

## A STUDY THAT SHOWS RELIGIOUS ZEALOTS ARE DRIVEN BY A FEELING OF PIETY

Ariel Glucklich, Professor of Religion, Georgetown, points to the fact that "people go to war not just out of aggression but for honour and even for love." His book, *Dying for Heaven*, should be taken seriously for the testimony of those who knew murderous religious militants and those who were involved in such terrorism do bear witness to an amazing buzz at the though they are doing something so extreme for a worthy cause.

Let us look at a study that may question that.

The *Journal of Individual Differences* talks about the extremist mindset and says it really exists. Janko Mededovic and Goran Knezevic talk about the Militant Extremist Mindset or MEM. Employed in Belgrade's Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, they found you can tell if a person or group will probably commit acts of violence when you learn what they believe and what reasons motivate them.

One thing all the extremists they studied had was a belief that violence can and often does work for the greater good. COMMENT: Nobody has the right to deny that any political party or religion that exists today is dependent on killing opponents inside and out. They might not do it not but violence put them where they are in the society map. For example, if Catholicism had not managed to get Jewish critics silenced and killed, get heretical groups liquidated and control women by burning them as witches do you think it would even be around? Moral and doctrinal purity demand some kind of elimination process and it can be a bloody elimination. The hidden message of politics and religions is that violence has served them well.

Another is that the potential terrorists think cultures and the world in general are going off the moral rails. COMMENT: There is so much lying and corruption that peace cannot do much if anything. For example, if you believe abortion is murder and getting more and more rife and extreme you will feel that either way, peaceful protest or violence is still leading to babies being killed so it does not matter what way you go. The belief that evil people eventually eat themselves up makes you think that if you hurt them you are saving them from worse than what they can do to themselves. The notion that evil defeats itself encourages you to give it a helping hand for nobody says it should be left alone to fester.

Another making what might be termed the top three is the sense and feeling that some godly force bigger than them is poised to use the violence for a greater good and justifies or at least understands it. COMMENT: This belief tends to result in suicide bombing martyrs. This is closely related to the previous one where you are seen as helping evil self-destruct. It may not be articulated prophet style as in dictations from God running, "Thus says the Lord, the United Kingdom and USA will bear the fruit of their evil actions and perish in agony. But beauty and love shall rise from the ashes." But there is a prophet forecast mentality there.

The links between the extremists expresses something. You cannot think you need violence without feeling you are a hero to be or a potential one. You get pleasure even if it is only relief at the thought that you can maybe do something big about how society is going down the moral toilet. You get pleasure and a sense of support from thinking you are acting for and with God.

Take what Kennedy said about the danger with the fanatic is how he thinks of enemies and perceived enemies. All our insights about what religious terrorists have in common can be summarised by saying the problem is how enemies are evaluated. Let us explore this. God goes with the notion that he despite appearances will be working against the wicked to support the good. Crushing them or killing them is seen as paving way for the greater good. Or it is seen AS the greater good. They are seen as lacking the spiritual gift of spiritual pleasure that God grants which is why they are sinners or rebels from God or potential rebels. Each rebel is a potentially worse rebel which makes it more disturbing. If a religious person sees an abortion affirming culture as a murderous one what can you expect them to do but want to kill the people responsible for that culture or who are part of it?

Belief can get a person to kill for God or faith or the faith-group. Belief can also remove reasons for leaving people alone away from those who want to kill heretics and infidels. Either of those scenarios is bad and you can have both together at the one time as well.

Glucklich reminds us that the mentally-ill no more use violence than the mentally healthy do. It is good to see this book moving away from the bigoted and lazy assumption that religious terrorists are to be assumed to be driven by mental illness such as schizophrenia or whatever. If you want to blame religion and say it is the mental illness then that is up to you. Antisocial personality disorders often get the blame too. But if somebody is not fitting in society but is happy with God

and feels close to God and God is enough for him then can you call that person a sufferer of an antisocial disorder? Faith can hide how much hate a person has for society. It is easy for the believer in God to be nice to you and charming when he thinks he is channelling and directing his hate by getting God to do bad things to you if not now then in God's own time.

Those who act alone rather than group members tend to show signs of personality disorders or mental illness. There could be some psychotic symptoms even in those who have not developed full mental illness. What counts then as such a symptom? Disintegration mainly.

Accordingly another body of research has found that developing this personality trait of disintegration which it describes as, "proneness to see and feel connections among factually unrelated phenomena, leading to the weakened reality testing and various psychotic-like phenomena" seems to be the symptom we should talk about. It is essentially seeing meaning and patterns in life or events that are in fact not there. The religious terrorist may go on a shooting rampage if he opens his Bible/Koran looking for a message from God and sees a pro-violence one. It does not matter if the terrorist finds this message strong or weak. It may be enough to get him to act violently. The trouble is that imagining signs is what fuels religious faith and trust in God! Can we call this a mental illness only when it may lead to something bad? The problem makes it hard to find clues if x will suicide-bomb instead of y who thinks the same way.

## LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Dying for Heaven is a timely book. The real blame for religious terrorism is schools and parents and clergy who condition and influence their children into religious faith. Beliefs kill not guns and not terrorist's bombs. What leads to the bomb being made and carried and used in the first place? Somebody's belief.

All religion can say is to quote the book, "If one can love God, one surely ought to love another human." Then the next sentence is, "In practice, however, no such horizontal love can be detected in large-scale groups."

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Janko Međedović, Goran Knežević. Dark and Peculiar: The Key Features of Militant Extremist Thinking Pattern? Journal of Individual Differences, 2019.

