

# The aspects of terrorism



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The Aspects of Terrorism Terrorism has raised the level of global violence as a means to draw attention to social, economic, and political causes as wide ranging as the clear cutting of the rain forest, abortion, and the military occupation of a nationalist homeland. In each instance there is an individual motivation that initiates a member's participation in an organized group that promotes violence as a means for political or social change. The terrorist group maintains its cohesiveness through an organization that may or may not have the same goals as the individual members. As a result, the organizations are granted a degree of legitimacy by their effectiveness at holding the public or governments hostage to their demands. Understanding these aspects of terrorism is a necessary first step in forming a counter terrorism strategy. The most robust terrorist organizations have their basis in religion, and have been able to recruit members from areas that have been the subject of occupation by a foreign power.

On the individual level, feelings of nationalism and a right to a land are the strongest motivators for committing terrorist acts, while ideology has only a small part. Suicide bombers are arguably the most heavily committed individuals to the terrorist's cause. In a recent study at the University of Chicago, Pape (2003) found that, " a strategy of suicide terrorism is most likely to be used to achieve nationalist goals, such as gaining control of what the terrorists see as their national homeland territory and expelling foreign military forces from that territory" (7). This has been evidenced in the Palestinian crisis, Northern Ireland, and Basque separatists in Spain. " Even Al Qaeda's goals for 9/11 included ridding Saudi Arabia of U. S. troops" (Investigations). A right to a homeland far outweighs the importance of ideology.

Ideology seldom enters the discussion on terrorism or the terrorist's demands. In recent decades, terrorists have targeted democracies as they are "especially vulnerable to coercive punishment", and they have also been in a hegemonic position to aggressively occupy homelands in an effort to spread democracy (Investigations). Religion is similarly weak as a motivation to commit terrorism, but does play a role as an organizer and symbol.

Religion plays a part in terrorism as a symbolic commonality among the members and a vehicle for organizing and financing. The Middle East has some of the most violent terrorism in the world, and it is often seen as an Islamic against Christianity struggle. However, "most Muslims repudiate the terrorist attacks launched in their name, but the militant radicals have widespread sympathy because they articulate the grievances of many Muslims against American policy" (Lapidus, 2002, p. 835). In addition, religious organizations are easily exploited by terrorists for fund raising and as a legitimizing front for terrorist activities. The Catholic religion played this role in Northern Ireland for the IRA, and it is seen in radical abortion foes in the US that use extremist religions as a base of operations.

In conclusion, the most effective counter terrorism strategy would be to eliminate the perception of occupation of a foreign homeland. Ideology and religion play only a minor role in the individual's decision to use terrorism or as a point of disagreement to initiate a terrorist act.

## References

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