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Trends. Terror Management about Terrorism: Continued Victories for the 9/11 Terrorists

Editor

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Terror management is a theory wherein explanations for human psychology and behavior are based on a posited human need to avoid the terror of a perceived meaningless and unpredictable world. Thus, many beliefs and belief-based behaviors--including, perhaps, the belief in and advocacy of terror management theory--may have more to do with internal than external adaptation and threat management. In addition, as far as terror management as a motivator is activated through terrorism, terrorists garner a long-term benefit of instilling a psychological response set within their targets that may render these targets less successful in proactively and reactively responding to external terrorist threat. In fact, the targets may become oblivious to the very psychological response set that may render them less successful in responding to external threat.

In the above context, United States Government representatives; mass media talking heads, headless talkers (radio broadcasters), and scribes; and concerned citizens are engaging in a futile epistemological exercise concerning pre-9/11 intelligence concerning terrorist threat. Sure, the exercises of attempting to establish who knew, what did they know, when did they know it, and how did they respond to it also involve attempts at political and material gain, the acting out of psychodynamic conflict, and legitimate counterterrorist consequence. But with each cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral exertion comes another terrorist blow--without the need for additional terrorist resources. And for such a reason has terrorism been a timeless and resilient tool of those who believe themselves to be the wretched of the earth. (See Bentall, R. P., Kinderman, P., & Bowen-Jones, K. (1999). Response latencies for the causal explanations of depressed, paranoid, and normal individuals: Availability of self-representations. *Cognitive Neuropsychiatry*, 4, 107-118; Brannan, D. W., Esler, P. F., & Strindberg, N. T. A. (2001). Talking to "terrorists": Towards an independent analytical framework for the study of violent substate activism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 24, 3-24; Florian, V., Mikulincer, M., & Hirschberger, G. (2001). An existentialist view on mortality salience effects: Personal hardiness, death-thought accessibility, and cultural worldview defence. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 437-453; Greenberg, J. Arndt, J., Schimel, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Solomon, S. (2001). Clarifying the function of mortality salience-induced worldview defense: Renewed suppression or reduced accessibility of death-related thoughts? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 37, 70-76; Kanekar, S., & Miranda, J. P. (1998). Attribution as a function of agential distance in a causal chain. *Genetic, Social, & General Psychology Monographs*, 124, 271-282; Johnston, D., & Van Natta, D. (May 21, 2002). Ashcroft learned of agent's alert just after 9/11. *The New York Times*, pp. A1, A16.) (Keywords: Terror Management, Terrorism.)