Understanding and Responding to Islamic Terrorism

Lesson 3: Goals and Contributing Factors

Lesson Outline

- Goals
- Contributing Factors

The Goals of Islamic Terrorism

Restore a 7th-Century Version of Islam

- Most of the modern Islamist movements are guided by a worldview that views the 7th century AD as the peak of civilization.
- The 7th century was the dawning of Islam and saw the first rapid expansion of the Muslim empire.
- Anything that came after the 7th century, whether it be political theories, intellectual advancements, etc., is to be rejected.
- The world should be governed by the Qu'ran and Sunnah (Muhammad's example) and live under the Sharia'h.

The Goals of Islamic Terrorism

Restore Islam to Global Position of Power

- As discussed in previous lectures, Islam went from a position of great global power to one of minute presence.
- Many Muslims countries were at one time controlled by Western powers and even now are often subjected to the will of entities such as the UN, which are non-Muslim bodies.
- The desire for Islamists is to see Islam retake control and become the dominant religio-political power, not just in the Middle East, but also throughout the world.

The Goals of Islamic Terrorism

Submit the Entire World to Islam

- The phrase "Muslims want to take over the world," is often viewed with suspicion and dismissal. It just sounds fanatical and paranoid.
- The reality is that Islam as a system has an inherent mandate to submit the entire world to the religion of Allah.
- Allah is the supreme being, so any part of the world that does not submit to him is outside of his will. Whether it is people or governments or morals, all things must submit to Islam.
- While this is a scary truth, Christians should at least appreciate the inherent universality of the religion. If Allah is supreme, and if he has given commands for all of life, then everything should respond to those commands in obedience.

Factors that Contribute to Islamic Terrorism

Political Factor: Hostility Toward America

"We need not go back beyond nine hundred years to attempt a diagnosis of the ingrained suspicions and acts of hostility manifested by Christian societies of Europe toward Islam until the mid-twentieth century, and by the United States since then. The United States has replaced the erstwhile European colonizers of Muslims and has been branded as the promoter and supporter of neocolonialism by foisting the state of Israel on the Arab Muslim heartland and sustaining it with overwhelming military power, and by sustaining in places of authority unpopular Muslim rulers who have been more inclined toward self-service than public service." - Caesar Farah

Factors that Contribute to Islamic Terrorism

Social Factors: Decline of Society

- Intellectual and Cultural Isolation
- Minimal Research and Development
- Declining Productivity
- Inadequate Education
- Human Resources Squandered
- Poverty of Opportunities
- Freedom Denied
- High Maternal Mortality
- Disaffected Youth

Factors that Contribute to Islamic Terrorism

Who is to blame for these problems?

- Unfortunately, much of the blame is directed at Western powers, particularly the U.S.
- As a result, many young men turn to Islamist groups as a means of improving their lives, earning a living, and taking down the source of their problems.

Factors that Contribute to Islamic Terrorism

What about a religious motivation?

If you listen to secular news outlets and political pundits, you are likely only to hear about political and social factors that influence Islamic terrorism. Any talk of Islam as a religion motivating terrorism is quickly rejected as "bigotry" and "Islamaphobia." However, is there an element of religious ideology that is motivating some Muslims to become terrorists? We will examine this question in lessons 5 and 6.

Questions and Comments