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Trends. Car Bomb Explosion and an Explosion of Truths

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Abstract: This Trends article discusses multiple political psychological aspects of the August 29, 2003 car bomb explosion adjacent to the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, Iraq

The August 29, 2003 car bomb explosion adjacent to the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, Iraq is another human tragedy for those were killed and injured, yet another seeming impediment to Iraqi security and stabilization, and still another example of why such acts can be politically beneficial to their perpetrators.

As to the last observation, initial reactions and reports comprise at least several theories and attributions as to the perpetrators and those behind them. One narrative focuses on supporters of Saddam Hussein and members of the Baath Party. Supporters and members may have engaged in the car bomb explosion to impede Iraqi security and stabilization. Another narrative focuses on the United States (US) and its coalition allies. They are responsible for the tragedy because they are responsible for a security that has not been forthcoming or has been violated. Yet another narrative focuses on Zionist conspiracy. This conspiracy has allegedly been long ongoing and seeks to keep Islam and Arabs down and Judaism and Israel up through murder, propaganda, and the hoarding of global material assets. Other narratives attribute blame to Sunnis targeting Shiites and Shiites targeting Shiites. The former is founded on a centuries old conflict over the origins of Islam, the latter over a more contemporary conflict for supremacy of Iraqi Shiism and Iraq itself.

Many of these narratives are or can be mutually reinforcing much more easily than mutually contradicting. For example, Baathists and Sunnis could reasonably collaborate in an attempt to regain power lost since the demise of the Saddam Hussein government. The US and Israel could reasonably collaborate—assuming US goals for Iraq of free markets and representative democracy are compatible with Israeli security and material well-being. Even Shiite and Sunni adversaries could be temporary collaborators against a joint adversary—viz., the US.

In fact, reason as an epistemological vehicle to identify the source of the car bomb explosion can seem to be a promiscuous lover of Truth as truths. The same seems to apply to other epistemological vehicles. One may believe in whatever a respected communicator communicates through the vehicle of authority. One may believe in what one believes because one believes it through the vehicle of faith. Or one may believe through empirical data.

But these epistemological vehicles are almost always interactive and difficult to isolate. For example, one can wittingly or unwittingly attend to and apply empirical data to support pre-existing faith and belief in authority.

The upshot of the explosion of truths is an environment of cover, camouflage, and deception within which terrorist perpetrators can operate. This environment—along with the history of terrorism often being a successful force multiplier of the conventionally weak against the conventionally strong—would seem to ensure that the war against terrorism may be managed for the better or for the worse. But this

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war can never be won. (See Batteau, A.W. (2002). Anthropological approaches to culture, aviation, and flight safety. *Human Factors & Aerospace Safety*, 2, 147-171; Keinan, G., Sadeh, A., & Rosen, S. (2003). Attitudes and reactions to media coverage of terrorist acts. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 31, 149-165; MacFarquhar, N., & Opiel, R.A., Jr. (August 30, 2003). Car bomb in Iraq kills 95 at Shiite Mosque: Moderate cleric is among dead. *The New York Times*, pp. A1, A6; Pedahzur, A., Perliger, A., & Weinberg, L. (2003). Altruism and fatalism: The characteristics of Palestinian suicide terrorists. *Deviant Behavior*, 24, 405-423; Walker, K. L., & Chestnut, D. (2003). The role of ethnocultural variables in response to terrorism. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 9, 251-262.) (Keywords: Baath Party, Car Bomb, Iraq, Security, Terrorism.)