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# Terrorism in the Mideast and the United States Republican Presidential Campaign: Ideological Terror and Public Discourse

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Abstract. This article describes the use of ideological terror by the United States (US) Republican presidential campaign in the wake of the terrorist attack on the USS Cole.

Although not necessary and only sometimes sufficient, psychological terror may be an important intermediary variable in terrorism's achieving of political objectives. In an effort that might be considered an outgrowth of vicarious conditioning and/or identification with the aggressor, the US Republican presidential campaign seems to be attempting to achieve ideological terror in its quest to secure the presidency.

For example, the Republican vice presidential candidate has stated that the terrorist attack on the USS Cole is prima facie evidence that the US volunteer military does have the resources it needs to do the job it is asked to do. In other words, any successful military, paramilitary, or other politically violent act by an adversary must be explained by a lack of US military resources. The adversary cannot otherwise possess the requisite intelligence, creativity, motivation, and material assets to be successful. The desired belief intended to result from such Republican communication is that the Democratic president has not acted and the Democratic presidential candidate will not act (if elected) to provide the requisite resources to prevent terrorism. Thus, we all live in a state of terror and will continue to live in such a state unless the Republican presidential candidate is elected.

The Republican vice presidential candidate also has suggested that better gathering of intelligence could have prevented the terrorist attack on the USS Cole. This may be the case, but, again, it may not. Collecting intelligence on the intentions of notoriously difficult-to-penetrate terrorist cells and international organizations is, well, notoriously difficult. The Republican vice presidential candidate's suggestion in this context is grossly misleading at best and at worst tars the current Democratic presidential administration and a future administration led by his main opponent as hopelessly incompetent based on a specious foundation. The belief in this present and future incompetence logically leads us to an associated belief of being extremely vulnerable to further acts of terrorism and likely ideological terror.

In addition, the Republican vice presidential candidate has sown the seeds of terror with other security-related statements. (1) He has stated that any would-be terrorist needs to know that if you're going to attack, you'll be hit very hard and quickly. This statement suggest that the Democratic way of doing business is not to do this and, therefore, that terrorists can only be encouraged to engage in terrorism by the Democratic way of doing business. (This argument is advanced even though the quick and hard approach--if possible with requisite intelligence and materiel--may generate martyrs and many others willing to become martyrs.) (2) He has equated the attack on the USS Cole with the taking of US hostages by Iran under a previous Democratic presidential administration--again linking Democratic with weakness and a heightened threat of terrorism. He has done this even though it was during the 1980s under a two-term Republican presidential administration (that he cites as strong) that a number of US hostages were kidnapped and murdered, that a US Embassy was successfully destroyed with much loss

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of life, and US Marines suffered horrendous losses through terrorism. (3) He has attacked the current Democratic presidential administration as weak and incompetent for not holding together the Persian Gulf War allies, not forcing oil prices of many of these countries to remain low, and allowing the Saddam Hussein regime to remain in power--linking Democratic with weakness, incompetence, and a heightened sense of economic, political, and military terrorism. He has done this even though the Republican presidential administration of his own father made the decision to leave Saddam Hussein in power at the end of the Persian Gulf War.

Ideology can denote beliefs and belief systems nurtured in a political citizenry by a controlling political elite so that citizenry exploits itself in the service of the needs of that elite. Regardless of the merits of the various candidates in the US presidential campaign, Republican ideological terror may not only contaminate informed public discourse but also act in the service of terrorists. (See Bruni, F., & Cooper, M. (October 14, 2000). Bush camp sees unrest as validation of its views. *The New York Times*, pp. A1, A13; Kampf, H.A. (1990). Terrorism, the left wing, and the intellectuals. *Terrorism*, 13, 23-51; Rajnarain. (1986). Psychology of right and left. *Indian Journal of Current Psychological Research*, 1, 1-16; Reich, W. (Ed.). *Origins of terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*. Cambridge University Press; Roucek, J.S. (1947). *Social control*. Van Nostrand.) (Keywords: Democratic, Ideology, Republican, Terrorism.)