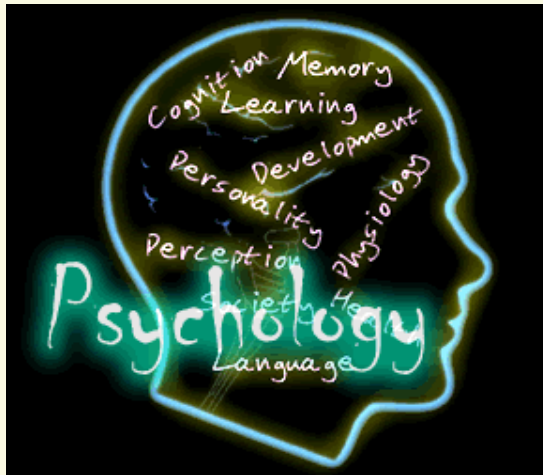


Psychological Theories

Psychological explanations draw from basic concepts and principles:



Mental processes (cognition, perception, and emotion) and their relations to an individual's personality, attitudes, and behaviors

Social psychology of person-group relations (beliefs, conformity, persuasion)

Abnormal socio-psychopathological disorders (maladjustment, deviation, mental illnesses)

Are terrorists clinically mentally ill? Have antisocial personality disorders?

Do “terrorist personality traits” dispose some people to violent acts?

Can any social psychological factors explain which persons, under what conditions, are more likely to support & join terrorist orgs?

What are the psychodynamics of becoming a suicide bomber?

Can we best understand suicide bombers as driven by pathological psychological forces, as motivated by altruistic idealism, or as strategic political actors opposing occupiers of their homeland?

Are Terrorists Mentally Ill?

Some psychologists and psychiatrists describe terrorists as appearing to exhibit symptoms of major mental pathologies



Terrorists are seen as psychopaths & sociopaths suffering from various severe antisocial disorders

Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (**DSM-IV**) uses categorical classifications: psychotic disorders (delusional beliefs); mood disorders (depression); narcissism (self-obsession); ...

How well could such persons function inside highly disciplined, covert organizations? (e.g., Moussaoui)

But, very little direct research has been conducted on actual terrorists. Because terrorists aren't willing to lie on the couch, researchers must rely on constructing case profiles from secondary sources of uncertain validity.

“The only way to answer these questions is to collect **detailed biographies** or conduct **psychological autopsies** on each of these types of individuals (guerillas, protest self-immolators, and suicide bombers).”

Pathological Terrorist Personalities

Mark Sageman, psychiatrist & former foreign service officer, described three forms of **personality pathologies** arising from childhood traumas:



Pathological Narcissism: wounded at early age by loss of one or both parents, the PN self splits into two identities – a grandiose “Me” and a hated “Not Me.” The latter identity is projected onto outside scapegoats, who are blamed & attacked.

Paranoia Personality Disorder: Distrust and suspicion of others’ malevolent motives. Entitlement beliefs lead to disillusionment, then to rage & violence against perceived enemies. Group paranoia adopts the leader’s pathology.

Authoritarian Personality: Harsh, psychically punitive child-rearing practices produce conformity, submission to authority, aggression toward outsiders. Child-rearing norms of some cultures, such as the Middle East, are allegedly more likely than other societies to produce young men with such dispositions.

Sageman found little evidence of pathology in bios of 172 mujahedin.

Are caution, suspicion, & conspiracy views very rational responses?

Analyzing the “Mind of the Terrorist”

Jeffrey Victoroff’s review of psychological theories revealed that “virtually none of them has been tested in a systematic way.”



“...although terrorists rarely exhibit psychological *disorders*, they may exhibit identifiable psychological *traits* or may have been influenced by identifiable social factors.”

(Victoroff 2005:17)

Psychiatrists and psychologists have suggested some at-risk factors:

- ✓ Troubled male youths, mentally immature, no girlfriend, unemployed without social safety net, no means to enjoy life, lack of life meaning
- ✓ “Woman hater,” lacking close ties & trust (e.g., Timothy McVeigh)
- ✓ Authoritarian Personality traits (see Sageman slide above)

Are personality traits that dispose people to be bombers widespread in some cultures, shaped by societal norms & child-rearing practices?

Or are suicide bombers not pathological, but idealistic and altruistic?

Are Suicide Bombers Altruistic?

Self-sacrifice is often viewed as **altruism**, especially in a war to defend homeland or one's military unit; e.g., Japanese *kamikaze* fliers in WW2

Suicide bombing – self-killing during a terror attack intended to kill others; a pejorative term, not used by groups (“martyrdom operation”)



Attacks have occurred in 30+ countries since 1980:

- 1983 Beirut, Lebanon: Fr. & U.S. marine barracks
- 1987-93 & 2000-05 Palestinian *Intifadas* in Israel
- 1994-96 & 99-09 Chechen Wars against Russia
- 2001 September 11th plane attacks on the U.S.
- 2003 Bali, Indonesia, nightclub (◀ Ali Imron reenacts)
- 2003-10 Iraq War by Al Qaida, Sunnis, & Shi'as
- 2005-?? Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan

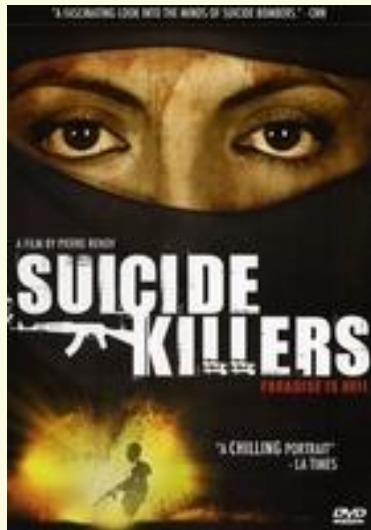
Are suicide bombers suicidal persons? Pathological? “Brainwashed”?

Is suicide bombing a rational strategy for terrorist orgs? How effective?

What social & political conditions trigger suicide bombing campaigns?

Suicide Killers – Paradise is Hell

Watch this documentary, directed by Pierre Rehov, which examines suicide bombers through interviews with academics, survivors, families, activists, prisoners whose suicide missions were thwarted.



Does anyone try to explain suicide bombers by applying rational choice or psychological principles?

What evidence about psychodynamics – humiliation, shame, powerlessness, despair, anger, revenge, ...?

What are bombers' self-identities and self-images?

Are bombers mainly motivated by altruism, to sacrifice themselves for some greater objective?

How important are religious beliefs in justifying or rationalizing actions that the bombers might otherwise view as repugnant?

Do you see any ways to prevent or defend against such campaigns?

Is the film consistent with Robert Pape's theory that suicide bombing campaigns occur only in an occupation involving different religions?

Suicide Terrorism is Strategic

Robert Pape found 95% of 188 suicide attacks in 16 campaigns (1980-2001). Most occurred when a democratic power occupied a country with a different religion and the occupied religious community supports altruistic suicide.

Suicide terror's **strategic logic** is to put pressure on the occupying nation to withdraw; 6 of 11 campaigns achieved significant some political concessions. Israel pulled back from Gaza, West Bank; Iraqis unsuccessful in ousting U.S.



Since 1983, Hindu Tamils began using suicide bombers against Buddhist Sinhalese to create a homeland on Sri Lanka. But, the 1987-90 Indian peacekeepers, who are fellow Hindus, were not targets of suicide bombings.

A woman soldier of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam assassinated Indian P.M. Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 only after he appeared ready to send Indian troops back into S.L.

PKK Kurds launched 14 suicide attacks on Turks (1996-99), then stopped on their leader's orders. Did Kurdish Sunnis identify with Turkish Sunnis?

Why did IRA not use suicide terror in N. Ireland?

Does evidence imply suicide bombing is rational, at both the individual- and organizational-levels?



Dhanu (I.I.) approaching Rajiv Gandhi