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Functionalism as an Aid to Antiterrorist/ Counterterrorist Analysis

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Title: Functionalism as an Aid to Antiterrorist/Counterterrorist Analysis

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Abstract. This article describes how philosophical and psychological variants of functionalism can aid antiterrorist/counterterrorist analysis.

Functionalism among philosophers often denotes an approach to defining mind or some of its constituents. For example, in attempting to deduce whether the human brain and a computer both exhibit mind or intelligence as a constituent of mind, philosophers might compare the degree of similarity among the problem solving outputs of the two. If these outputs are sufficiently similar and accurate, the computer may be termed a Turing machine and intelligence--in this instance--as the human brain.

Functionalism among psychologists often denotes a school of psychology. This school focuses on the adaptive consequences of human thought and behavior--but not teleology as an ultimate explanatory vehicle-- as the optimal vehicle for developing systematic human knowledge. Although championed long ago by John Dewey, James Angell, and Harvey Carr, the school still effects modern psychological theorizing and experimentation in fields such as social and evolutionary psychology.

In both philosophy and psychology, the sine qua non of functionalism is not input or process but output and its consequences. This approach can be very useful in antiterrorist/counterterrorist analysis.

For example, as intimated by John Deutch, former Director, Central Intelligence Agency, in estimating a terrorist threat one may err by merely identifying terrorist assets possessed by political entities sharing ideology and professed goals. Of crucial concern are the real-world consequences of terrorist acts-- proximal and distal. In this regard, Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) seem to be dedicated to destroying the state of Israel en route to establishing an Islamic Palestinian state. In contrast, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is secular and leftist in professed ideology, yet it also acts to destroy Israel.

An analysis might proceed as follows once the functionalist identities of the above groups are recognized. On the one hand, the difference in professed ideologies of Hamas and PIJ versus PFLP might be viewed as a vulnerability that could be exploited by antiterrorist/counterterrorist entities to mitigate against cooperation. On the other hand, the proximal similarity in real-world consequences of the three groups' acts might suggest not only that these groups might work together on selected operational or support functions, but also that the groups might work together on a regular basis or at least share personnel. Moreover, given that the differences in distal real-world consequences may be perceived by some group members to be practically significant only in the distant future, a theocratic-oriented entity may control or even create a secular-oriented one--or the converse--for the proximal real-world advantages.

As well, given that there are relative heterogeneities even within the most homogeneous entities, the antiterrorist/counterterrorist analyst may use a functionalist approach to search for consequential consistencies among members of the seemingly most diverse terrorist groupings. In representative

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democracies, however, identifying the most unlikely and even the most likely of linkages among terrorist operational and support cadre will be constrained by ethical, moral, and legal concerns related to civil liberties. The theoretical lack of face validity in specific situations, e.g., the hypothesized cooperation of secular and theocratic groups, may be used by civil rights advocates--sincere and insincere--to impede antiterrorist/counterterrorist activities even if there is an empirical data base strongly suggesting such cooperation. In a rather awkward mixed metaphor from the world of intelligence: walking back the cat is misdirected by a false- flag operation.

A last word about functionalism. Some readers might venture that linking entities through real-world consequences smacks of paranoia. However, as described in a previous IBPP article, paranoia is often incorrectly ascribed to adaptive hypervigilance. In the high-impact, low- frequency world of terrorism-- wherein the low frequency of the act belies a higher frequency of terrorist planning and support activities--functionalism has its place. (See Cone, J.D. (1997). Issues in functional analysis in behavioral assessment. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 35, 259-275; Deutch, J. (Fall, 1997). Terrorism. *Foreign Policy*, 10-22; Heidebreder, E. (1933). *Seven psychologies*. NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts; Paranoia and political leadership. (January 24, 1997). *IBPP*, 1(9); Searle, J.R. (1997). *The mysteries of consciousness*. NY: New York Review of Books Paperback.) (Keywords: Intelligence Analysis, Terrorism)