in the West of much of the Islamic world and experience. The events of September 11th have forced many citizens to look outside their boundaries and examine the motivations of a world alien to them. Ansary argues that the Afghan culture did itself few favours in helping to bridge this gap. He explains that the tendency for Afghans to use cultural expressionism—such as epic or lyric poems—makes their culture less accessible to Western minds.

Ansary notes that only in the last twenty years have significant numbers of Afghan people moved to the United States. However, for the first ten years many young Afghans where simply trying to survive and adjust to Western life. It is only now that they have found the confidence and voice to be heard. Importantly, Ansary identifies the recent emergence of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism as an extreme reaction to the meeting of Western and Islamic worlds. However, he recognizes that both worlds must find a way to co-exist.

FURTHER RESOURCES
Books

Web sites

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**“The Psychology of Terrorism”**

**Essay excerpt**

**By:** Clark R. McCauley

**Date:** 2002

**Source:** Social Science Research Council: After September 11th Essay Archive.

**About the Author:** Clark R. McCauley, a professor of psychology at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, is the Director of the Solomon Asch Center for the Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict at the University of Pennsylvania. He began studying terrorism in the 1980s, while he was a consultant for the Frank Guggenheim Foundation in New York. He joined the faculty of Bryn Mawr College in 1970.

**INTRODUCTION**

It is Clark McCauley’s opinion that “terrorists are neither crazy, nor suicidal. The vast majority, more than 90 percent, of all terrorists are perfectly normal, psychologically speaking.” He assumes that individual citizens may be drawn to terrorist activities when they feel that a cherished group is threatened. When that occurs, average citizens may become so involved in the intensity of the small-group dynamics that their allegiance to the group supersedes their normal inhibitions against violence. In short, they may be willing to harm or kill others, or to be killed themselves, rather than risk disappointing their peers.

McCauley views the acts of terrorism and the state’s response to those acts as parts of a dynamic system that must be considered together in order to be understood. McCauley uses the metaphor of the pyramid to explain the concepts of terrorism: the base of the pyramid contains all of those individuals who sympathize or intellectually support the goals of the terrorists. Those at the base of the pyramid may not necessarily agree with the means used by the terrorists; they may, in fact, be morally opposed to violence as a means of achieving political or even religious goals. The apex of the pyramid is composed of the extremist members of the terrorist group. Between the base and the apex lie the varying groups of supporters whose allegiance lies with the cause represented by the terrorists. The closer to the apex, the greater is the individuals’ identification with the ideology and philosophy of the extremist group. The structure of the pyramid affords cover, multiple sources of support, and an ample supply of potential new recruits for the terrorist group.

The paradox of terrorist violence lies in the typical reaction from the targeted location: the country (or state, or group, or whatever the targeted area is) typically responds to violence with the perpetration of retaliatory violence, followed by the persecution, or at least marginalization, of individuals associated with the terrorist group (either actual group members or simply citizens of the same country, or members of the same, or similar, religious, ethnic or cultural group). In so doing, the victim may, in effect, expand the support system for the terrorists. Secondary violence (retaliatory actions) could strengthen the belief system of terrorist sympathizers in the rhetoric espoused by the terrorists (that the victims are, in fact, the aggressors and are deserving of the acts perpetrated against them).

McCauley suggests that the best possible response to a terrorist act is to maintain a stance of non-violence, as that will ultimately separate terrorists from their support systems.
A common suggestion is that there must be something wrong with terrorists. Terrorists must be crazy, or suicidal, or psychopaths without moral feelings or feelings for others. Thirty years ago this suggestion was taken very seriously, but thirty years of research has found psychopathology and personality disorder no more likely among terrorists than among non-terrorists from the same background. Interviews with current and former terrorists find few with any disorder found in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. Comparisons of terrorists with non-terrorists brought up in the same neighborhoods find psychopathology rates similar and low in both groups.

Another way to think about this issue is to imagine yourself a terrorist, living an underground existence cut off from all but the few who share your goals. Your life depends on the others in your group. Would you want someone in your group suffering from some kind of psychopathology? Someone who cannot be depended on, someone out of touch with reality? Of course there are occasional lone bombers or lone gunmen who kill for political causes, and such individuals may indeed suffer from some form of psychopathology. But terrorists in groups, especially groups that can organize attacks that are successful, are likely to be within the normal range of personality.

Indeed, terrorism would be a trivial problem if only those with some kind of psychopathology could be terrorists. Rather we have to face the fact that normal people can be terrorists, that we are ourselves capable of terrorist acts under some circumstances. This fact is already implied in recognizing that military and police forces are eminently capable of killing non-combatants in terrorism from above. Few suggest that the broad range of military and police involved in such killing must all be abnormal.

No one wakes up one morning and decides that today is the day to become a terrorist. The trajectory by which normal people become capable of doing terrible things is usually gradual, perhaps imperceptible to the individual.
In too-simple terms, terrorists kill for the same reasons that groups have killed other groups for centuries. They kill for cause and comrades, that is, with a combination of ideology and intense small-group dynamics.

The cause that is worth killing for and even dying for is personal, a view of the world that makes sense of life and death and links the individual to some form of immortality. We have to, because, unlike other animals, we know that we are going to die. We need something that makes sense of our life and our death. The closer and more immediate death is, the more we need the group values that give meaning to life and death. These values include the values of family, religion, ethnicity, and nationality—the values of our culture. Dozens of experiments have shown that thinking about our own death leads us to embrace more strongly the values of our culture (“terror management theory”).

The group values represented in the cause are focused to a personal intensity in the small group of like-minded people who perpetrate terrorist violence. Most individuals belong to many groups—family, co-workers, neighborhood, religion, country—and each of these groups has some influence on the beliefs and behavior of the individual. These groups tend to have different values and the competition of values reduces the power of any one group over its members. But members of an underground terrorist group have put this group first in their lives, dropping or reducing every other connection. The power of this one group is now enormous, and extends to every kind of personal and moral judgment. This is the power that can make violence against the enemy not just acceptable but necessary . . .

. . . In brief, the psychology behind terrorist violence is normal psychology, abnormal only in the intensity of the group dynamics that link cause with comrades.

Psychologists recognize two kinds of aggression, emotional and instrumental. Emotional aggression is associated with anger and does not calculate long-term consequences. The reward of emotional aggression is hurting someone who has hurt you. Instrumental aggression is more calculating—the use of aggression as a means to other ends. Terrorist aggression may involve emotional aggression, especially for those who do the killing, but those who plan terrorist acts are usually thinking about what they want to accomplish. They aim to inflict long-term costs on their enemy and to gain long-term advantage for themselves.

Terrorism inflicts immediate damage in destroying lives and material, but terrorists hope that the long-term costs will be much greater. They want to create fear and uncertainty far beyond the victims and those close to them. They want the enemy to spend time and money on security. In effect the terrorists aim to lay an enormous tax on every aspect of the enemy's society, a tax that transfers resources from productive purposes to anti-productive security measures.

Terrorists particularly hope to elicit a violent response that will assist them in mobilizing their own people. A terrorist group is the apex of a pyramid of supporters and sympathizers. The base of the pyramid is composed of all those who sympathize with the terrorist cause even though they may disagree with the violent means that the terrorist use. The pyramid is essential to the terrorists for cover and for recruits. The terrorists hope that a clumsy and overgeneralized strike against them will hit some of their own side who are not yet radicalized and mobilized, will enlarge their base of sympathy, will turn the sympathetic but unmobilized to action and sacrifice, and will strengthen their own status at the apex of this pyramid . . .

. . . A violent response to terrorism that is not well aimed is a success for the terrorists. . .

. . . Terrorists also hope for a reaction of stereotyping and prejudice in which the terrorists are seen as typical members of the cause they say they are fighting for. Usually the terrorists are only a tiny splinter of the group they aim to lead. Their most dangerous opposition is often from their own side, from moderates who see alternatives other than violence. If the response to terrorist attack is to lump together all who sympathize with the cause the terrorists claim to serve, to see a whole ethnic or religious group as dangerous and violent, then the moderates are undermined and the terrorists win . . .

. . . Since the first bombing attack on the World Trade Center, the U.S. response to terrorism has shifted from criminal justice—finding, trying and punishing perpetrators—to waging war. This shift has psychological consequences.

Framing terrorism and response to terrorism as “war” implies a movement from individual blame to group blame. This is just what the terrorists want. They want to be seen as representing all who feel that the U.S. has since WWII dominated, humiliated, and helped to kill Muslims. They want responsibility for their actions projected to all who sympathize with their cause. It should be our business not to accept the terrorists as leaders of a billion Muslims. Rather we should inquire into the policies of the U.S. that could create so much anti-American feeling around the world . . .

. . . The domestic costs of increased security are the costs of a more centralized state that can become the enemy of its own people. In the U.S., the government has already assumed new powers without consulting Congress. Polls taken in years preceding the terrorist attack on 11 September indicate that about half of adult Americans saw the federal government as a threat to the rights and freedoms of ordinary Americans. No doubt fewer would say so in the aftermath of the recent attacks, a shift consistent with the adage that “war is the health of the state.” But if more
security could ensure the safety of the nation, the Soviet
Union would still be with us.

The response to terrorism can be more dangerous
than the terrorists . . .

SIGNIFICANCE

Contrary to the commonly held belief that terro-
rists must be experiencing significant psychopathology
(mental illness), research conducted during the latter
half of the twentieth century suggests that those indi-
viduals (members of terrorist groups) would be unlikely
to be given a diagnosis of psychopathology if assessed.
In fact, those with significant psychopathology are
unlikely to be able to function within a small, cohesive
group of like-minded individuals acting together to
achieve a common goal (as in an extremist group). In
order to achieve a terrorist act or attack, it is necessary
to be able to calmly and logically create a plan of action,
envision the probable outcomes, and carry out the sce-
nario to successful fruition.

Psychological theory defines two types of aggres-
sion: emotional and instrumental. Emotional aggres-
sion is akin to the “fight” aspect of the “fight or flight”
theory. Emotionally aggressive behavior is the “hurting
back” of a perceived aggressor. It is aggression that does
not calculate the long-term outcome of events; it is a
response born of anger and fear, and it is often impul-
sive and poorly thought out. The goal of emotional
anger is to inflict harm and pain on the perceived
aggressor, in at least the measure in which it was
received. Instrumental aggression also perpetuates vio-
lence, but it is violence with a long-term goal. The
aggressive act is viewed as a catalyst for other events. It
is those events that, in the long run, achieve the ultimate
goals of the perpetrators.

Although terrorism and terrorist acts of violence
causes damage and pain (and often death and the
destruction of significant amounts of material or prop-
erty) in the immediate aftermath of the initiating act,
the goal of the terrorist group is far more long-term.
Most terrorist organizations aim to achieve a climate of
fear and suspicion far beyond the immediate moment.
The group anticipates that the acts of the moment will
have the long-term effects of causing the target to
expend large amounts of time and money on broadened
and increased security, ramping up military personnel
and training, and generally expending vast, unplanned,
sums of money on measures associated with security.
A primary goal of terrorist acts, then, is actually a financial
one: necessary resources are diverted from practical,
social, and humanitarian uses (fruitful use of funds) to
those associated with perceived protection and security.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Books
Worchel, S., McCauley, C., Lee, Y-T, and F. Moghaddam,
eds. Psychology of Ethnic and Cultural Conflict. Praeger

Web sites
Social Science Research Council: After September 11 Essay Archive.
S&T Bryn Mawr College Newsletter on Science and Technology.
Solomon Asch Center for the Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict. “The
Psychology of Terrorism: An Interview with Clark
McCauley, Co-Director of the Solomon Asch Center for
Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict (September 11, 2001).”
<http://www.psych.upenn.edu/sacsec/online.Intervue.htm>

Islam Denounces Terrorism

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INTRODUCTION
In The Clash of Civilizations, his seminal 1993 book,
the academic Samuel Huntington argued that America’s
main global challenges over the coming decades would
come not from a resurgent east, or post-Soviet Russia.
Instead, he wrote, that as people defined themselves
increasingly by ethnicity and religion, the West would
find itself more and more at odds with civilizations that
reject its ideals. In particular, Huntington predicted
that a confrontation between Islamists and the West was
inevitable.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001,
Harun Yahya (a penname used by Adnan Oktar), a
prominent Turkish thinker, set about demolishing the
myths that a clash of civilizations was in some way