

# Religiously Inspired Terrorism

- SRA-211, Threat of Terrorism and Crime
- Penn State Altoona
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# Overview of the history of religious terrorism

- The horrific attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, apparently perpetrated by well organized terrorists with ties to radical [Muslim](#) extremist groups, has America grappling with the threat of terrorism as never before.
- Unfortunately, the combination of religion and violence is not new in history. In fact, many English words used to describe terrorists and their actions, such as "zealot," "assassin" and "thug," derive from the names of religious groups.
- Yet in recent times, the religious motivation for terrorism has been overshadowed by "ethnic- and nationalist-separatist or ideologically motivated" political terrorism.

# Overview of the history of religious terrorism

- While many secular terrorist groups do have religious elements, the political dimension is the predominant characteristic.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRYZjOuUnlU>
- This began to change in the 1980s with the rise of religious terrorism in the form of militant Islamic Shiite fundamentalism.
- As we will see, the shift toward terrorism motivated by religious considerations is one of the reasons for terrorism's increasing lethality.

# Religion's Dark Side

- Each religion seems to have two prongs
  - Sanctifying life, love for others, forbids killing, acknowledges humanity, etc.
  - "The other streak lurking within each religion is one that is dark and forbidding."
    - Sanctioned killing and urges a rigid approach that advocates violence against non-believers
    - In this case, religion is interpreted in a manner that serves political causes

# Ancient Religious Terrorism

- Jewish Sicarii – dagger man, killed romans in the name of god.
- Assassins - During the Crusades, the Muslim sect known as the Assassins tamed more powerful enemies using a shocking means: murder in the name of god.
- The Assassins' pioneering use of suicide terrorism, of murdering systematically though at times indiscriminately to achieve political ends, finds chilling echoes in the tactics of terrorist groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and al Qaeda.

# Religious Terrorism Today

- **In a state of resurgence w/ Islamic terrorism** - While terrorism — even in the form of suicide attacks — is not an Islamic phenomenon by definition, it cannot be ignored that the lion's share of terrorist acts and the most devastating of them in recent years have been perpetrated in the name of Islam.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsCZzpmbEcs>
- **Interesting Fact** - Dormant for quite a long time, but it is not new. Our founding fathers understood the importance of separation of church. This is key to the American experience. Too many terrorist groups today use religion to support their evil doings.

# Religious Terrorism Today

- This does not mean religion is bad.
- So Fundamentalism is not necessarily the problem
  - Many fundamentalist subgroups in various religions do not advocate violence
  - Rather, they have some back to basics approach to living according to their own religious dictates
  - Nonetheless, there are no moderate religious terrorists

# Began with the Iranian Revolution

- Emerged in 1979 with the Iranian revolution and Ayatollah Khomeini
- When Ayatollah Khomeini took power he made no bones about helping Muslims
- Iran actively helps Muslims engaged in struggles anywhere in the world with little regard for international law (terror for religion)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArW8BGv1RyM>
- This terror in the name of religion spread throughout the middle east and Western governments have been slow to counter this behavior
- While such groups as Hezbollah have capitalized on it giving good Muslims a bad rap

# The Religious Sources of Islamic Terrorism

- Islamic terrorists justify their violent tactics through interpreting the [Quran](#) and [Hadith](#) according to their own goals and intentions.
- The highest numbers of incidents and fatalities caused by Islamic terrorism occur in [Iraq](#), [Afghanistan](#), [Nigeria](#), [Pakistan](#) and [Syria](#).
- In 2015 four Islamic extremist groups were responsible for 74% of all deaths from terrorism: [ISIS](#), [Boko Haram](#), the [Taliban](#) and [Al-Qaeda](#), according to the [Global Terrorism Index](#) 2016.
- In recent decades, such incidents have occurred on a global scale, affecting not only [Muslim-majority states](#) in Africa and Asia, but also [Europe](#), [Russia](#), [Australia](#), [Canada](#), and the [United States](#).

Such attacks have targeted Muslims and non-Muslims.

# The Religious Sources of Islamic Terrorism

- The literal use of the phrase "Islamic terrorism" is disputed.
- Such use in Western political speech has variously been called "counter-productive," "highly politicized, intellectually contestable" and "damaging to community relations. **Thoughts?**
- However, others view the refusal to use the term as an act of "self-deception".
- President [Donald Trump](#)'s national security advisor [Michael T. Flynn](#) states, "You cannot defeat an enemy that you do not admit exists." **Thoughts?**

# Islamic Terrorism vid

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6axTxU3oyo>

# Religious Terrorists

- Terrorism can be motivated by religious ideologies and grievances.
- Religious terrorism is particularly dangerous due to the fanaticism of those who practice it and their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the cause.
- Religious terrorists are more likely to use “all in” tactics such as suicide bombings.
- This is made possible by religious teachings used to justify and even encourage this kind of self-sacrifice.

# Religious Terrorists

- **Examples:** Al-Qaeda is perhaps the most prominent example of a group that can be characterized as religious terrorists.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xlvwICN6sU>

Religious terrorism has a long history from Catholic-Protestant violence in Ireland to Muslim-Hindu tensions in Pakistan and India.



# Religious Terrorists Beliefs

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Political victory is not the goal, **Complete annihilation is the goal**

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Winning must be absolute – **they see this as a battle between good vs evil**

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Killing is a sacred religious act – **enemies of god**

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Behaviors from thousands of years ago are sacred models for present conduct - **Their struggle is divinely inspired**

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**They will change the course of history and their actions are exempt from wrong**

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# The rise of ISIS, explained in 6 minutes

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzmO6RWy1v8>

# Where civilizations collide


- The **Clash of Civilizations (COC)** is a hypothesis that people's cultural and religious identities will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world.
- Eight different areas in the world, Western, Japanese, Confucian, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-orthodox, Latin American, and African.
- In those regions with multiple religions there can be conflict. Examples?
- Those countries are considered torn countries.
- With this, you can see the issues that can ensue.

# Modern globalism and religious terrorism

- Not a well defined term. Mainly dominated by secular western culture.
- **Secularism** is the principle of the separation of government institutions and persons mandated to represent the state from religious institutions and religious dignitaries (the attainment of such is termed secularity). One manifestation of secularism is asserting the right to be free from religious rule and teachings, or, in a state declared to be neutral on matters of belief, from the imposition by government of religion or religious practices upon its people.

# Modern globalism and religious terrorism

- Religious terrorist groups hate secular globalism and will fight to the death to stop it.
- In this case, it is a reference to Western culture spreading throughout the world.
- Religious terrorist groups do not respect an individuals religious faith as a private concern.



There are some general  
differences between  
secular and religious  
terrorists

These are  
tendencies, not  
hard rules

Secular vs. Religious Terrorists

# Secular vs. Religious Terrorists

*For the religious terrorist, violence is first and foremost a sacramental act or divine duty executed in direct response to some theological demand or imperative.*

*Secular terrorists, even if they have the capacity to do so, rarely attempt indiscriminate killing on a massive scale because such tactics are not consonant with their political aims and therefore are regarded as counterproductive, if not immoral.*

# Political System/Norms of Society

- Secular terrorists want to replace/improve the political system and generally pursue this goal within the norms of society
- Religious terrorists have no regard for social norms or for an audience of people. The act for god. Therefore, showing restraint is not of interest.
- Secular terrorists are far more interested in the theater of terrorism, and this creates more incentive for restraint

# Issues

- Secular terrorists tend to seek out groups and issues that fit their thinking and emotional needs
- Religious terrorists look to historical precedent, scripture and clerical guidance

# Purpose of Violence

- Secular terrorists view violence as an unpleasant necessity that sacrifices the few for the good of the many
- Religious terrorists view violence and killing as acting on behalf of God in a righteous deed. The more killing, the better

# Demonization

- Secular terrorist demonize their enemies, but it does not compare to the level of demonization carried out by religious terrorists
- Degrading and dehumanizing their victims makes the killing easier and more justifiable

# Reasoning and Negotiating

- Religious terrorists cannot be reasoned with
- Negotiation would be compromising with the wishes of God
- Root causes of their acts are actually immaterial pretexts

# Representation

- Secular terrorists view the public as their community, and so it holds back to gain sympathy and sympathizers
- For religious terrorists, they are their own community

# Secular vs. Religious Terrorists

- Bruce Hoffman contrasts the ethical values of "secular political" terrorists with "religious political" terrorists, and notes that these differ radically in that for "holy terrorists...violence [is] first and foremost a sacramental act or divine duty executed in direct response to some theological demand or imperative.
- For such groups terrorism is a full time vocation and they take public credit for such acts as a means of influencing their perceived constituency on behalf of a goal with terrorism as the means to an end.

# Secular vs. Religious Terrorists

- By contrast, unlike "secular terrorists," religiously motivated groups have no external community for whom a terrorist act is designed to influence.
- Religious terrorists often act anonymously and for no one but themselves, which results in increased levels of violence and lethality.
- These differing ethical foundations for terrorism provide the basis for the disturbing trend over the last decade towards a willingness to use biological and chemical weapons, as well as the increasing potential for their use in the future.

# Islamic Terrorists/Western Culture

- Islamic terrorists think secularism is death to religion
- Islamic terrorists are violently opposed to everything western
- Western culture has infected there way of life through technology but...
- Religious terrorists reject moderate versions of their own faith THOUGHTS?
- Western culture, morals and values are an attack on their religion
- Western culture has become pervasive enough that it threatens traditions and religion in general THOUGHTS?

# Government Failure

- All of this western culture affects government because of a change in tradition.
- Gives people thoughts of change and maybe a better way to live.
- Major problems typically already exist in middle eastern countries and authoritarian governments.
- Terrorists and governments redirect people's anger to targets such as western culture rather than the deserving governments. SEE THE PROBLEM

# Christian Terrorist Beliefs

- Religious terrorism is not limited to Islam, but it is quite rare in other religions at this time
- Jesus was not Jewish; he was Aryan
- The lost tribes of Israel were Aryan, not Jewish
- Anglo Saxons were really God's chosen people
- The United States is the real promised land, not Israel
- WHO DO YOU THINK BELIVES THIS?

Does this give you a better perspective on religious terrorists?

# State Sponsored Religious Terror

- Sudan is roughly 70% Muslim in the north, and 30% Christian in the south
- Northern Muslims have attempted to convert the southern Christians for centuries.
- In recent decades, the Islamic government of Sudan has killed millions in the south in an effort to terrorize the south into converting to Islam
- <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2017/11/20/trump-declare-north-korea-state-sponsor-terror/f7XKniiqqPMoou8ca72qCI/story.html>

# Summary

- Each religion can contain aggressive groups
- Being a fundamentalist does mean you are a terrorist
- The Iranian revolution of 1979 opened up today's religious terrorism
- Religious terrorism is different from other types of terrorism
- Today's religious terrorism can be seen as a fight against globalism and western culture
- State sponsored religious terrorism is possible
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xlvwICN6sU>