

The reality of terrorism and the western myth

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What do you think of when you hear the word 'terrorism?' Title 22 of the United States Criminal Code defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience" (Saleem and Azam Tahir).

Currently, there are many religious terrorist organizations that practice radical acts against the Western community, to name a few: ISIS, al-Qa'ida and Boko Haram. However, Western society has shown a bias against the Muslim community after 9/11 because of al-Qa'ida's radical Muslim influence. There is more to terrorism than radical religious practices, therefore Western society should not create a negative bias against the religion as a whole. A Muslim teen wrote, "I'm afraid to speak my beliefs... we are all witness that the western societies are getting more immoral day by day" (Sullivan). Since 9/11, Western society has created a bias against the Muslim community by crediting most terrorist activity to the Muslim religion, but in reality terrorism is attributed to psychological manipulation that causes extreme religious acts.

The purpose of this paper is to inform individuals of the conflict between Western norms and Islamic beliefs, Muslim discrimination in pop-culture and propaganda, and psychological and environmental factors that extremists use to gain a following in their terrorist organization. The United States has always been an international influence through its distinguished cultural ideas and political ideology. However, countries that do not affiliate themselves with the ideologies that the United States shares can find the Western hegemony to be overwhelming and aggravating. More specifically, <https://assignbuster.com/the-reality-of-terrorism-and-the-western-myth/>

the rapid expansion of Western influence causes conflict between Western norms and Islam beliefs; these beliefs not only include the idea of ' God' but also the conservative aspect and cultural aspect involved with Islamic beliefs. The difference between Western society and Eastern Islamic norms causes tension between the two respectively: Many Western ideas, those held by people in democratic nations of the Americas and Western Europe, are contrary to Islamic beliefs and practices. Also, the wealth of the West, in contrast to the widespread poverty in Islamic countries, has created a broad gap between Western and Islamic societies.

While Western eyes may see some of the rules of Sharia, or Islamic law, as inappropriate for the modern world (for example, the treatment of women), in Muslim societies these rules seem comfortably traditional and in line with basic religious teachings. (May and Outman). The United States and Western Europe is culturally diverse and combines all ethnicities and cultural ideas into their mix. However, there is a gap between the minorities of certain religions including Islam to religions such as Christianity; this causes conflict between what the West defines as " what is Muslim" to what is actually defined as Muslim practices. Islamic norms do not necessarily mean that they are a terrorist or related to or support religious extremism.

Western prejudices support the idea that Muslims have a tie to terrorism and that they all support radical religious practices. These prejudices came into the picture post 9/11 since people blamed Muslims as a whole after the extremist group al- Qa'ida called themselves " Muslims;" they believed they were acting under the term ' jihad.' Since then, Western society has sub-consciously distanced themselves from the Muslim community and has kept <https://assignbuster.com/the-reality-of-terrorism-and-the-western-myth/>

these prejudices. Like all other cultures, most Muslims want to be integrated and part of the culture in which they live in, not segregated from it. Defining a Muslim on the color of their skin, the way they look and how religious they are not only negatively distinguishes them from the rest of society but also gives Muslims a disadvantage in job opportunities and in integrating into Western society. Rabbi Axler of Temple Isaiah explained the Muslim community by describing that “ there are significant differences in our faiths but what we are all looking for in our families and our country is usually the exact same thing.

” (Axler). Without Western society realizing that the Muslim community is not different from themselves, only then will the prejudices no longer define the Muslim community. Post 9/11, Muslim discrimination in pop-culture and propaganda has become a Western norm and is deemed acceptable in today’s society. Pop-culture and propaganda’s negative attention on Muslims has caused the Western society to stereotype the religion as a whole instead of stereotyping the religious extremists themselves. To understand this concept, Western society must distinguish the difference between Muslims and the radical form of Islam that extremists practice under.

“ Understanding whiteness is relevant to understanding white supremacy, just as understanding Islam is relevant to jihadism. And to be sure, religion matters to ISIS. A lot. But the concept of an exclusive identity matters far more, to the point that ISIS will engage in virtually unlimited theological gymnastics to justify it.” (Berger).

Propaganda and pop-culture has yet to distinguish one from the other. Americans are exposed to political/international issues and events almost exclusively through media and what information the media feeds to the population. That being said, even if Americans did not consciously want to have a bias opinion about Muslims as a whole, " they don't necessarily have an opportunity to learn about Muslims other than the media." (Tappan). What Americans are seeing form these negative opinions of Muslims but when they do get correct information about Muslims, there is strong probability that their opinion can change. People are ignorant to the difference between the religion and a form of radical religious practices.

Without the media publically differentiating the two, Western society will continue to segregate and keep the prejudices against Muslims due to their unfamiliarity on the subject. Due to the negative attention Muslims have been receiving since 9/11, some Muslims have decided to shield their families from the anti-Semitism propaganda. Through social networking, pop-culture and propaganda, Muslims are easily exposed to prejudices and ignorance on their religion. In recent media, a prime example of this involves a Muslim family, the Khans, whose teens were caught joining ISIS. These teens then explained, " Muslims have been crushed under foot for too long... This nation is openly against Islam and Muslims.

" (Sullivan). Although these teens are part a minority in the Muslim religion, there argument on Western culture and its anti-Muslim propaganda is relevant. The Khan family's parents tried to shield their teens from unwanted influences and regularly monitored the children's access. This was not

because they were strict, but because the parents wanted to “ expose them to adult stuff...[they] wanted to preserve their innocence.” (Sullivan).

However, shielding children from a problem that is not going away only stalls the inevitable. Without Western society confronting the problem of anti-Semitism in media and propaganda, Muslims will continue to segregate themselves from the rest of society due to Western society’s distain towards Islam. Knowing the difference between a religious extremist and one who practices religion is key to end Western prejudices on the Muslim religion. Psychological and environmental factors are the most prevalent ways that extremists use to gain a following their terrorist organization. More specifically, warping the idea of religion into an incentive to start a battle against innocents changes the religion from its original meaning into something entirely different. An example of this phenomenon is the definition of the word ‘ jihad.

‘ Jihad refers to the internal battle between one’s religious beliefs and the skeptical beliefs others have on the Muslim religion. The term ‘ jihad’ can also be referred to an external battle; this gives religious Muslim terrorists the incentive to start an “ external battle” with non-believers. (Ghosh). Terrorist’s lust for violence and interconnectedness helps them create a certain ‘ metaphor’ about God and allows them to interpret the Qur’an into their own definition. Most analogies to God can be rooted back to human behavior, which causes each individual to have their own interpretation and also allows terrorist groups to be able to employ their actions through the idea that their actions are based upon the will of God.

(Coetzee). Because of this, members of terrorist organizations have a completely different interpretation of Islam than the majority of Muslims themselves. Terrorist organizations and their rise in power came from the psychological manipulation of their peers and strategic tactics that cause a gradual increase in their influence in society. Terrorist organizations give an emotional appeal that attracts its members through “ a set of feelings, concerns, aspirations or desires relating to one’s moral self—to one’s being-in-the-world.” (Cottee and Hayward). Terrorist organizations target those who are not satisfied with their life; they join these radical groups in a hope that the religious cause, solidarity and intimacy between the members will give them satisfaction.

Terrorists are human beings with passions and desires; these passions and desires are fulfilled from violence, which grants each terrorist emotional appeal. Radical religious groups manipulate extremists by giving them rewards and pleasure for committing radical acts. Since all members are put in solidarity and are only subjected to news and media that the head members want them to see, there is no way for these radical groups get “ both sides ” of a story. In the case of the Taliban, children are taken at a young age and taught to hate Western society: These children are explicitly forbidden from reading newspapers, listening to the radio, reading books that the teachers do not prescribe them. If any child is found violating these rules, he is severely reprimanded.

Effectively, the Taliban create a complete blackout of any other source of information for these children. The Taliban want these children to hate the world that they currently live in. (Obaid-Chinoy). Distorting and warping <https://assignbuster.com/the-reality-of-terrorism-and-the-western-myth/>

emotions to create an idea that all Westerners are non-believers and that the world extremists live in is a horrible place of anti-Semitism is a form of psychological manipulation that is a catalyst for violent behavior. Assuming that every Muslim has a psychologically distorted and twisted mind is an ignorant belief that some Westerners have against Islam.

Believing in this principle not only misrepresents the majority of the Islamic population, but it also helps give terrorist organizations additional reasons why they should despise the West. Terrorism has been a foreign and domestic problem since established states formed throughout the world. However, religiously affiliated terrorism has recently started a new trend in Western culture; finding a scapegoat. Western society should not be blaming all Muslims, only a small percent of Muslims practice extreme religious terrorism. Instead, religious terrorism should be attributed to psychological manipulation through which these extremists use religion as an incentive for their actions.

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