

Clearly put, why have Islamic terrorists and other fundamentalist groups around the world chosen violence as a legitimate method of projecting their message? Can we expect more of the same type of terrorist violence in the future? What effect has this type of violence had on our thinking? There exists a view held by some that the Islamic faith has become outdated in a world of economic capitalism and that politically weakened Islamic peoples and governments use terrorism because of their weaknesses. Objectively, this is feasible but not satisfactory, there is more to the picture. People who are racked by political weakness and have no legitimate method of voicing their concerns will become socially unstable after only a short period of time. The Iranian Revolution was built specifically on this principle. This is the source of the view that fundamentalism grows out of political instability. These ideas are significant because of the volatile relationship that has matured greatly between the Middle East and the West in the aftermath of September 11th. Also significant is the role that Israel has played in combating terrorism. In the fifty years that Israel has been in existence, it has dealt with insurgents and terrorists unceasingly. With a hardliner and former counterinsurgency commando as the prime minister, Israel has taken a more proactive approach to fighting terrorism since 9-11. This may be due to the U.S. turning the other cheek, as it is taking a more proactive approach as well. However, the conventional forces that each country will deploy in this fight will not be able to conduct operations to full potential without collateral damage to civilians, who will be caught in the crossfire as insurgent terrorists melt back into the civilian populace. In a fight where hearts and minds are the key, such collateral damage is unacceptable but highly likely. Against a shadowy enemy, it is difficult to know who the innocent bystander is versus who is the terrorist. It seems most likely that differing worldviews are behind most of the strife which exists between these societies. In particular, the world view of Iran, which has a government run by an Islamic Fundamentalist. Why have so many terrorist organizations made Islam into a warrior culture?

There are three pertinent theories that help to understand the sources of such human behavior. Rational Choice Theory suggests that those individuals which adopt terrorism and insurgency tactics do so

for a certain reason. That is, they weigh their options and choose violence and possible death as the *most* rational choice because they may feel it is the only thing they can do. But what conditions would lead them to that conclusion? What is the rational framework here? The possibility exists that it is merely an inter-group struggle between the Middle East and the West so that one may establish dominance over the other. Thus, Conflict Theory would be a prudent framework to consult. This approach would suggest that the struggle which exists is based on differing and conflicting interests, values, and norms. Finally, World Systems Theory will provide the necessary tools to study the inequality of the world system and to shed light on the assertion that fundamentalism grows out of a political system that is unstable and unjust.

Throughout history, the Middle East has been a hotbed of seemingly perpetual religious and political conflict. From the tribal conflicts of the Sumerians and Mesopotamians, to the numerous bloody Crusades of the Middle Ages, to the current conflict in Iraq, the Middle East resembles a swirling vortex of warfare from which humanity sprung and perhaps where humanity may end. It is ironic that the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys, the source or, “cradle of humanity” should contain so much violence. Today, certain organizations headquartered in the Middle East have begun to export this violence to the furthest reaches of the world. International terrorism today is a phenomenon that fights the establishments of the world and exports criminal violence from a ubiquitous stronghold. It should be understood that Islam is a religion dedicated to peace and non-violence. The vast majority of Muslims are civilian workers, students, college professors, and family oriented peoples. However, there exist today certain groups who may justify their hate and violence using religious teachings such as *jihad*. The American media and news organizations all over the world have singled out such groups in recent years because of the successes that they have had in their operations. For instance, the Islamic al Qaeda terrorist group believed responsible for the World Trade Center Bombings, 11 September 2001, New York. It would be very misguided to believe that all Muslims are terrorists and conduct themselves in such ways. It is also curious that terrorists are rarely referred to as Muslims but rather Islamic terrorists. The term Muslim seems reserved for the peaceful and mainstream followers of the Islamic faith. Nonetheless, terrorism remains predominant in News headlines today. According to the United States Department of the State, terrorism is, “premeditated, politically motivated violence” used as a method of causing fear and influencing other organizations and peoples toward a particular goal.

Tightening down an exact definition of terrorism can be almost as difficult as catching the terrorists

themselves. However, most definitions have five common threads: fear, violence, political activism, use of force, and civilian casualties. From these five common traits a definition might look something like this: Terrorism – the use of politically motivated force to create violence and fear in a civilian populace. This definition could be described as a base line definition and could have amendments attached to it such as a religious affiliation. Certain Islamic terrorist organizations are creating violence and political unrest for the purpose of rejuvenating traditional Islamic values and specifically *Wilayat Al-Faqih*. This concept, emphasized by the late Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini, literally means “to supervise (as a guardian) and administrate the society.” (Amuli, p.7) Essentially, this concept means that a domestic actor, preferably one schooled in Law, should take control of guardianship, jurisprudence, and justice. Also of key importance here in discussing the motivations of international terrorists is the concept of *jihad*. The concept of *jihad* is used here to mean holy war rather than its literal meaning, struggle. In traditional Islamic beliefs, *jihad* is used as a verb to mean a struggle undertaken to benefit the community and to become a better Muslim. However, terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, Islamic Jihad, and Hizballah use it because of how they interpret their situation; in essence believing they will become better Muslims if they kill. Though *jihad* is a concept open to interpretation, it is the wanton killing of civilians that moves elite governments to oppress, not the objection to a religious ideology. As mentioned before, the lack of a legitimate political or social forum where everyone may voice their concerns gives rise to instability in only a short period of time. Ayatollah Khomeini, the chief architect of the Iranian Revolution, built his vision on a return to traditional Islamic values in society and campaigned for a greater clerical influence in state politics. The Iranian people had begun to use urban mosques as political forums. Thus, Khomeini sought a greater clerical influence in state politics for the purpose of bringing the people back into the fold of state government under his direction. Khomeini’s rise to power began in 1961 after the shah of Iran introduced the White Revolution. The White Revolution carried out large-scale land reforms and land redistribution which led to a mass migration of peasant workers into the south side of the capital at Tehran. Most of these migrant peasants were “poorly educated but usually deeply imbued with religious values. They sought continuity with their traditional culture through affiliation with urban mosques and in 1978 became disproportionately involved in the

protests and riots of the revolution.” (Defronzo, p.260) As a result, fundamentalist religious leaders who had backed the idea of a new government with more clerical influence and more conviction in Islamic principles became a potent adversary to the shah. Khomeini became an influential leader in this time because of his dedication to traditional Islamic values and specifically *Wilayat al-Faqih*. Jonathan White notes, “This brand of international terrorism is endorsed because it involves a *holy war* against all parties resisting the Islamic Revolution.” (White, p.157) In this light, *jihad*, interpreted as *holy war* this time, appears to promote heroism and chivalry in the name of killing. It is a powerful recruiting tool, designed to attract young males who have few economic opportunities but who are drawn to the notions of heroism and chivalry. They are, in actual fact, handed a prefabricated political ideology and taught to accept and carry it out as if it were the will of Allah. Groups like Hizballah also have other objectives such as the ultimate establishment of Islamic rule in Lebanon. This objective took form after Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 and a smaller group known as Islamic Jihad became linked with Hizballah. At this time, Islamic Jihad’s leader, Dr. Fathi Shekaki, and the spiritual leader of Hizballah, Hassan Fadlollah essentially brokered a merger between Hizballah and Islamic Jihad based on their like objectives. “Shekaki saw the Hizballah model [of organization] as a new method for structuring terrorism.” (White, p.157) Operating under the umbrella of Hizballah, Shekaki “broke Islamic Jihad into a multitude of smaller groups” so that “each [terrorist] operation could literally have its own small terrorist group” while Islamic Jihad and Hizballah “could hide in a flow of misinformation”. (White, p.157) Essentially this allowed their organizational structure to remain intact while they continued to sponsor and finance terrorist activities. These types of small unit structure are called cells. They are extremely mobile, highly trained, and once deployed on their mission, are no longer in need of any type of higher command. Using suicide bombers as highly destructive weapons in conjunction with this type of organizational structure represents a use of tactics unlike anything before, except for the Japanese use of “kamakazis” in World War II. However, the cell structure is more efficiently organized, using small unit infiltration and demolition tactics as opposed to a berserk charge. In essence, it makes a single combatant into a walking bomb (guaranteeing delivery of the weapon), places him or her in a target rich civilian environment where he/she then detonates, in effect killing as many as twenty or thirty bystanders. All without warning or evidence to lead investigators to the source. It represents the pinnacle of insurgency tactics that pervade today. In 1983, Hizballah and Islamic Jihad embarked on a suicide campaign of this type in Lebanon. By

1986, those tactics had surfaced in Europe, rising in infamy because Western “defenders had [not] predicted the role of suicide.” (White, p.158) Western tacticians were at a loss for some time as to how they could strike back against clandestine suicide agents. They were faced with the possibility of potential agents moving freely throughout Europe and the U.S., embedded in sleeper cells with no prior criminal record to weed them out and arrest them. Israel’s approach to such tactics involved creating destruction and violence similar to that which was inflicted on them, in effect, fighting fire with fire. They used military resources to track down targets and pursued them aggressively with door kickers, assault teams, tanks, and bulldozers. Each group continues the struggle with the resources and personnel that it has while the conflict remains ongoing.

Terrorism is a method used in last resort. Groups that perform terrorist activities do so because they have no other means of political expression. Hizballah has sought to throw off this label in recent times by renewing its image as a legitimate political organization. However, any groups giving financial and logistical support to terrorists are themselves terrorists by proxy. Military resources are of little consequence if they are without supplies, maintenance, and repair. Without logistical support, groups such as Islamic Jihad would not be called terrorists; rather, they would be called rogues or criminals. It is the institution of organization that defines terrorism, as an ordered military type of organization used to carry out clandestine bombing and suicide missions. Without logistical and financial resources such groups would not exist. Therefore, support groups and countries, like Hizballah and Iran, that supply these resources are allowing terrorist organizations to exist and to thrive.

The events of 9-11-01 have changed the way that Americans think. Up until that point, the U.S. had seen terrorism as a foreign problem with only a few small implications for the U.S. homeland. Today, in the post 9-11 era, our eyes have seen the towers fall time and again on the news, TV, and in books. We are forced to think back to that day and where we were, what we doing, and how we reacted. The American people experienced new depths of fear and sadness. But as the dust cleared, New York City Firefighters hoisted the American flag and began a national outpouring of patriotic fervor. For some, it was time for retribution and justice through bloodshed. Indeed, the average American wanted revenge. The ranks of the

military swelled as new recruits joined to fight for the cause, The American Way. During World War II, the U.S. experienced this same type of effect after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Those who volunteered themselves then are now referred to as “The Greatest Generation” and are recognized as having sacrificed the most of any generation while winning the greatest victories for the United States. New military recruits today are also seeking glory for themselves and to do their job in what is perceived as a noble cause. The thought of an Army private, putting his life on the line and fighting against terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq reminds us of the young men who fought in the Pacific and Europe in the 1940’s. However, in order for that Army private to exist, he must have a counteragent, another soldier to fight against. On the other side of the world, that soldier lives a similar existence were he is seen as freedom fighter for his cause. Both soldiers have *willingly* volunteered their lives, and understand the proximity of death in armed conflict. They are, willing to die for what they believe and find company with others who are the same. When future U.S. soldiers witnessed 9-11 and the deaths of so many innocent people, their resolve to combat evil was cemented. The resolve of the al-Qaeda fighters who were to act as their counteragents had already been cemented, and set in motion. Both of these people believe their path is a righteous one. Both will seek to prove himself better in the arena of war and intelligence. Both are armed with the resolve that will motivate them. The one factor that separates them is technology. The U.S. is armed with laser guided munitions, air power, ships, tanks, high-tech weaponry, and the idea that freedom belongs to all people; our “terrorists” are armed with suicide bombers, bullets, and the idea that they are infallible holy warriors whose directions are dictated by their God, Allah. In a conventional fight, the U.S. will win, they know it and we know it. In this type of asymmetrical warfare, the insurgent challenging the U.S. attacks soft targets and fights with the only effective method he has left that will cause enough damage, suicide bombs. This method is low cost and highly effective. The bombers and their organizations appear berserk and insane, willingly strapping a bomb to their chests and filling their pockets with glass, screws, nails, or other shrapnel and blowing themselves to shreds in a market or on a bus. Their method is that of insurgency, erosion, and guerrilla tactics. They know that such tactics will frustrate and anger U.S. troops and cause them to fight with their emotions rather than as cold hard robots performing a job. Perhaps it is a method of taking on a soldier’s humanity rather than his rifle. The question then becomes, how should a U.S. soldier continue from here? Should he seek to find and kill the terrorists before they can kill again? The answer is that a soldier should proceed knowing that he is pursuing a

suicidal/homicidal criminal in a mass of innocent bystanders. He can not open fire because each innocent person that he kills will come back as two more criminals that he must then hunt down. In this situation, the soldier must become more of a policeman than a soldier. Terrorists are criminals who perpetuate criminal violence and should be brought to justice as though they were breaking the law. It is important to remember that the tactics of terrorism are politically neutral. That is, they do not conform to any political ideology but, are rather a tool that any group or organization can use for their own purposes. What makes each terrorist group distinctive is the ethnicity of its members, the geography of their area of operations, and the political objectives that they support. In almost all cases, terrorism is a tool used to further a political objective. Some seek to change the status quo while others attempt to create chaos and anarchy. Regardless, terrorism remains an act considered criminal by most of the world. This leads to the question, what do the U.S. government and other law makers, such as the U.N., want to accomplish by combating terrorism? Do they seek to put an end to its existence? Or, do they want to first understand why, the psychological makeup of a terrorist, and the source of such motivation?