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REVIEW ARTICLE

PSYCHOLOGY OF TERRORISM

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	All human behaviour is based on multiple contributing factors. Terrorism though not a normal human behaviour is no exception. It is possible to understand the motivations behind terrorism through and understanding human behaviours. While aggression and personality both have biological bases behaviour. It is a common misconception to view terrorism as a syndrome that determines something mentally "wrong" with terrorist. The purpose of this paper is to analyze what has been reported from the scientific and professional literature about the "Psychology of terrorism" .Terrorism has changed over the time and so have the terrorists, their motives and the causes of terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

It is a common misconception that terrorism is a new, more modern approach to warfare. In reality, however, terrorism has existed as a form of war throughout history. The reason that terrorism may seem more prevalent in the modern era is due in part to the advent of technology, and factors that this development precipitated. Large scale weapons have enable terrorism to transform from small localized attacks to large scale international attacks with high numbers of causalities, inspiring greater and greater levels of fear in those that witness the events. One of the primary goals of terrorism is to make a statement and reach a particular audience. With the development of certain technologies, long range communication and travel was made easier. This development has made the idea of terrorism more appealing to potential terrorist, either individual or as an organization, because they are able to reach a worldwide audience for a relatively small cost. Modernization increases competition among individuals, and very often between groups, in an attempt to gain access to vital resources. This competition leads to a widening and exacerbation of gaps between economic classes and breeds resentment between groups. Disadvantaged groups find inequality intolerable and press for social change. Because of the limited resources that are available to these groups, they often feel that their only option is terrorism.

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Terrorism defined as "Acts of violence intentionally perpetrated on civilian non combatants with the goal of furthering some ideological, religious and political objective". Friction between minority groups living in such close vicinity often causes these groups to break from society as a whole and create smaller social organizations. Individuals with strong religious, ethnic, or linguistic affiliations find commonality and through this form communities that often become political, each with a separate value system. The development of these separate groups often causes political friction and social unrest, two conditions that greatly increase the likelihood for individuals to engage in terrorism (Husain, 2006).

Both modernization and urbanization also cause rapid social change. Rapid social change not only brings people from diverse backgrounds with differing values together, but it also can create instability in the current government structure. In these shifts of populations, norms are altered, and because of this and the weakening of the central government structure, laws are often rendered useless or weakened. A weak government and a shifting political dynamic give terrorist organizations the opportunity to gather supporters that are dissatisfied with their current circumstances. The new addition of supporters allows the organizations to become more active and make more dramatic actions to gain power, often violent terrorist attacks. While it is possible for individuals to commit acts of terror alone and create a political impact, in the power of the group can be much more influential than a alone voice (Husain, 2006, Milgram, 1974). Before exploring psychological approaches to the specific problem of terrorist violence, it may be helpful first to examine whether and how

psychology and other behavioral sciences have sought to explain violent behavior more generally. Definitions of "violence" in the social science literature are at least as plentiful as definitions of terrorism. Most focus on causing harm to others, but some also include suicide and self-mutilation as forms of "violence to self." The dichotomy of "Nature vs. Nurture" in explaining any form of human behavior, including violence, is outdated and inconsistent with the current state of research in the field.

Violence is "caused" by a complex interaction of biological, social/contextual, cognitive, and emotional factors that occur over time. Some causes will be more prominent than others for certain individuals and for certain types of violence and aggression. A second general observation is that most violence can be usefully viewed as intentional. It is chosen as a strategy of action. It is purposeful (goal-directed) and intended to achieve some valued outcome for the actor. It is not the product of innate, instinctual drives [4], nor is it the inevitable consequence of predetermining psychological and social forces. In order to answer the question, "How could someone do such a thing?" from a psychological perspective, it is important to understand human nature on a more fundamental level than political or sociological factors. In order to do this, it is important to understand research that has been done in the past.

The psychoanalytic theory is most widely recognized theory that addresses the roots of all forms of violence is the psychoanalytic model. Despite its influence on writers in the political science, sociology, history, and criminology literature, this model has weak logical, theoretical, and empirical foundations" (Beck, 2002). Freud viewed aggression more generally as an innate and instinctual human trait, which most should outgrow in the normal course of human development. A later development in Freud's theory was that humans had the energy of life force (*eros*) and death force (*thanatos*) that sought internal balance. Violence was seen as the "displacement" of *thanatos* from self and onto others. A number of more narrow violence-related theories have drawn on psychoanalytic concepts and ideas, but none are widely regarded as psychoanalytic theory of violence.

The link between frustration (being prevented from attaining a goal or engaging in behavior) and aggression has been discussed in psychology for more than half a century. Some even view it as a "master explanation" for understanding the cause of human violence. The basic premise of the frustration-aggression (FA) hypothesis is twofold: (1) Aggression is always produced by frustration, and (2) Frustration always produces aggression. When subjected to empirical scrutiny, however, research has shown that frustration does not inevitably lead to aggression. Sometimes, for example, it results in problem solving or dependent behaviors. And aggression is known to occur even in the absence of frustration. Thus it is not reasonable to view frustration alone as a necessary and sufficient causal factor. In an important reformulation of the FA hypothesis, Berkowitz (1989) posited that it was only "aversive" frustration that would lead to aggression. The newly proposed progression was

that frustration would lead to anger, and that anger – *in the presence of aggressive cues* – would lead to aggression.

Social learning theory is a simple extension of this basic idea, suggesting that behavior (e.g., aggression) is learned not only through one's direct experience, but also through observation of how such contingencies occur in one's environment. Some have referred to this as vicarious learning. In this model, aggression is viewed as learned behavior. Accordingly, it is argued that through observation we learn consequences for the behavior, how to do it, to whom it should be directed, what provocation justifies it, and when it is appropriate. "If aggression is a learned behavior, then terrorism, a specific type of aggressive behavior, can also be learned" (Oots & Wiegele, 1985).

The basic notion of social cognition theory is that people interact with their environment based on how they perceive and interpret it. That is, people form an internal (cognitive) map of their external (social) environment, and these perceptions – rather than an objective external reality – determine their behavior. The experimental literature clearly suggests that perceptions of intent affect aggression. Moreover, there are internal and external factors that can affect one's perceptions of provocation or intent. Two common cognitive/processing deficits found among people who are highly aggressive are: (1) an inability to generate non-aggressive solutions to conflicts (and lack of confidence in their ability to use them successfully) and (2) a perceptual hypersensitivity to hostile/aggressive cues in the environment, particularly interpersonal cues. Some researchers suggest that the principles the actions of terrorists are based on a subjective interpretation of the world rather than objective reality. Perceptions of the political and social environment are filtered through beliefs and attitudes that reflect experiences and memories" (Crenshaw, 1988).

Throughout the 1960's, Stanley Milgram performed a series of experiments to study human obedience to authority. In these experiments, Milgram had the subject played the role of the "teacher" and teach the "learner" a series of word pairs. The "learner" was then supposed to repeat the word pairs back to the "teacher". An authority figure, in this case an experimenter wearing a white lab coat, had the "teacher" administer an electric shock to the "learner" if they made errors. While the electric shocks were not real, the "teacher "was unaware of this fact. The shocks are administered up to 450 volts, on a scale ranging from "Slight Shock" to "Danger: Severe Shock" to finally "XXX" (Milgram, 1974). As the experiment progressed, the "learner" began to get answers wrong and was then shocked by the "teacher".

Following each shock, the "learner" showed behaviors that were appropriate for the corresponding shock level, like flinching, yelling, and eventually begging for the experiment to end. Once the shock levels exceeded 315 volts, the "learner" failed to respond, but the "teacher" continued to shock the "learner". Throughout the experiment, many of the subjects hesitated to proceed, but when they were assured that "it was imperative that [they] continue", or that they would not be held responsible if something were to go wrong, a surprising 62.5%

of the subjects completed the experiment and administered the fatal voltage shocks. Over half of the participants continued to shock the "learner", after, to the best of their knowledge, the "learner" had been rendered unconscious, or worse. Before the results of the experiment was released, Milgram asked leading psychologist to predict how many subjects would reach the final voltage level. Not one of the psychologists predicted that anyone would administer the fatal shock, and the average was that only 30% would reach the "Danger: Severe Shock" (Milgram, 1974). Because the majority of terrorist activities are run through organizations, obedience to an authority player plays a significant role in the motivation to engage in violence. This suggests that the distance, emotionally and physically, increases the chances of violent activity.

A terrorist's ability to distance himself, especially in an emotional sense, allows him to separate the human feelings of compassion and guilt and do things that he would normally consider to be immoral. When an individual joins a terrorist organization, one of the primary goals of that group is to insure that the newcomer shares the same values and beliefs as the group. This provides the organization with a certain amount of security. This process is called indoctrination and forces the individual to merge with the organization and become one. By identifying with a group, a terrorist transcends self and gains a purpose in life. Being a member of a group comes with a lot of power and a large influence of conformity. An individual will go to extensive lengths to gain acceptance into a group and maintain this belonging. The individual no longer identifies with society as a whole, and therefore no longer is constrained by the concepts of morality that are common throughout the majority of society (Husain, 2006; Victoroff, 2005).

The Frustration-Aggression Paradigm is one of the most common explanations of the motivation behind acts of terrorism. This theory integrates both social and psychological explanations for terrorist involvement. Individuals who endure severe poverty are limited in the resources that are made available to them. This means that they do not have conventional means to deal with their frustrations. Because of this they are likely to turn to aggression, and this aggressive outlet can take the form of terrorism. Deprivation also plays a key role. An individual that is deprived of basic opportunities is likely to engage in terrorist activities. Individuals that have been deprived of homeland, civil rights, government and education are more likely to become terrorists (Husain, 2006).

Conclusion

No single theory has gained ascendance as an explanatory model for all types of violence. Perhaps the diversity in behaviors regarded as violent poses an inherent barrier to such a global theory. Social learning and social cognition approaches have received some of the most extensive empirical attention and support, but not necessarily for terrorism specifically. Terrorist violence most often is deliberate (not impulsive), strategic, and instrumental; it is linked to and justified by ideological (e.g., political, religious) objectives and almost always involves a group or multiple actors/supporters .It is necessary to support the idea that terrorism is immoral. No matter how valid the reasoning behind it is, violence is never justified. In order to prevent the support of terrorist organizations and the violence that follows, it is imperative to have a consistent stance that terrorism is immoral. Understanding that terrorism is a complex instrument that is often used as a last resort, will help the current forces work to eliminate terrorism and make room for productive means of communication between those with power and those without.

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