

PSCI 3510
Terrorism and Political Violence
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PSCI 3510 "Cinema Series"

- First film: Michael Collins
- Next Wednesday evening (10/10) 6:30 pm in 3301 Friedmann
- Michael Collins was an activist and leader in Ireland's struggle for independence between 1916 and 1920.
- He was also a leading figure in the Irish Republican Army (IRA).



UNSC Simulation

- Roles will be assigned next week.
- Two chairs needed.
 - Experience in Model UN or student government is a plus.
 - Willing to wield the gavel and be familiar with the rules (posted on the course website).




Possible Causes of Terrorism

- Poverty (correlated somewhat with education).
- Religious identity.
- Other forms of identity (e.g., nationalism, religion, ethnicity).
- Psychological maladies or propensities.



Last week...

Observance → Activism → Violence?

- From the article by Gregg:
 - Social movement activism.
 - Fundamentalism.

Observance → Activism → Violence?

- The apocalyptic warrior.
- Divine battle between good and evil.
- Sometimes: end of times scenario.
- Violence is part of the process.



An Apocalyptic Cult

- Aum Shinrikyo, Japan.
- It's religion was syncretic, drawing from Hinduism, Buddhism, Christian messianism, and more.
- End of days: WWIII apocalypse that would leave followers the only ones living.
- Sarin gas attacks in 1995.



Cautionary Note

- Devout religious observance does not necessarily lead to religious activism.
- Religious activism does not necessarily lead to violence.



Ferguson, Missouri 2014

Psychological Explanations

- Common CW: Terrorists suffer from mental illness.
 - Thesis: radicalization is caused by mental illness.
 - No evidence to support.



Borum on Psychology of Terrorism

- Worldviews and mindsets
- Vulnerabilities
- Propensities



Psychological Explanations

- Mindsets, vulnerability and propensities.
 - What kind of people are vulnerable to terrorist messages?
 - What kind of mindsets lead to propensities for violence and radicalization?



The "Authoritarian" Mindset

- Characteristics:
 - submission to authority
 - anger and aggression toward "out-groups"*
- Thinking style:
 - rigidity
 - dualism (dichotomies; black and white)
 - intolerance of ambiguity

* Think of Sen: positive and negative manifestations of nationalism

The "Authoritarian" Mindset

- Common manifestations:
 - ethnocentrism
 - prejudice
 - nationalism
 - anti-immigrant attitudes
 - opposition to civil and human rights
- "Authoritarians seek protection from danger as well as direction when faced with uncertainty."

The "Dogmatic" Mindset

- Characteristics:
 - closed cognitive system of beliefs and disbeliefs about reality
 - central set of beliefs about absolute authority
 - patterns of intolerance
 - unable to process contrary information
 - hostility to different views
 - dualism in thinking
 - dehumanizing of opponents
- i.e., "authoritarianism +"

The "Apocalyptic" Mindset

- Characteristics:
 - belief in "approaching confrontation, cataclysmic event, or transformation of epochal proportion"
 - sense of time: the cataclysm is imminent
 - violence is justified to achieve justice and hasten the end
 - mobilization and movement
- Can be exacerbated by psychological states such as depression or psychosis (uncertainty of reality)

Psychological Vulnerabilities

- What kind of people are vulnerable to terrorist messages?
 - A need for personal meaning and identity
 - purpose, value, self-worth
 - A need for belonging
 - sometimes this is the initial appeal for prospective terrorists
 - Perceived injustice and/or humiliation
 - view injustice as intentional
 - strong desire to punish perpetrators