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Just Because or Because: Terrorism Discourse and Counterterrorism

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Title: Just Because or Because: Terrorism Discourse and Counterterrorism

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Abstract. This article describes some antiterrorism and counterterrorism implications of public discourse on terrorism.

Two significant moral and ethical perspectives on terrorism contrast it as intrinsically good, bad, or mixed or as good, bad, or mixed as identified through its genealogy. Especially when this genealogy is dependent on the intention of the perpetrator based on using people as a means to an end, the two significant perspectives reflect the Kantian distinction between deontological and consequentialist.

Certainly, discourse on the moral and ethical implications of terrorism may be necessary to preserve one's humanity in the context of an activity that seems to many to be inhuman and inhumane. However, it is the antiterrorism and counterterrorism implications of the discourse that may receive short shrift, regardless of whether or not implications may or may not be isolated from the discourse.

For example--with the assumption that terrorism is intrinsically bad, one might be likely to support preemptive violence against terrorism. Yet, preemptive violence may actually breed more terrorism at a rate geometrically increasing to that of ending the careers of terrorists through violence, thus all but contributing to deterrence. Terrorism as intrinsically bad so that it ineluctably envelops and constitutes the essence of the terrorist might also lead to precluding the notion of rehabilitation. Terrorism as intrinsically bad may also whet the appetite of survivors' revenge, thus whetting the appetite of perpetrators and survivors of the perpetrators as well for yet additional violence.

Terrorism discourse based on genealogy has one huge contraindication. In so far as it leads to successful attempts at eradication or attenuation of motivating grievances of terrorists and other people whom they may wittingly or unwittingly represent, a powerful positive reinforcement contingency is established that will necessarily fuel additional terrorism in response to grievance. In a world featuring the prepotency of perception, terrorism discourse based on genealogy also must confront strong social cognitions that the survivors' quest for causality implicitly attenuates the guilt of and mitigates against severe punishment for terrorists.

In conclusion, it may be that language constraints confronting moral and ethical deliberation on terrorism may impede effective antiterrorism and counterterrorism. That the same may not be the case for terrorist perpetrators may be another of terrorism's advantages. (See Blumberg, H.H. (2002). Understanding and dealing with terrorism: A classification of some contributions from the behavioral and social sciences. *Peace & Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 8, 3-16; Brezinski, Z. (September 1, 2002). Confronting anti-American grievances. *The New York Times*, p. wk 9; Hill, T.E., Jr. (1991). Making exceptions without abandoning the principle: or How a Kantian might think about terrorism. In R. G. Frey & C. Morris (Eds.). *Christopher W. (Ed). Violence, terrorism, and justice.* (pp. 196-229). New York, NY, US: Cambridge University Press; Richter, L. K., & Richter, W. L. (1999). Ethics challenges: Health, safety and accessibility in international travel and tourism. *Public Personnel Management*, 28, 595-615.) (Keywords: Antiterrorism, Ethics, Counterterrorism.)

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