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The Other Side of the Rubicon: Social Mechanisms of Reality Construction in Religious Terrorism

Gerry Rough

Abstract

This paper discusses a number of different ways that the religious terrorist sees his world and how he reacts to it. First, religious terror is defined to focus the discussion. Second, the religious terrorist sees secularization as a major threat, and why he must resist this trend. Third, humiliation is discussed and how this justifies his actions. Social disengagement is also discussed, and how the terrorist sees that governments and outsiders are against him. There is also an additional section on why Islam has within itself the elements that lead to terror, and why Islam is so different from other faiths that do not lead to this path nearly as much. Conclusions and policy proposals are given.

It was Tuesday morning. It was supposed to be just another day in an American city, just another day at the office. But this was not the morning we thought; it was a morning that would shatter the silence and awaken a nation: it was the morning of 9/11. The silence was shattered that day with thunder from the heavens, the sound of wrath, the sound of fury from an enemy we could not see. We slept peacefully in our smugness, blissfully unaware that an enemy we could not understand was drawing near with weapons we could not comprehend. We were a people who could not be attacked from afar, and so we slept the uneasy slumber of a nation who feared the inevitable, yet ignored the silence that we knew would someday awaken us. This was the America that we knew on September 11, 2001. On September 12th, we awoke a new nation, a nation that had forever changed. The world that we had refused to see was now upon us, and we were only beginning to ask the burning questions that seemed to spring forth from our nation, the questions of who had done this, and why did they do it.

Since then, of course, we now have a national understanding of those questions that we did not before, but there are still questions that are yet unanswered, including the question of how could someone make the leap from hatred to action on this scale. Clearly there is something brewing under the surface here that reasonable people do not understand, something sinister that we dare not think. This is the world of the religious terrorist, the world that we as a nation *must* understand if we are to defeat this most deadly of enemies. The question of how to get from a reasonable person to vicious terrorist willing to murder on a grand scale must be explored and understood *before* we move forward in the War on Terror, for if we can understand this question, we can then understand its causes and its cures. Seeing their world in *their* terms is where we must begin if we are to defeat terrorism at its source. If there is one thing this research has made abundantly clear, it is that there is no psychological personality that makes one a terrorist. Unfortunately, much research has been done on this very issue from a clinical view and nothing to date has been found: there is no terrorist personality, no clinical diagnosis that leads to the sickness we know as the world of the terrorist. Walter Reich has put it most succinctly: "Nor does that constellation of characteristics long sought but still not found, the 'terrorist personality,' appear to account for terrorist behavior; indeed, it

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almost certainly does not exist."[1] This paper then, explores the *social* world of the religious terrorist, the humanity that we in the West saw on that day that repels us so. For, I believe, there are clues to terrorist behavior still to be found, but only at the social level of inquiry. But before we begin, we must first define what we mean by the term religious terrorist, so that we can start to understand the events of 9/11, and to whom we are responding. Beyond this introductory definition, there are three major sections to this paper. First, I will expound the important issue of the growing global secularization movement and how it threatens the world of the religious terrorist. From there I will illustrate the topic of humiliation and social injustice that pervades the terrorist mindset, and lastly, I will develop the matter of social disengagement and how terrorists tend to remove themselves from their world and how it affects them.

But there is yet one more element of religious terrorism that is paramount to understanding this important issue; it is the topic of why Islam is so much different than other faiths that makes it the hub of most religious terror. In this additional section, I will explore the elements that are within Islam that have taken Islam as a faith into territory uncharted by other faiths, and help the reader understand the social and political forces that feed the terrorist impulse within Islam.

Defining Religious Terror

In attempting to define terrorism apart from other forms of violence, we must make the clear distinction between several terms that are commonly used to describe violence of this nature. Terrorism is most readily distinguished from simple criminal violence not in the tactics used, but in the reason the acts are carried out. Criminal violence has no political cause associated with it; it is here a matter of personal or egocentric purpose. Perhaps the best example of this is John Hinckley, the would-be assassin of President Reagan in 1981. Hinckley's stated goal was to impress the actress Jody Foster. This is clearly different than the stated goals of political terrorist organizations of the Middle East such as Al Qaeda or Islamic Jihad who have stated their goals.[2] Additionally, the terrorist can be easily distinguished from an extremist in that the extremist does not use violence, but attains his goals by using illegal or culturally unacceptable belief systems or other non-violent means. The key difference here then, is the use of violence. According to Bruce Hoffman, author of *Inside Terrorism*, "The terrorist is fundamentally a *violent intellectual*, prepared to use and indeed committed to using force in the attainment of his goals."[3] The terrorist is not some sort of nut who decided one day to get his name on the front page of the local newspaper. He has somehow come to the logical conclusion that his cause now justifies his use of violence because there is a transcendent reason to murder in the name of that cause: he uses his violence because he believes in his cause, and he believes there is a case to be made to use violence to further that cause. Religious terrorism, the subject of this paper, simply fills in the needed transcendent reason for the use of violence: God told us to do it this way. It should be noted here as well that religious terrorism is not simply an afterthought; religious based terror is a thoroughly *altruistic* act — something done for the sake of others. Religious terrorists don't just add religion

[1] Reich, W. "Understanding Terrorist Behavior," in Walter Reich, ed. Origins of terrorism. (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1990) 269

[2] Hoffman, B. Inside terrorism, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 42

[3] Hoffman, B. Inside terrorism, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 43

and stir; make no mistake, the violence didn't come first, it was the command from God that came first. And to reject that command brings enormous consequences, as I will now show.

Secularization and the Social Order

The issue of secularization to the religious terrorist is an extremely important one because it is so foundational and threatening to them. In this section of the paper, I will define secularization and why it is so important to this issue, then move into the need for moral order and how it plays out to the religious terrorist, and then how secularization is related to how religious terrorists view the almighty. In this way the reader can follow the reasoning better as each section builds upon each other toward a conclusion.

Secularization is essentially defined as making something separate from any religious or clerical type of influence. This is very insulting to the religious terrorist, because religion should be part of any governmental institution. The primary argument for the religious terrorist to use violence is that secular society (i.e., the society that has separated itself from religion) has essentially rationalized away the entire concept of religion and religious experience, only to find the empty shell of some antiseptic-sounding term that only academic professors use. Not so the religious terrorist. According to Martin, "They plot and plan and God too plans…but the best of planners is God."[4] For those of terrorist mindset, it is the ultimate insult to think in such terms. Life is *defined* by religious teaching and one's adherence to God; it is not *part* of it as the heathen would so easily have us believe — or so the argument would go. To separate the two is simply an absurdity for a religious terrorist.

What the terrorist sees on a practical level is that often there is a reductionist view that seems to pervade academic or even secular thought as regards religious experience. There is the sense in which those who question religious experience reduce the issues down to separated categories or terminology. And so from here the rub is that everything that is religious is reduced into its constituent parts and then mutilated by someone who doesn't understand the religious mind in the first place. Perhaps Watts has summed up religious reductionism (reducing religious experience into its constituent parts) when he notes that "greedy reductionism" explains all things religious. Greedy reductionism is the approach taken by the scientist in question who cites a range of relevant factors, then moves to the "nothing but" stage of the argument, meaning that the experience is nothing but those factors mentioned, then finally moves to the inevitable conclusion that "there is nothing authentically religious about religious experience."[5] One does find it interesting from the terrorist's perspective that one who would suggest this kind of reasoning did not at the beginning of the peer reviewed article in question mention any sort of disclaimer that he or she does not believe in the concept of God and/or the relevance of God. 'Purely as a scientist' they came to the conclusion that religion is nothing but social factors run amok. Religious terrorists see this very phenomenon at work in an increasingly secularized society and bristle at what they see as an insurgence against the created order. The terrorist's world is responsively constructed in black and white terms: if this be the social order, we are subject to judgment and wrath on the one hand, or utter repentance on the other. Here is where the religious terrorist makes his case, that the social

[4] Martin, G. Understanding terrorism, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003) 121
[5] Watts, F. Theology and psychology, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2002) 78

institutions have become blind unto themselves, and the secular academic looks objective only because she clothes herself in a white smock and glasses.

The discussion above regarding secularization and how it is a threat to religious terrorists is the perfect segue into how terrorists view the almighty as compared to others. According to Rudolf Otto in *The Idea of the Holy*, all of us have an innate sense of the creature versus the creator when we encounter the almighty: "In the one case you have the creature as the work of the divine creative act; in the other, impotence and general nothingness as against the overpowering might, dust and ashes as against the 'majesty.'"[6] It is here where others who are not religious terrorists differ from those who are. Those who are terrorists live their lives according to different rules, having been touched by the "other" as Otto has so eloquently put it. But in the end those who are not so devout in their faith fear not the 'majesty;' they fear not that which is not of themselves; they fear not that they are but "dust and ashes," and are but *nothing* in His presence. And that is just the point. The terrorists among us see their position in relation to God, *and fear and tremble!* Religious terrorists see the split between the Divine Order that should be, and the not-so-sacred reality that is here, and they see a world that must be restored back to what the almighty created in the beginning.[7] It is a constructed version of reality that is certainly subject to criticism from outsiders, but it is there nonetheless.

Humiliation and Social Injustice

The issue of humiliation cannot be underestimated in regards to terrorist aggression. Terrorists often feel a profound sense of humiliation such that their social identity has been ripped from their person. The reason for the humiliation is simple: their most important or identifying feature, their master status in sociological terminology, has been offended. In the case of the Palestinians in the Middle East, this is especially true. In that case, the identifying feature is their land. But make no mistake; you can hear the same rhetoric from the Ku Klux Klan here in the American heartland, whose identifying feature is their racial heritage: "Our people led by the hand of God will once more rule our great land…The White Christian people have been betrayed by our nations political, economic, educational, and religious leaders…The Knights Party, will in the years to come, become recognized by the American people as THE WHITE RIGHTS MOVEMENT!"[8]

In the case of the Klan, of course, the rhetoric is the social identity of race; in the case of the Palestinians, it is the social identity of land, and to some extent race and religion as well. The land, after all to the Palestinians, is *their* land, and they are socially and religiously identified with that land. Either way, the result is the same; a sense of humiliation that eats away at the identity of the religious terrorist. An example of this regarding the plight of Palestinians comes from Sociologist Jessica Stern, widely regarded as America's foremost expert on religious terror:

> [The Israel Defense Forces (IDF)] structures are not allowed under the Oslo Accords…The six thousand settlers in the Gaza Strip use 70 percent of the Gaza's water resources…The

[6] Otto, R. The idea of the holy, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923) 21

[7] Barkun, M. Religion and the racist right, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 119

[8] From http://www.kkk.com

> passage from one world to the other is dizzying. For Gazans, a world of relentlessly humiliating occupation by a vastly superior military power. For settlers, a southern-California-style oasis, kept up by Palestinian laborers.[9]

Terrorists feel a sense of betrayal and horror at what they see is a great injustice against the group that they belong to. Stern further documents the experiences of one nine year old Palestinian, who states in part:

> I will never forget those days, that seemed all the more difficult for a nine-year-old child. The toilets that were piled to the roof with excrement. The endless lines of other travelers and children, waiting for the unwelcoming and belligerent faces of their occupiers to place a simple stamp in their travel document giving them approval to return home; or to arbitrarily interrogate them; or deny them entry. The strip searches.[10]

They are daily reminded of their efforts that have failed in the past, and they are constantly reminded as well that their efforts continue to be ignored by the power of the state that can and should change their plight. But instead their plight is either ignored, or worse, forgotten. The only thing left is violent action that can get them to the table where everyone else sits. This is precisely why terrorists *must* use violence: it gets you attention.

But there is also another element to the sense of humiliation that needs to be considered, especially in case of Islam, but the same principle applies to other religious terrorists as we shall see shortly. In the case of Islam, there is a long history of humiliation that enters the picture as well, and perhaps there is no better place to see this than in the example given by Doran in *Somebody Else's Civil War*. According to Doran, the history of Muslim humiliation goes all the way back to the crusades and the invasion of the Mongols in 1258. These historical events were the very apex of barbarity with the fall of Baghdad and the wholesale slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Muslims. If that were not enough, as legend would have it, the skulls were stacked outside the city walls to make the point. Prior to this, of course, the crusades were the ultimate insult to the Muslim mind, a fact not lost even today some 900 years later: "In *Salafi* writings, the United States emerges as the senior member of a 'Zionist-Crusader alliance' dedicated to subjugating Muslims, killing them, and, most important, destroying Islam."[11] It is from this vantage point that we can see a clear theme beginning to emerge, the theme of historical/cosmological insult and injustice that pervades the cultural setting, the shared history that is understood. There is the sense that whatever humiliation that is present is not just an isolated issue for the current generation, it is that the humiliation has been brewing for many generations and continues that is so insulting. It is that the injustice has been happening to a people that must be stopped, and the call of this generation is to avenge the blood of the forefathers, to fight the fight of history and of a people to restore their dignity.

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[9] Stern, J. Terror in the name of God, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003) 35-37

[10] Stern, J. Terror in the name of God, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003) 38

[11] Doran, S. "Somebody else's civil war," in James F. Hoge and Gideon Rose, ed. How did this happen? (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2001) 37-38

Social Disengagement

There is s clear perception in terrorist circles that either a social out group (an enemy) is persecuting them, or that it is the government. Hogan and Dickstein surveyed perceptions of injustice and concluded that, "An orderly pattern of relationships…is beginning to emerge. The ethics of conscience, moral intuitionism, principled disobedience, doubt concerning the efficacy of the law as a means for promoting human welfare, and a tendency to regard institutions as the source of social injustice seem to be reliably interrelated."[12] This is clearly one of the core functions of the terrorist mindset: the idea that the social institutions have failed, they are to blame for our collective lot, and we must disengage from the society that allows it and fight them in the streets if we must. This very much reflects many of the writings of terrorists foreign and domestic, for the distrust of governments and other social institutions is the subject of endless writing. This should not surprise the reader. Anti-government rhetoric abounds to no end as regards almost all extremist type rhetoric. A wonderful example of this comes from Sociologist Jessica Stern:

> Some groups blame the government for acts they themselves have committed or intend to commit in the future. Aum Shinrikiyo accused the CIA of actions that the cult itself was planning, such as using chemical agents against the Japanese people. The Christian Identity news media began warning of a 'biological genocide' plotted by the U.S. government at about the same time that several right-wing extremists were found in possession of biological agents (in 1995).[13]

The very institutions of both government and religion are often seen by terrorist groups as having turned against the terrorist and his group. In turn, of course, the terrorist group now sees those same institutions as enemies of his group. The very people that the terrorist should count on for help when he needs it are the people he has grown to distrust. This is the argument that finds traction for the terrorists among us, and it is indeed far more difficult to give a coherent answer when it is governments indeed who use the social institutions to their own shame.

On Faith and Politics

While it is important to take into account the factors that have been the subject of this paper so far, I believe there is another point of view that underscores the reason that Islam and religious based terrorism is the center of so much of the world's terrorist activity. And because Islam is the primary source of most religious terrorism today, it is incumbent upon us to ask the question of why Islam seems to be so different among the world's faiths that it seems to foster the seeds of

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[12] Hogan, R. and Dickstein, E. Moral judgment and perceptions of injustice. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 1972, Volume 23, Number 3, p. 412

[13] Stern, J. Terror in the name of God, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003) 35-37

[13] Stern, J. Terror in the name of God, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003) 38

[13] Doran, S. "Somebody else's civil war," in James F. Hoge and Gideon Rose, ed. How did this happen? (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2001) 37-38

[13] Hogan, R. and Dickstein, E. Moral judgment and perceptions of injustice. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 1972, Volume 23, Number 3, p. 412[13] Stern, J. The ultimate terrorists, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999) 81

terror within. Is there something within Islam that is fostering the violent reaction to its perceived enemies that is not found elsewhere, or at least much less pronounced, that would lend itself to terrorism as a viable realistic option to affect change? These are the questions that need to be answered. It should be clearly stated here before we begin to answer these questions that not all Muslims believe the terrorist ideology. In fact, very few actually do. The point here is that Islam is being pushed by forces within that make it more likely for the terrorist mindset to take hold, and that understanding these forces could hold the key to returning Islam to its place as one of the world's great faiths.

One of the primary differences, and my own view as regards the key to answering this vexing question, is that Islam has become obsessed with its focus on the loss of its former political identity, having been eclipsed so completely by the West in this regard. More to the point, Islam has become obsessed with its political identity to the exclusion of its cultural and theological identity. In the words of Sociologist Bernard Lewis, whose thesis revolves around the cultural and historical humiliation that Muslims feel when confronted with Western supremacy, both public and private, scientific and political, "It became abundantly clear in the Middle East and indeed all over the lands of Islam that things had indeed gone badly wrong…The primacy and therefore the dominance of the West was clear for all to see, invading the Muslim in every aspect of his public and — more painfully — even his private life."[14] Islam then, has become so focused on its political loss that it has come to be *defined* by that loss, and it has therefore become obsessed with restoring its former political glory rather than allowing itself as a faith to do what religion does best in the lives of its believers. That is a clear focus that is not featured prominently in other faiths. It is a focus toward solving the problems of *this* world in political terms, not a focus that prepares the faith for the *next* world: the ultimate conversion, salvation, and enrichment of the hearts of its believers. By contrast, even within fundamentalist and evangelical Christianity, clearly the most conservative socially and theologically, there is nothing that approaches this: there is no socially accepted view that wants to bring others under some sort of religious rule or religious law. Within this subculture there is the clear social understanding that we must prepare for and be vigilant for the coming of Christ, not set up a kingdom here on earth to solve our political problems before he gets here. The few who teach such things are social and theological outcasts and seen all too unmistakably as such within that subculture. These are the "Christian" cults, who are recognized as outside the faith, the American militia groups, white supremacists, etc.

Not so within the factions of Islam that are sympathetic to terrorists. Islam has virtually no toleration of other faiths within its borders, wants very strict Shari'a law backed up by a Shari'a governmental and judicial system with it, and a social structure that reflects the teachings of Islam. If any of this has a familiar ring to it, it should. This is very much the Muslim version of Christianity under the papacy during the Middle Ages. When politics and faith became intertwined, it became so corrupt that it resulted in Christianity's own civil war, the Protestant Reformation. And it is this very attitude within Islam of living in this world and trying to change it politically that is so different. It is not as though this is *completely* different within Christianity and Judaism, it is that these social impulses are so much more subdued, and dramatically so, and recognized as unreasonable within doctrinal constraints. Indeed, the histories of the other two great faiths of the West have taught them not to go too far with the power of the state: the ancient Jews

[14] Lewis, B. What went wrong? (New York: HarperCollins, 2002) 151, 152

learned these lessons from a history of terrible kings who eventually led them to civil war and the wrath of God who took their land; Christianity learned these lessons from a history of papal and state abuse that tore the faith apart and led it to its own destructive response, the Reformation. This is what it means to live in exile for Christians and Jews: they have learned the lessons of living with their faith *apart* from political power. Islam is obsessed *with* it.

This sense of utter humiliation that happened with the ancient Jews and Christians has dramatically altered how each of these two faiths sees themselves in terms of the state. For Jew and Christian alike, the power of the state is important because faith belongs at the table as an important social institution, but the power of the state is not — most definitely *cannot* — come to define their respective faiths. Power is, after all, an earthly symbol; it helps us live in this world as a *reminder* of the world to come. It cannot become so sacred in the end that it consumes us with this world and its shifting political winds, for history has shown the Jew and the Christian that political power can be taken from us at any time, and we must hold fast to the faith that we have with or without the power of the state. For both Jew and Christian alike, the power of the state is for *this* world, not the next!

For Islam, religion and state are the same thing. They are the same social institution all rolled up into one. There is no difference between political Islam, and theological Islam. Perhaps Bernard Lewis has stated it best:

> If one may admit, in a limited professional sense, the existence of a clergy, there is no sense at all in which one can speak of a laity among Muslims. The idea that any group of persons, any kind of activities, any part of human life is in any sense outside the scope of religious law and jurisdiction is alien to Muslim thought. There is, for example, no distinction between canon law and civil law, between the law of the church and the law of the state…There is only a single law, the shari'a, accepted by Muslims as of divine origin and regulating all aspects of human life: civil, commercial, criminal, constitutional.[15]

This is an important distinction to make in religious terrorism because if religion and state are intertwined, politics and what you do with it are intertwined as well. If Islam can make indeed no distinction between politics and faith, between one social institution and another, then the baggage that comes with that frame of mind comes with it. To a religious terrorist, that makes a political enemy an enemy of the social order, an enemy of the faith, an enemy of the family, and an enemy of social justice, all of which were previously mentioned. So, the problem with Islam is that it has not separated itself from political power, and it has focused more on its political struggle with the West than it has waiting for Allah to move his will among the unconverted. The Christian and the Jew have learned this lesson the hard way throughout their historical journeys. Islam has yet to learn that there is something *beyond* political power and that in the end politics and state are for *this world*, and are here for our *this world* existence. Until Islam as a faith learns to focus on what religion does best, using its influence to guide its adherents and shape the moral character of its people toward a peaceful world and social justice for all, it will continue to be mired in the political issues in the here and now, and Islam's violent impulses, wrought in the crucible of being *defined* by the loss of its former political supremacy, will continue unabated.

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[15] Lewis, B. What went wrong? (New York: HarperCollins, 2002) 100

Conclusion

What we have seen with this study is that there are recurring themes that play out over and over again with religious based terrorism. The terrorist lives in a world far different than our own, and sees his world in far different terms and frames than you and I. They live in a world of anger, hate, humiliation and frustration, and it gnaws at them constantly. We have seen previously that the terrorist act is tied to the perception of social order, and terrorists, just like the rest of us, have a *need* for social order, and they will get it no matter how they have to do it. The religious terrorist's life is *defined* by faith, not merely influenced by it. Hence, his frame of reference is much different than others who cannot see his way of thinking. Indeed for the religious terrorist, others simply *refuse* to see the world that he sees every day. Faith is the primary social agent for the religious terrorist, and he is angered by what he sees the secularist as espousing: that all faith can be reduced to psychological and sociological factors and that there is nothing religious about religious experience. The terrorist sees the split between what is and what should be, and since God has not acted, he is calling the true believers to act in his place.

The religious terrorist has rejected faith and family because there is nowhere else to turn socially or religiously. And because his faith and his family have rejected him, the only thing left is his new faith, created by leaders of men searching for a world that makes sense, to justify his violent action and somehow make sense of a world that makes no sense at all. This is why his faith is so intense: it *must* make sense of a reality that cannot be made to make sense any other way. The religious terrorist lives in a world that has been disrupted morally and socially. Good is now evil, and evil is now considered good. The Enlightenment project didn't work for the religious terrorist; it turned the moral order on its head. The only thing that *will* work is a return to the true faith of the terrorist. History has taken a turn that has not been kind to the religious terrorist; it has been taken over by the secularist who refuses to see his own path of destruction. And since the West refuses to see it, they must be *forced* to see it. The humiliation that he feels must be brought to the table where everyone else sits; to make them see and indeed turn from the worn and trodden path of their own destruction.

These three themes play out time and time again for religious terrorists: secularization, humiliation, and social disengagement. They are a mere glimpse into the mind of the religious terrorist and the themes that are so prevalent as we have seen. Where his actions will take him not even he can see, but he is driven to move forward, driven to blind faith, and driven by a rage the rest of us can only glimpse. Until we understand the mind of the religious terrorist, we have no hope of winning the war on terror, but if we can understand his world in *his* terms, social policy can follow that will help frame the dialogue from war into the peace that each of us wants for future generations.

In lieu of the difficult circumstances that surround the topic of religious terrorism, it begs the question of what policy proposals can be initiated that will bring about the changes needed to fight the war on terror and at the same time address the concerns this paper has outlined. What policy proposal is there that can help to alleviate some of the legitimate concerns of the religious terrorist that he sees in his world? Perhaps there are some tentative ideas that should be considered. These proposals should not be considered only public policy ideas. They are intended both for public as well as private policy.

There are several that should be considered. First, the secularization issue that is so prominent with religious terrorists could be alleviated with a tolerance for religious views in the public square. The antipathy to religion and especially traditional religion could be alleviated by making traditional religious views part of the democratic dialogue. This should put all faiths (with the exception of culturally defined extremist views, such as white supremacists, etc.) on an equal per with each other. All forms of media should be encouraged to treat faith equally from all sides of the political spectrum. Second, the inequality issue needs to be addressed also. There needs to be social and private policy and education that addresses inequality at the practical level. Often, inequality is taught as theory but not addressed with realistic policy implementation. The related issue to this is the humiliation that some groups feel that needs to be addressed. Groups that are consistently put down for their beliefs and/or humiliated in the public square should be treated as equals, and there needs to be a culture of revulsion at the constant humiliation of groups that are not of the same religious or political tradition as you are. Extremist groups that are culturally defined as such are the antipathy of this cultural or interfaith tolerance: they are marked by paranoia of all outside groups, and false conspiracy charges that justify their intergroup conflict.

Another consideration is that there needs to be a strengthening of the moral contract. By this I mean that there needs to be the understanding within the culture that morality does matter, and that there are behavioral limits that do help us live in a just society. Simply because it can be said or done does not mean that it is good enough to be accepted by the rest of us as legitimate conduct. Yet another proposal to be considered is to address the assumption that western society is superior. It comes across to many who are not western as pretentious and arrogant. This assumption should be questioned and dropped from our culture. Lastly, any policy proposal here should be implemented with an outcome based check: whatever works to change the outcome to the desired result should be implemented, rather than whatever is politically correct according to a given view. Outcome based change really is the only way to realize serious results.

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