

THE ROOTS OF TERROR

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Class 58

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27 NOV 2007

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Terrorism is an anxiety inspiring method of repeated violent action against a group or state. These acts are normally conducted by clandestine groups or individuals for ideological, criminal, or political reasons. The direct targets of the violence are usually chosen at random and are not the intended targets but serve as message generators to the main target audience, turning them into a target of terror. America defines terrorism as activities that involve violent or life threatening acts that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any state, and appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping. This definition is in broad spectrum of the whole term and it has been written that the use of the term implies moral judgment and if one party can successfully attach the terrorist label to its opponent, then it has directly persuaded others to adopt its moral viewpoint.

Terrorists can justify their horrific acts as a means to achieve their goals. The concepts of law, ethics, morality, logic, and even religion are not considered when terrorists strike at innocent victims. It is simply because they do not see themselves as terrorists. There is a famous saying that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter".

Regardless of the group's struggles, the creation of terror and mass hysteria are tools used to demonstrate the powerlessness of governments and can only be categorized as terrorism.

History shows that there can be many reasons for terrorist to strike. Those reasons may include, but are not limited to be considered terrorism; political tyranny, religious oppression, ethnic oppression, military occupation, religious duty, political or social conviction, and guerilla struggle. An example including many of these reasons can be found in some of the earliest known terrorists. They were in the form of religious groups called the Sicari and the Zealots. They were Jewish groups that were active during the Roman Occupation of the Middle East during the first century. The Sicari executed Jews and murdered those in which they deemed apostate. Their

weapon of choice was a short dagger called a Sica, which is the origin of their name and can be translated to the "dagger men". The Zealots generally targeted Romans, Greeks, and Jews that collaborated with them. They would commit murders in daylight so that witnesses would be terrified and thus send the message to Romans that they meant business. These tactics would evolve into the tactics that are used today.

Much like the Sicari and the Zealots, terrorist cells of today require and usually consist of a hierarchy. There is usually a leader or figurehead of the group which operates as the face of terror. The sight of his face may create fear in the public because of what they know his organization to be about. The organization also includes an operation or political officer. The duties of that officer are to plan, coordinate and ensure that the plan is executed. He is also responsible that the correct message is relayed to the targeted audience. Like any other organization, the cells have a religious or spiritual leader. He is responsible for giving advice and inspiration to his organizational leaders and those that require spiritual guidance. Terrorist cells

always require logistical support and usually have a funding officer. His job requires him to pay for training, operations, and most important, recruiting. In order for the cells to continue their activities, they must have followers willing to execute the heinous crimes in order to achieve their goals.

Therefore the logistical officer and the recruits are very important and use many different weapons to achieve those goals.

Such weapons may include small arms, Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's), and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) such as, Chemical, biological, and nuclear warfare. They may also use computer viruses to assist them in creating fear in the public. The cyber terror may create black outs in cities, shut down financial operations causing lost money, and affect the course of trains and airplanes causing mass casualties.

Terrorists usually target governments and Society leaders however, as stated earlier they are not usually the victims of the violent acts. It is thought by the terrorists that by preying on the weak, the government will change its own ideals and fall to their demands. These organizations also target police

and military organizations of nations that they are in disagreement with. They may also include civil servants, and non government organizations working abroad for causes of relief to other nations. It has even been documented that some terrorist organizations have killed members of other known terrorist organizations. In essence, nobody is safe when it comes to dealing with terrorists.

Attacks by terrorists have come a long way since the first century and can be more devastating. We have seen the hijacking of airplanes, kidnappings of high ranking military officials, and the poisoning of consumer food products. However, the invention such as the bomb has made these attacks much more frightening and a lot more destructive. Although murders still continue in the United States at an alarming rate, a suicide bomber can cause an explosion in a small location and kill hundreds of people in the collapse of a structure. Therefore the fear of terrorism exists and it cannot be taken lightly when a person makes a threat of a terrorist attack.

Americans know this all too well with the events in recent years targeted at our Soldiers abroad and our citizens at home.

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