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SKU: 9780134818146-TEST-BANK

Chapter 2
Political Ideology and the Historical Roots of Terrorism

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 2 explores the political and social theory that motivates certain groups—from the genesis of revolutionary ideology and terror to contemporary hate crime and radical Islamic movements. We start with the historic left-wing ideologies of socialism from the end of the 19th century and trace ideological ties to more contemporary perspectives of revolution in South America and the Middle. The final part of this chapter focuses on the historical roots of terrorism in the Middle East, from early anti-colonial ideology and the mandate system developed at the end of World War I to the establishment of Israel and the beginning of the Palestinian Resistance movement.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Describe the concept of political terrorism.
- Provide an overview of leftist terror cells, including Latin American and European groups.
- Discuss how colonialism and the mandate system set the stage for future conflict in the Middle East.
- Describe the secular "first wave" Palestinian terror groups.
- Provide insight into how the United States and its policies have impacted terrorist ideology in the Middle East.

LECTURE OUTLINE

Introduction

The subject of "politics" often provokes intense emotion, generates passionate discussion, and can frequently create extreme resistance to considering another person's point of view. Identifying with a particular political theory or ideology can also help reduce uncertainty, make a person feel more secure, and increase feelings of solidarity with others. As such, it's easy to understand "how" terrorists can add to and indoctrinate their ranks, particularly during times of perceived societal upheaval. Early historical writers on the subject of terrorism suggested that terrorism must be part of a revolutionary strategy and that it poses a significant social consequences as well:

• Terrorism has a direct effect on the social structure of a society.

• Terrorism upsets the framework of precepts, images, and symbols on which society is based on, which society depends and trusts.

• Terrorism destroys the solidarity, cooperation, and interdependence on which social functioning is based and substitutes insecurity, distrust, and fear.

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- Terrorism attacks the very bases of social order, culture, and government.

Revolutionary Ideology and Terror

Much of the collective "modern" experience with terrorism from the Middle East is based in radical Islam. Terrorism today is not seen as purely a political phenomenon, but rather as something that is mostly motivated by religious zealots that misinterpret the peaceful constructs of various world religious, whether Islamic, Judaic, or Christian.

Surprisingly, even those terrorist groups (like al-Qaeda) that spring primarily from religious ideology are deeply rooted in political and historical movements hailing from mid-19th century Europe. Left-wing extremism is heavily rooted in the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in Russia during the 1800s. Their theory (now called "Marxism"), seeks to change or eliminate a capitalist system that is perceived to be corrupt and oppressive in nature and restore power and autonomy to the working class.

Anarchism

Anarchism is a belief that there should be no centralized government and that society should be based upon voluntary cooperation and free association between individuals. It was first expressed by a radical contributor to the ideology of the 1848 uprising in France, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

For the most part, violent revolution and destruction was advocated via largely passive propaganda—accomplished by leaflets, parlor meetings full of intellectuals, and newspapers with pro-revolution language.

Necheyev and his contemporaries promoted "propaganda by the deed," wherein acts of violence were advocated as a principal means of revolution. A rash of political assassinations in the early 20th century can also be traced to the anarchist tactics espoused by Necheyev and Bakunin.

Marxism

The Marxist movement sprang from the belief that power and wealth were too concentrated in the hands of just a few—it championed the industrial working class as the creators of society's wealth, and sought to share that wealth equally, rather than putting it all in the hands of the very elite (the bourgeoisie).

In The Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engel proscribe a political and social theory that directed the working class to violent revolution in an effort to overthrow the existing monarchies of Europe and Russia.

Marx believed that entire history of man and society was a drive toward a new, utopian state of government: communism. Communism is characterized by the total elimination of private property as well as government. Under the communist state, all goods and services are owned in common and are available as needed.

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Marx's entire theory is based on his perspective of history as a constant struggle between classes of society. Marx believed that revolution was sparked by the vanguard, described as advanced and tenacious representatives of the working class, who would organize revolution and overthrow the bourgeois ruling class.

The vanguard

Vladimir Lenin further developed the concept of the vanguard in the early 20th century. The vanguard exploits the differences in people existing in a heterogeneous population. They use differences among people to agitate and disrupt society, while at the same time attacking government through a variety of tactics.

"Che" Guevara and the Promotion of World Revolution

Ernesto "Che" Guevara (1928–1967) was a Marxist revolutionary who became an iconic cultural hero throughout the world during a time when the tenets of capitalism were questioned and the United States was engaged in the controversial Vietnam War (1956–1975).

Guevara believed that there needed to be an immediate impact on the political consciousness of the ruling party, and that immediate impact involved an armed revolution sparked by those most oppressed—the rural, agrarian-based population of a country.Much of Che Guevara's writing formed the basis for Communist rhetoric during the Vietnam War and his picture symbolized the anti-American sentiment prevalent during this time period.

The concept of the vanguard did not die with Guevara. Today, elements of the process are seen in Islamic terror cells, and in many cases, terrorism remains the mark of the vanguard.

Latin American Leftist Groups

In Latin America, for example, several groups furthered Marxist ideology in action, engaging in guerrilla warfare just as "Che" Guevara advocated. Today, the most infamous of these is the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), established in 1964 as the military wing of the Colombian Communist Party.

The National Liberation Army (ELN), is also a Marxist group that operates in the Colombian countryside. Though much smaller than FARC, it too has profited heavily from the drug trade as it looks to replace the Colombian government with an egalitarian democracy that represents the rural peasant class.

Peru's most notorious leftist group is Sendero Luminoso or Shining Path, which adopted core Marxist principles and added the teachings of their leader Abimeal Guzman, resulting in a mish-mash of mysticism, Marxism, teachings of Mao, and even racial Bigotry.

In Argentina, complex political upheaval spawned several leftist groups. The Montoneros and the People's Revolutionary Army rose to infamy after a 1966 military coup in the country established an authoritarian-bureaucratic state. The Montoneros sprang from the Marxist left, viewing themselves as a vanguard for revolution, but also incorporating radical Catholic

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principles into their calls for justice and unity for all Argentinians.

European Leftist Groups

While leftist groups in Latin America were fighting ostensibly a "guerrilla" war on behalf of the peasant and agrarian classes, European leftist terror groups of the same period identified more as "revolutionary thinkers."

One of the most active of these new left groups was the Red Brigades, based in Italy. The group formed in 1969 and became one of the largest leftist groups in Europe, with thousands of members at its peak. Their blend of Marxist and Leninist ideology sought to overthrow the government in three phases, all involving campaigns of urban terror.

In Germany, the notorious Red Army Faction (RAF)—also known as the Baader-Meinhof Gang—was the most prominent leftist group of its era. Its members, forever casting it in the lore of terrorist history, carried out three major incidents. First, a public prosecutor in Berlin was killed by a hit squad in April. Second, in July 1977, a banking executive was murdered in his home. Third, in September 1977, Hanns Martin Schleyer—a powerful industrialist linked to the old German Nazi party—was forced out of his car and kidnapped.

The Revolutionary Cells, and its feminist-leaning auxiliary group the Red Zora, were the least prominent of the three major European leftist groups. The group was Marxist in nature but eschewed the "underground" terrorist tactics of the RAF.

Members of the Revolutionary Cell, in concert with members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), hijacked the Air France plane with 248 passengers. Acting on intelligence from various sources, the famous Operation Thunderbolt was planned for the raid on Entebbe at night on July 4, 1976. The "Raid on Entebbe" became a significant world event and marked the beginning of elite commando forces of countries around the world in an effort to counter terrorism with opposing tactical and military means.

- **Movie note** – Show the movie "Raid on Entebbe" (1977) or "7 Days in Entebbe" (2018) in class. Discuss the significance of this event and what led it to become a flagship event in the history of counter terrorism.

Historical Roots of Terrorism in the Middle East

Marxist theory has also acted as the ideological foundation for groups interacting throughout the world—for example, the collaboration between German leftist cells of the RAF and members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) during the 1970s.

Colonialism and the mandate system

The term colonialism refers to a practice of inhabiting a specific area outside the native country. Unfortunately, it often includes the social, political, and economic domination of the indigenous people of an area. Further, when a colonial power takes over a new territory, the natural resources and/or wealth of that territory is often transferred to the colonizing country.

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During World War I, both the British and the French realized the significant strategic importance of the Middle East, especially the potential wealth from oil that lies under its desert sands. In 1916, the Sykes-Picot Agreement was developed. The Sykes-Picot Agreement essentially carved up the Middle East into British and French “spheres of influence”.

In addition, the Balfour Declaration, emerged from Great Britain in 1917, formally signaled British support for the development of a new, sovereign Jewish state in the Middle East. The Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration sadly laid the early foundation of mistrust against Western countries that Persists to this day.

The fight against colonialism throughout the Middle East was informed by the same philosophical ideology: Marxism. Arab uprisings began immediately as a result of the mandate system. The first began in 1920, as a revolt against British control in Egypt, followed by another in Iraq the same year. Arab resistance also increased in the British mandate area of Transjordan, containing what is now the Palestinian Territory, Israel, and Jordon.

The events of World War II loomed large in the Palestinian Territory as well as throughout the Middle East, changing the course of Palestinian history and signaling the end of the mandate system of traditional colonialism in the Middle East.

The impact of World War II and the establishment of Israel

After World War II ended, areas subject to the mandate system in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt gained full independence from British and French rule. In the Palestinian Territory (referred to as just Palestine), however, control of the land was handed over to the newly formed United Nations (1947). The UN developed a Special Committee on Palestine, which set forth two proposals calling for the creation of separate Arab and Jewish states.

The United Nations adopted the partition plan on November 29, 1947. It gave just over 56 percent of Palestine to the Jewish state and about 43 percent to the Arab state, with the holy sites in Jerusalem remaining an international enclave.

The approval prompted the withdrawal of British forces and immediately pitted Arabs against Jews living in the area. Arab military forces invaded Israel; most were unsuccessful, and hostilities ended in early 1949 with an armistice agreement that set the recognized boundaries of a new Israeli state and divided Jerusalem in half between the Jewish and Arab settlers.

In addition to the dispute about whether Israel should even exist, other contentious factors are at work. Many of the sites located in Israel generally and in Jerusalem particularly have great meaning to all three of the monotheistic religions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, and often they are within just a few feet of each other.

The Palestinian resistance movement

The problem of Palestine quickly became the “lightening rod” for all Arab Muslims against

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Western influence in the region.

In early 1964, Egyptian President Jamal Abd al-Nasser convened the first Arab Summit Conference in Cairo regarding the plight of Palestine. The conference, held in 1964, gave birth to a new organization known as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), with a Palestinian Congress headed by Ahmad Shuqayri.

Predictably, the PLO fractured into over a hundred different groups, each linked to the concept of a free and independent Palestinian state, but with a different ideology or methodology for achieving such a status. Some of these groups had existed well before the PLO was even chartered. One such group was al-Fatah, which translates as "to open" from Arabic. By the end of the 1965, al-Fatah had become an accomplished guerrilla force, carrying out a variety of bombings and attacks against Israeli military and citizen targets.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) was the second largest group. Leadership of the PFLP rested in the hands of two Christian Marxist physicians; George Habash became the political figurehead while his longtime friend, Wadi Haddad, directed military and guerrilla actions. In July 1968, the PFLP began a terrorist strategy aimed at bringing the Palestinian agenda to the attention of the entire world. The PFLP came to the forefront of Palestinian organizations as a result of successful skyjackings that hit the world stage, forcing one terrorism expert of the time (Brian M. Jenkins from the RAND Corporation) to coin the phrase that "terrorism was grand theater."

The Black September Organization (BSO) is perhaps the most notorious, though short-lived, of the early Marxist Palestinian terrorist organizations. The Black September Organization carried out a significant number of very violent attacks in Israel and left a lasting mark on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. No attack during this period was more shocking than the events at the Summer Olympic Games in Munich, Germany, in September 1972.

The Abu Nidal Organization (ANO) was the last of the first-wave; primarily Marxist oriented Palestinian groups to gain major international notoriety. Headed by a former PFLP member named Sabri al-Banna, the group was highly entrepreneurial, working for a variety of countries, conducting "missions" that included paid assassinations and bombings throughout the Middle East. From 1972 to 1994, the group conducted 90 attacks in 20 different countries, claiming the lives of over 900 people.

- **Movie note** – Several movies deal with 1972 Munich Olympic Massacre and can be shown in class: Munich (2005); One Day in September (1999); Sword of Gideon (1986) 21 Hours at Munich (1976).

Politics, Oil, and Terrorism in the Modern Era

The Palestinian groups discussed so far were the forerunners of modern Middle East terrorist organizations, but notably they were secular—meaning that their ideology was not based in religion, but more in the political theories of Karl Marx. These prominent Palestinian terrorist groups clearly paved the way for more contemporary terrorist groups that eschewed political

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theory in favor of more radical Islamic (religious) ideology.

Since 1948, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been a central point of outrage by Arab radical groups in the Middle East. Bolstered by Marxist ideology and further inflamed by the perspectives of Fanon and other philosophers, these groups have also pointed to colonialism by European powers as the means of exploitation of the natural resources (particularly oil) in the Middle East.

On March 20, 2003, the United States launched ground attacks in Iraq to "disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people." From March 2003 to February 20, 2014, 5,314 American soldiers died in Iraq military operations and another 51,895 were wounded. Estimates for Iraqi deaths range from 120,000 to 200,000 people, and economic loss is in the billions of dollars. Iraq has become the symbol of anti-American sentiment among terrorist groups, and again, a breeding ground for radical Islamic ideology.

LIST OF CHANGES/TRANSITION GUIDE

The section 'The Islamic state" has been removed.

ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASS ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Have students compare and contrast Marxism with Federalism.

Activity 2: Make up a timeline game by listing 10-20 events. Have the students work in groups to place the events in the proper order from first to last.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS TO BOX QUESTIONS & END-OF-CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Box questions

2-1: Can you think of similarities or differences between the left and the right?

A: On the far right fringe of the spectrum, groups advocate for a specific race or ethnicity, religion, or nationality. Their endgame is a change based on a reaction to a perceived threat, that is, a changing values system or a new and pervasive culture that is upending a long-standing social order. Their methodology for achieving their endgame involves a retreat or return to the "good old days"—a social movement that seeks to restore that cherished social order. These are characterized by the neo-fascist, neo-Nazi, and skinhead hate groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, and the Christian Identity Church.

Far-left groups, by contrast, are much more future-oriented; they look to radical change, hoping to topple the social order of the past on behalf of certain societal classes (e.g., the working class or proletariats). Their movements are often based in a complex theoretical groundwork that describes those that have wealth and those that are oppressed (e.g., anti-colonialism, anti-capitalism, Marxism). The ultimate goal is liberation from a real or perceived oppressive

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government. This designation contains groups that often self-identify as communist, socialist, or anarchist, such as the Black Blocs, Earth Liberation Front, Weather Underground, and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

What really sets leftist terror groups apart—and in fact, distinguishes all ideological groups from each other—is the types of groups that they "advocate," their techniques, and their endgame. For example, modern or centrist groups advocate for society in general, not focusing on one group or another but instead looking at the whole. Their process for advancing their cause is a group consensus—generally as part of a partisan democratic event such as voting—and the outcome is generally a balance between a gradual change with a nod to tradition or status quo. This is a good characterization of most modern American political groups, with labels from liberals to conservatives.

2-2: Can you think of other philosophers that influenced revolutionary writers in the future?

A: Answers will vary (opinion question)

2-3: Do you think Arafat was a "thug" or a legitimate representative of his people?

A: Answers will vary (opinion question)

2-4: How do you think this incident impacted American policy? Do you think we should have a "no negotiation with terrorists" perspective or have things changed with more sophisticated terrorist groups?

A: Answers will vary (opinion question)

Review questions

1. Describe how political ideology can influence a person's entire worldview.

A: Identifying with a particular political theory or ideology has also been shown as calming, as strange as that may seem when discussing terrorism. It can help reduce uncertainty, make a person feel more secure, and increase feelings of solidarity with others.

2. What are the basic tenets of Marxism, and how do you see its effects in modern Middle Eastern terror?

A: Marxism seeks to change or eliminate a capitalist system that is perceived to be corrupt and oppressive in nature and restore power and autonomy to the working class. Although the goals are certainly laudable—to provide a better future for the working people—Marxism is heavily focused on the means to overthrowing government versus the maintenance of law and order. Left-wing theories are focused on revolution and anarchy, verses peaceful demonstration, to change governmental processes.

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According to Marx, man's history is that of a social class and class struggle. Social class is based on wealth and the ownership of private property, and that all class struggle has been over attaining control of private property. Marx believed that man's history of existence was based on materialism, or the ownership of private property. He strongly believed that there was no god or divine creator, and that all earthly functions are explained in terms of economic and social class based, again, upon the ownership of private property.

The discussion of terrorism in this chapter has traced its evolution from Marxism and left-wing terror groups full circle to Islamic fundamentalism. The historical roots of terrorism in the Middle East lay in 19th century France, and weave their way through Eastern Europe to World War I's colonial legacy of the mandate system. The establishment of Israel after World War II, the frequent intervention of military forces in the Holy Lands of Islam, and the quest for oil by Western nations only helped to coalesce bitter Arab groups against one enemy. The vestiges of those actions remain a threat to the stability of the entire Middle East, and to the safety and security of Western nations—especially the United States.

3. How do you think Latin American and European terror organizations inspired present-day Arab terror organizations?

A: Under Article 22 of the "Covenant of the League of Nations," the mandate system of dividing the Middle East into European colonies was established. Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Algeria were placed under French control, while Palestine, Transjordan (the area composed now of Israel and Jordan), and Egypt fell under Great Britain. The British also took, as part of their mandate, the three Ottoman provinces of Mesopotamia, Mosul, and Baghdad and Basra, defining what is now modern-day Iraq. The mandate system essentially charged Great Britain and France with administrative oversight of these territories, with responsibility for leading them toward eventual self-rule, but in reality, the two superpowers had no intention of ceding their newly acquired, wealthy territories. Immediately following the implementation of the mandate, Arab nationalism rose throughout the Middle East and resistance against the new colonialism began

4. What was the mandate system and how do we see its lasting effects in Middle Eastern conflict?

A: At the end of World War I, a series of treaties divided the former Ottoman Empire into a series of British and French "spheres of influence." This encroachment into Arab lands engendered a series of uprisings throughout the Middle East, further inflamed by the mandate system—which gave Great Britain rule over Palestine, which had previously been legitimized as a Jewish homeland by the Balfour Declaration.

5. How is the United States perceived by the Arab world, and why? How does this influence terrorist ideology?

A: United States oil interests—plus its long-standing support of the Israeli state—have long been a source of anger among Arab nationalists, who decry the imperialist actions of the United States and other Western countries. Nationalists and Islamic fundamentalists use Marxist-Leninist principles to inform their perceptions of and reactions to the unwelcome advances of the United

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States. Such sentiment has been further exacerbated due to U.S. actions in and around Iraq, most notably due to the U.S. presence in Arab holy lands as part of an offensive around Iraq and the long-standing occupation and destabilization of Iraq.

Critical thinking exercises

1. **The Impact of Oil in the Middle East.** Visit the homepage for Saudi Aramco and Life-Time Magazine. Search these sites for stories on the discovery of oil in the Middle East. Learn about the history and culture of the Middle East in 1945 when the oil industry just began in that region. Notice the photos of the region and compare them to more modern times. How much has the landscaped really changed in half a century? Visit the home pages of some of the wealthiest Middle East countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. Notice the significant improvements in health, education, and welfare of the individuals in those countries. Notice also that each of these countries is a royal monarchy. How do you think the form of government and the pervasive religion of Islam in the region have impacted the economic development of the Middle East—both negatively and positively?

A: Answers will vary. It is helpful for the students to know that some of these countries are the richest in the world. The United Arab Emirates has 95% of the world's oil. Since the 1970s, UAE has changed from a desert to a magical fairy-tale. Their Islam religion does not tolerate alcohol, drugs, or guns. Their crime rate is low and the police force is respected. The country allows freedom of religion and can boast that a homeless problem does not exist.

2. **Terrorism as the Nexus of Politics and Violence.** In 1997, Bruce Hoffman, an international expert on terrorism and political violence at the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, California, wrote a compelling article entitled "The Modern Terrorist Mindset: Tactics, Targets and Techniques" (New York: Columbia International Affairs Online Working Paper, October 1997). In that article, Hoffman explores the mindset of terrorists and the tactics they use in seeking political change. He contends that terrorism is where politics and violence intersect in the hopes of producing power … power to dominate and coerce, to intimidate and control, and ultimately to effect fundamental political change. Discuss this concept in history. Has any terrorist movement ever been successful in achieving not just political change through revolution, but also long-term international recognition as a ruling party or existing government? Can you give any examples? Interestingly, Hoffman indicates that in modern times, most terrorist groups do not reach the final steps of authority and governance of their homeland or country … but that was in 1997. Have things changed, particularly in the Middle East?

A: Answers will vary. This calls for an opinion. The students will find that there is continuous disagreement on this issue. Some will argue that terrorism is successful, while others disagree. This can make for a great discussion.

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