


PSCI 3510
Terrorism and Political Violence
October 9, 2017

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PSCI 3510 "Cinema Series"

- First film: Michael Collins
- Next Monday evening (10/16) 7pm in 3301 Friedmann
- (Rumor: there might be pizza...)
- 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).





Meet Ashley Horvat (BA '10)
2017 Alumni Achievement Award Recipient
Political Science/Environment and Sustainability
Friday, October 13 at 12 p.m.
Political Science Library, 3301 FRD

Ashley will share how her WMU education prepared her to become a leader in the electric vehicle industry, as well as her perspective on the future of the automobile.
Questions and Answers to follow!
Lunch provided.





Simulation

- The guidelines and instructions for the simulation have been posted.
- Role assignments will be announced on Wednesday.
 - If you have a preference, let me know by tomorrow.
 - Note: I may or may not honor preferences (don't take it personally if not).





Possible Causes of Terrorism

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



Psychological Explanations

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

Psychological Explanations

- Borum: 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)

The "Fundamentalist" Mindset

- Belief in the literal word or text, dogmatic and uncompromising. Usually accompanied by presence of a charismatic leader.
- Frequent characteristics
 - dualism
 - paranoia
 - apocalypticism
 - attraction to charismatic leadership
 - total conversion to new status

Psychological Vulnerabilities

- 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

Attitudinal Propensities

- Pro-violence attitudes
- Tendency to harbor grievances
- External threat perception
- Sensation-seeking
- "Disinhibition": moral disengagement from conventional sanctions on violent behavior

Sum

- What makes an individual open to terrorist messages?
- Borum: look for a combination of:
 - Specific mindsets
 - Psychological vulnerabilities
 - Attitudinal propensities



Do we think clearly when we think about terrorism?

Really?



Critical Thinking Errors

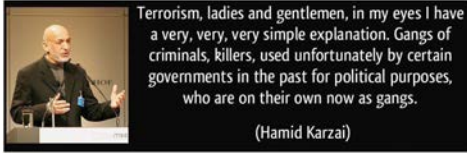
- Overgeneralization
 - All terrorists are not alike.
 - Motivations differ.
 - Consider:
 - Zealots, Sicarii, Thugs, and Assassins
 - The Jacobins of the French Revolution
 - 19th century anarchists
 - Irish nationalists, other 20th C ethnic separatists
 - European and Latin American leftists
 - Religious radicals
- What do they have in common?

Critical Thinking Errors

- Overgeneralization
- Reductionism
 - The fallacy of explaining complex phenomenon by a single factor.
 - "[Terrorists] hate us because we have freedom of speech, because we have diversity in our religious beliefs. They hate us because we're a tolerant society." (Senator Marco Rubio after 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris)

Critical Thinking Errors

- Overgeneralization
- Reductionism
 - The fallacy of explaining complex phenomenon by a single factor.



Other Errors

- Under appreciation for psychology of rewards.
 - Power, prestige, privilege.
 - Glamour and excitement.
 - A sense of higher purpose.

Other Errors

- Under appreciation for psychology of rewards.
- Describing motivations with complex psychological diagnoses
 - Often it's just hatred, revulsion, and/or revenge.



ISIS video screenshot threatening revenge against Russia