored.

The fact is that every form of crime and terrorism depends on the opportunities presented by the everyday arrangements of society. These are appraised and acted on by terrorists and organized criminals, just as much as they are by ordinary burglars and robbers. When we reduce these opportunities, terrorists have to reappraise their position. They can try to find ways around the new barriers and might persist with these attempts even if they fail more often. This may be the case with suicide bombing in Israel, where there is evidence that more attacks have been launched despite a higher failure rate (see Chapter 3, Box 3.2). But, as we shall show, it is not beyond our capacity to make some acts so difficult as to prevent most terrorists from even trying to repeat them, at least for awhile. This can provide very valuable respite from attacks even if some new terrorist group might in time adapt to and defeat the initially successful measures.¹

AIRLINER HIJACKINGS

Airliner hijackings placed terrorism on the world stage in the late 1960s, long before the advent of the suicide bomber or the car bomb. Although many hijackings have been committed by the mentally deranged or by criminals for escape or extortion, the first-ever recorded airline hijacking was politically motivated. This occurred in Chile in 1930 when Peruvian revolutionaries seized a Pan American mail plane and directed the pilot to drop propaganda leaflets over Lima. No further hijackings were recorded until the late 1940s/early 1950s when a spate of hijackings occurred from Eastern Europe to the West. Since then, more than 1,000 airline hijackings have been recorded.

> It was not until the late 1960s, however, that the epidemic of political hijacking was unleashed, when large numbers of U.S. airliners were hijacked to Cuba (about 70 between 1968 and 1970). Starting at about the same time, but lasting much longer, successive groups of Palestinian and Islamic terrorists hijacked dozens of airliners in several high-profile incidents. These hijackings sometimes stretched over days, if not weeks, and involved events of high drama, such as when a hijacked Air France airliner was successfully stormed by Israeli commandoes at Entebbe in 1973. Since the 1990s, dissidents and terrorist groups in the former Soviet block and in the developing world have regularly hijacked airliners to further their causes, but the overall numbers of hijackings have not approached those of the 1970s. The following list provides a rough chronology of hijackings, showing the main groups involved:²

- 1947–52: Eastern European asylum seekers hijack airliners to the West.
- 1958–61: Cubans loyal to the Batista regime divert Cuban airliners to the United States.
- 1968–70: Cubans dissatisfied with life in the United States hijack airliners back to Cuba.
- 1968–72: Criminal hijackings in the United States for escape/extortion.
- 1968–78: Wave of hijackings by the Palestinians and their allies following the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War.
- 1979–82: Shiite Moslem hijackings, mostly of Middle Eastern Airlines planes out of Beirut.
- 1980–83: Reverse flow of Cubans from the United States in the aftermath of mass exodus by Cuban “boat people” in 1980.
- 1983–88: Islamic fundamentalist hijackings of U.S./European airliners.
- 1990–2005: Hijackings in former Soviet-block countries and in the developing world.

It is easy to understand why hijacking has so frequently been employed by terrorists. First and foremost, a hijacking attracts enormous publicity for reasons that have been vividly explained:³

Of the available forms of theatre, few are as captivating as a skyjacking. The very fact that 200–300 potential hostages are packed into the metal shell of a jet airliner hundreds of times a day and sent hurtling through the skies provides terrorists not only with a target whose cosmopolitan innocence imbues it with a “there but for the grace of God” emotionalism, but one that is packed with a supermarket flair, ideal for selling through millions of television sets.

[Add to this the fact that many people are terrified of flying, and it is easy to see how a hijacking is a gift to the media and a publicity boost for the terrorists.

A second advantage of hijackings for the terrorists is that airlines symbolically represent the countries to which they belong—Air France, British

Air, Pan American—and attacking an airliner is to strike a blow at the hated country. Furthermore, most of the passengers of a national airline are passengers from that country. In effect, therefore, airliners solve one of the terrorist's conundrums—how to get close enough to strike the enemy, because they bring the enemy to them. (We discuss the importance of this in more detail in Chapters 11 through 14.)

A third advantage for the terrorists relates to the international dimensions of a hijacking. The airliner might belong to one country, be hijacked from a second and be taken to a third—perhaps to a fourth or a fifth. This makes it easy for hijackers to gain concessions by exploiting differences among countries in policies for dealing with hijackers. Some governments try to pursue a “no deals” policy, while others put a premium on saving the lives of their citizens.⁴ Exploiting these differences not only helps terrorists get what they want, but also makes it appear that governments have completely lost control of the situation.

Finally, an airliner has many advantages for the physical act of hostage taking, including the following:

- It contains large numbers of hostages who can be released one-by-one, or in small groups, in return for significant concessions. Because many hostages remain, this can be done without diminishing the terrorists' bargaining power.
- It can be parked at an open spot on the airport where it cannot easily be “rushed” by police or the military.
- It offers a means of escape from any airport where the authorities are uncooperative or threatening.
- ✓ It considerably simplifies the problem of control because passengers are confined in seats. It is difficult for passengers to rush the hijackers in a group and dangerous to do so because bullets fired by the terrorists or explosives discharged could bring the plane down with the loss of everyone's lives.
- ✓ It provides no hiding places for passengers or ways of escape.
- Cabin staff will help in calming distressed passengers and look after those who become ill.
- ✓ Because most of its passengers are strangers to one another, it is less likely that they could successfully plot to escape or overwhelm the hijackers.

U.S. EFFORTS TO PREVENT HIJACKINGS

The early political hijackings emanated from Eastern Europe and Cuba and were welcomed by the United States, which treated the hijackers as heroes who had risked their lives to escape from repressive regimes. This very

quickly changed, however, at the end of the 1960s with the increase of hijackings from the United States to Cuba. Some of these were committed by criminals escaping from the United States, but most were committed by Cubans who had fled the Castro regime and then became disillusioned with life in America. At first, these returning exiles were treated as political refugees and were welcomed by Cuba, which no doubt fueled the increase, but quite quickly the Cuban authorities realized that few of the hijackers they were receiving were in fact politically motivated, notwithstanding their claims. The Cuban authorities announced that they were no longer willing to receive hijacked airliners, and a period of long, cautious negotiation between the United States and Cuba ensued, which resulted in the signing of a five-year agreement on February 15, 1973. This agreement stipulated that each government would no longer offer safe haven to hijackers and would prosecute them in their courts. In situational prevention terms, this agreement removed the rewards of hijacking airliners between the two countries.

At about the same time as these events were unfolding in the Americas, a more dangerous series of hijackings led by Palestinian terrorist organizations was occurring in the Middle East and elsewhere, some of which involved U.S. airliners. The U.S. authorities were galvanized into action to deal with this broader threat and a raft of new security measures was introduced, including the profiling of suspect passengers, the introduction in 1970 of 1,500 armed sky marshals on domestic and international flights (the program was terminated in 1972, reintroduced in 1980 and substantially strengthened in 2001), the upgrading of airport perimeter security and the training of flight crews in resisting the demands of hijackers. Most important, screening of all embarking passengers and their luggage was introduced on January 5, 1973, by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). In situational prevention terms, the screening of all passengers and their luggage greatly increased the difficulties of undertaking a successful hijacking by detecting concealed weapons.

Each year, this screening results in the confiscation of hundreds of weapons and explosives. For example, from 1973 to 1988, more than 38,000 firearms were detected and some 19,000 related arrests were made. The FAA estimated that 118 airline hijackings and related crimes might have been prevented. It is certainly the case that the implementation of these security measures, together with the Cuban-U.S. agreement, was immediately followed by substantial reductions in the hijackings of U.S. airliners. In the five years before the introduction of the measures, 1968 to 1972, there were 135 hijackings of U.S. airliners; in the five years after the measures were introduced, from 1973 to 1977, there were 28 hijackings of U.S. airliners, a reduction of nearly 80 percent (See Table 4.1). Of the 135 airliners hijacked in the five years before the measures, 92 were destined to reach Cuba; in the five years after the measures, only 3 of the 28 hijackings were destined for Cuba.

The data in Table 4.1 do not allow us to say which of the two groups of measures—those relating to the U.S.-Cuban pact or those relating to tightened

Table 4.1 Airliner Hijackings and Sabotage Bombings (Attempts and Completed), 1961-2003

Period	Number of Years	Mean Hijackings per Year		Mean Sabotage Bombings per Year Worldwide
		U.S.	Foreign	
1961-67	7	1.6	3.0	1.0
1968	1	20.0	15.0	1.0
1969-70	2	30.5	58.0	4.5
1971-72	2	27.0	33.0	4.5
1973-85	13	9.4	22.7	2.2
1986-89	4	2.8	9.0	2.0
1990-2000	11	0.3	18.5	0.3
2001-3	3	1.3	5.7	0.0
1961-2003	43	6.7	17.9	1.6

Sources: Hijackings: Dugan, LaFree and Piquero (2005). We are indebted to the authors for supplying the data used in their article. Sabotage bombings: U.S. President's Commission on Aviation Security and Terrorism (1990); U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (1994-96); U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (1996-99); U.S. Department of State (2005).

security at U.S. airports—had the greater effect.⁵ Because some of the U.S. airliners hijacked after 1973 were boarded overseas, where security was not always as tight as in the United States, the figures in Table 4.1 might even understate the value of the measures taken in 1973. Even so, it is clear that these have been very successful and that they have brought about a large and sustained reduction in hijackings, which has lasted for more than 30 years despite very large increases in the numbers of U.S. airline flights during that time.⁶

DID THE U.S. MEASURES RESULT IN DISPLACEMENT?

Next, we examine whether any displacement occurred following the successful introduction of measures to curb the hijacking of U.S. airliners. First, is there any evidence that the hijackings were displaced to some other part of the world? According to Table 4.1, the answer is no, because there was no immediate increase in the number of hijackings in the rest of the world—in fact, the reverse is the case: There was a decline worldwide in hijackings after 1973, which may have resulted from the fact that other countries adopted many of the same security measures as those in the United States. Over the long term, the blips in this general pattern reflect mostly the waxing and

waning of new terrorist groups, not any switching of targets in response to increased security.

Table 4.1 also allows us to examine the validity of another claim—that the success of the antihijacking measures has resulted in terrorists resorting instead to sabotage bombings of airliners.⁷ Again, it is clear that this did not happen. Sabotage bombings of airliners have rarely been undertaken by terrorists and were no more used after the introduction of the 1973 antihijacking measure than before. This is not surprising because hijackings and bombings serve quite different purposes—the former is used to gain sympathy for the terrorists' cause and to extract concessions from the enemy, the latter is used principally to murder and destroy. Sabotage bombings are much more likely than hijackings to produce revulsion and a loss of support for the terrorists, which may help to explain why responsibility for a sabotage bombing has only rarely been claimed by a terrorist group.⁸ *offense/tactic displ. reason why wouldn't happen.*

Some more detailed analyses of the hijacking data summarized in Table 4.1 have been undertaken using econometric and other statistical techniques. Unsurprisingly, these analyses generally have concluded that the antihijacking measures were effective.⁹ However, they have also explored some other questions that seem misconceived or cannot be answered by the analytic methods employed, and the sometimes conflicting answers have served to obscure the achievements of the antihijacking measures. Following are the misconceived or unanswerable questions that have been explored:

- ✓ Did the successful antihijacking measures result in terrorists switching their attention from the airlines to some other kinds of targets, somewhere else in the world, that require different forms of attack?
- ✓ Which of the panoply of antihijacking measures that have been employed (metal detectors, baggage screening, Cuban-U.S. treaty, sky marshals, profiling, enactment of severe penalties for terrorism, United Nations (UN) resolutions, military retaliatory strikes, and so on) were responsible for the greatest effects? How many hijackings did each of the measures prevent?
- ✓ Did the antihijacking measures have a greater effect on “criminal” hijackings than on more deeply motivated “terrorist” hijackings?

None of the researchers exploring the first question seem to have been familiar with the research on displacement (see Chapter 3). Knowledge of this literature would have helped them to avoid the doubtful assumptions that terrorists see targets and methods of attack as interchangeable. In fact, the nature of the attack and the target chosen cannot be separated from the terrorists' objectives (to extort concessions, to draw attention to their cause, to destroy the enemy, and so on) and, depending on their objectives, some forms of attack could be quite counterproductive for the terrorists (we have already given the example of sabotage bombings of airliners). Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that terrorist groups are equally competent or knowledgeable

about all forms of attack or that they have ready access to the tools or weapons needed for the different acts. For example, it is not as easy as it sounds to switch from hijacking airliners to taking over embassies. Embassies are often protected by soldiers and other armed professionals and, unlike airliners, they cannot be whisked away to another country when the authorities refuse to cooperate.

A further questionable assumption is that terrorist groups are somehow closely connected worldwide (in the ways that the Mafia is said to be)—that they are watching each other's successes and failures and that they are learning from each other. There are likely to be some copycat attacks and, in the long run, terrorists probably do learn from each other's experience (e.g., the suicide tactics invented by the Tamil Tigers have spread to other parts of the world). What mostly determines their actions, however, is not what other groups are doing or not doing—it is what they themselves can do and want to do, here and now. For example, the fact that the opportunities for airliner hijackings were eliminated for Middle Eastern terrorists probably had little impact on the activities of the IRA in Belfast, which had never tried to hijack a plane and who continued unabated with their bombings and shootings.

Apart from its misconceptions, we doubt that the first question could be satisfactorily answered with the data available. The recording of airliner hijackings may be reliable over time because they are such highly visible events, but this is not the case for the many other kinds of terrorist attack, including bombings and shootings (especially those in developing countries), which are recorded with far less consistency and regularity. The problem is complicated by the relatively small numbers of hijackings compared with the much larger number of other terrorist events. This makes it very difficult to detect resultant increases in other kinds of terrorism when airliner hijackings were reduced. A further problem is that the statistical methods employed are all based on correlation. Inferring a causal connection on the basis of a correlation between a decline in one kind of attack and the rise of another kind somewhere else in the world is hazardous, because the latter might have increased for some quite unrelated reason, such as the forming of a new terrorist group. The only exception to this is when the correlations are extremely strong (which they were not in any of the studies we are considering) and a clear and direct link can be established between cause and effect. As we have argued, the displacement hypothesis does not meet this criterion, because it is disputed on theoretical grounds and has been given only weak support in empirical studies.

The second question assumes that the various antihijacking measures are of potentially equal value, but there are strong theoretical grounds for doubting this assumption. The idea that they would be deterred by UN resolutions seems particularly unrealistic, but the more credible idea that offenders (and terrorists) would respond to increases in mandated punishments is given little support by decades of criminological research. On the other hand, as

documented throughout this book, offenders do pay careful attention to increased risks of being caught and can be put off crime when it is made more difficult to commit (which passenger and baggage screening accomplishes). Furthermore, we doubt that the data would allow the effect of any particular measure to be isolated. The measures were introduced at more or less the same time, and the hijacking incidents are too few in number and too clustered in time to permit the effect of each measure to be separately determined. The attempt to do this also ignores the possibility that the effect of each measure is reinforced by the existence of the others so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects—a conclusion frequently reached in situational crime prevention projects.

As for the third question, it is sometimes difficult to know the motivation of the hijackers, as Fidel Castro discovered; many of those claiming political motives for hijacking an airliner to his country seem to have been mentally disturbed or acting for their own criminal reasons. In any case, as we explained in Chapter 1, we reject any fundamental distinction between terrorists and criminals, especially in the strength of their motives. Both groups are rational actors in that they want to succeed and believe they have a good chance of doing so. Properly conceived and properly implemented passenger and baggage screening measures should cause both groups equally to reevaluate their chances of success.

HAVE TERRORISTS ADAPTED IN OTHER WAYS?

As explained above, displacement refers to an immediate change in the terrorists' behavior designed to circumvent new preventive measures. We have seen that there is little evidence of any such displacement after 1973 when the United States implemented measures to prevent hijacking of its airliners, and the very real achievements of these measures should not be overlooked. However, nothing lasts forever, and there is every reason to think that ways to defeat these successful measures might eventually be discovered—indeed, were discovered by the 9/11 hijackers. They correctly gambled on getting box cutters through the security screening—a feat that publicly exposed the inadequate screening at U.S. airports. Many experts complained about the inadequacy of this screening process, which had fallen well below that at airports in Europe. The U.S. authorities have now tightened up the security procedures at considerable cost. No doubt, they will be forced to tighten them further in the face of “complacency brought on by the monotony of the work and where the chance of successfully identifying a terrorist is perhaps more remote than finding a pearl in a restaurant oyster.”¹⁰ Even more important, U.S. authorities have had to rethink their whole approach to preventing hijacking since the 9/11 hijackers rewrote the book. The 9/11 terrorists were not seeking concessions, and they had no plans to escape. Nor did they plan to force the pilots

to follow their bidding. Instead, they took over and flew the airliners themselves. They used them as weapons to destroy huge buildings and kill thousands of people, killing themselves in the process. In response to this new situation, the authorities have hired many more sky marshals, permitted pilots to carry guns, reinforced cockpit doors, forbidden passengers to move about the aircraft within 20 minutes of takeoff or landing, begun to scrutinize applications for flight training schools and undertaken many other new measures. These far-reaching situational interventions make it unlikely that terrorists could again take over airliners in the United States. Even if they did, knowing what was coming, the passengers and crew would likely fight back (as they did in the fourth airliner hijacked on 9/11) and the authorities might try to shoot down the plane.

So, although little short-term displacement followed the introduction of improved security, over the long term, terrorists adapted their approach to exploit weaknesses in the antihijacking measures. This is entirely to be expected and the authorities moved quickly to counter the new threat once it became a reality. But could they have anticipated the threat and preempted it? The answer is that, in view of the rise of suicide bombings in Palestine, authorities should have anticipated it. It was clear that many of the new generation of terrorists embark on their actions with the intent to commit suicide. However, it is less easy to say whether having anticipated the threat the authorities could have thought through the ways in which such an attack could be mounted, and whether they could have generated sufficient political will to institute sweeping new security measures in the face of a hypothetical attack. Box 4.1, which reviews the scope for dealing with the threat of terrorist attacks on airliners with shoulder-fired missiles, deals with these issues in more depth.

CONCLUSION

In response to a wave of airliner hijackings to Cuba from the United States, the two countries signed an antihijacking pact early in 1973. At the same time, because of the rise of airline hijackings in the Middle East, the United States also introduced the compulsory security screening of all passengers and their baggage. These measures removed the rewards and increased the difficulty and risks of hijacking. The data show that the measures were highly effective in reducing hijackings of U.S. airliners, and that the terrorists did not react by hijacking airliners from other countries or by turning to sabotage bombings instead. In retrospect, the reasons are fairly obvious. Why would dissatisfied Cuban nationals in the United States try to hijack airliners to some other destination? What would they have to gain by bombing U.S. airliners? Doing so would not enable them to escape to Cuba to a hero's welcome. And why would other terrorist groups turn from hijacking to sabotage, which

Box 4.1 The Potential Threat of Surface-to-Air Missiles

There is no question that U.S. airliners could be brought down by shoulder-fired missiles launched by terrorists. An estimated 700,000 of these missiles, known as MANPADS (man-portable air defense systems) have been produced worldwide since the 1970s. They are not difficult to purchase on the black market and are relatively inexpensive—some estimates put the price as low as a few hundred dollars for the older missiles. Many are now in the hands of terrorist groups hostile to the United States, such as Al Qaeda, the Taliban, Hezbollah, FARC, and insurgents in Iraq. Although these missiles have not so far been used against U.S. airliners, they have been used by terrorists in various parts of the world to bring down more than 20 civil aircraft, including some airliners. They could certainly be used in single attacks against U.S. airliners that visit countries where terrorists operate. Conceivably, an organization such as Al Qaeda could also mount a coordinated attack within the United States using teams equipped with these missiles. Because of their small size and weight (typically less than 40 pounds and 6 feet), the missiles could easily be smuggled into the country inside one of the 20,000 shipping containers that are unloaded without being inspected at U.S. ports every day.

So, there is undoubtedly a danger of MANPAD missiles being launched against U.S. airliners. There are also many different preventive measures that could be introduced. These include onboard devices to divert or destroy attacking missiles; additional aircraft safety measures such as redundant flying controls and strengthened fuel tanks to resist fire or explosion; enabling and disabling locks for future missiles like those used for nuclear devices; international arms dealing agreements to prevent terrorists laying their hands on more of these missiles; international agreements to prevent the use of civilian aircraft to ferry troops into theatres of conflict; and security enhancements in the vicinity of airports and reduced takeoff and landing patterns.

However, none of these measures is fool-proof and many are also very costly. According to Rand, it would cost \$11 billion to equip the fleet of 6,800 U.S. airliners with laser jammers and considerably more to maintain and support the jammers. This greatly reduces their chances of being implemented, particularly because there are so many unanswered questions regarding the threat posed by missiles. While they could undoubtedly be used to attack our airliners, they have not yet been used against the United States. Is this because there are, in fact, few real opportunities to use them against U.S. airliners overseas? And how likely is it that Al Qaeda would choose to bring down airliners in a concerted attack in the United States, demanding very considerable resources and organization, when with much less effort and risk, it could mount a frightening campaign of dirty bomb attacks against major U.S. cities? Imponderables such as these perhaps make it unlikely that any thorough attempt will be made to prevent the use of MANPADS against U.S. airliners, although Congress has designated \$120 million to support a research and development program to test missile countermeasures for airliners. Everything would change, however, if a U.S. airliner were brought down by a missile.

Sources: Bolkom, Feikert and Elias (2005); Chow et al. (2005).

serves different objectives and which would require them to learn new skills, obtain new weapons and completely change their planning? Even if they wanted to, they might not have the financial or intellectual resources to reinvent themselves in these ways. In any case, not every terrorist is as determined as the 1970s hijacker, Leila Khalid, who underwent plastic surgery to prevent her recognition while attempting further crimes. Some of the thwarted hijackers might try to commit other forms of terrorism against new targets, but others might decide to pursue political rather than violent action. There is only limited truth in the saying, "once a criminal, always a criminal," and the same is true of the terrorist.

While we believe that the dangers of displacement are exaggerated, and that it is possible to bring about substantial reductions in terrorism at particular times and places, we are less sanguine about these reductions lasting forever. So, even when we are successful, we must remember two things: (1) security improvements wear out, especially those requiring vigilance, and (2) new groups of terrorists, with new skills and new energy, backed by new technology, can succeed in finding loopholes in our defenses and can successfully attack again. This does not mean we should give up the attempt to protect ourselves, but it does mean we must continually review our vulnerabilities to attack and continually renew our defenses (see also Figure 15.3). The lesson of 9/11 is that we can do this fast and effectively when we stare catastrophe in the face; it seems much harder for us to act decisively when death and damage are on a smaller scale. Complacency allows routine terrorism to get a hold and, over time, to inflict considerable damage on society.

Suicide Bombings, Step by Step

In This Chapter

- Suicide terrorism has a higher kill ratio than other kinds of terrorism, although its efficiency compared with other types of attack is questionable.
- Suicide bombing in Israel is typical of routine terrorism, which sets it apart from single incidents.
- In Israel, civilians and the places they frequent are the primary targets.
- Terrorist groups display distinct operational patterns in their attempts to routinize suicide bombing attacks.
- Step-by-step analysis of suicide bombings reveals important points of intervention and avenues for preventive action.
- Much more detailed information is needed to conduct a realistic analysis of how suicide bombing groups carry out their tasks.

ALTHOUGH USEFUL FOR everyday communication, "crime" and "terrorism" are words that can seriously confuse the analysis of preventive options. This is because both are abstractions covering a wide variety of different phenomena, each of which requires separate analysis if realistic preventive options are to be identified. Thus, drug trafficking, juvenile graffiti, car thefts and corporate frauds are all proscribed by law and are correctly referred to as "crime," but they have little else in common. They vary greatly in their seriousness and the punishments they attract. Each is committed by a different group of offenders, using different methods and with different motives (except to benefit themselves in some way). To talk about "preventing crime" in the abstract, leads one to ignore these differences and to focus instead on what they have in common, such as the offenders' lack of respect for the law or apparent imperviousness to the threat of punishment. In turn, this leads to preventive policies focused on offenders—those that attempt to teach them to be more law-abiding or to have more fear of detection. If instead, one talks more specifically about preventing car theft, for example, one is quickly forced to consider, in addition, the situational circumstances that facilitate car thefts, such as poorly secured vehicles or poorly lit streets. And if one breaks down car theft further into specific categories—juvenile joyriding, thefts of parts, theft for own use, theft for export and so on—then the preventive options become more highly differentiated.