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Trends. The United States, Israel, and Parallelism in Counterterrorist Response

Editor

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Abstract: This Trends article discusses and evaluates United States reactions to terrorist attacks, and US support for Israel in a political psychological context.

The United States (US) is attacked by terrorists and launches 3 wars—one in Afghanistan, one in Iraq, and one globally against terrorism with global reach. Israel is attacked by terrorists and is counseled by the US to weigh the consequences of war and to consider that war only serves to create more terrorists and to intensify the threat to Israeli security. The question then becomes how to interpret the US counsel and why such counsel apparently does not apply to the US.

If the US believes that its own wars on terrorism do not create more terrorists, the case has not been made. Perhaps, the US can kill or apprehend terrorists at a faster rate than new terrorists are created. Perhaps, the new terrorists being created by the US are less formidable than the ones killed or apprehended. Perhaps US wars do not create new terrorists because there is much less killing of and injury to non-terrorists during the killing and apprehension of terrorists than is the case with Israel. Or perhaps terrorists are not being created at all in response to US wars. All of these are hypotheses gone looking for empirical support.

Another perhaps is that we are on the wrong track to focus on overt denotations of the US counsel. Perhaps the counsel is but a flag to show that the US is not totally in the Israeli camp—that it is, instead, an honest broker of a tragic conflict. Perhaps the counsel is a Machiavellian stab at balancing strong US domestic support for Israel, the possibility of some sort of agreement managing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at a lower level, the assumed reactions of the countless observers to the conflict, and the hopes and fears of us all. Perhaps the counsel is a manifestation of a US tunnel vision or narcissistic blindness or sense of entitlement or organizational defense that prevents serious consideration of noxious consequences stemming from counterterrorism through war.

With none of the above cases being made, the wars against terrorism go on. There is no counterterrorist parallelism in US counsel towards itself and towards Israel. And without parallelism, is that an intersection of counterterrorist tragedy up ahead? (See Everly, G.S., Jr. (2003). Psychological counterterrorism. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health*, 5, 57-59; Moghaddam, F. M., & Marsella, A. J. (Eds.). *Understanding terrorism: Psychosocial roots, consequences, and interventions*. American Psychological Association; Smith, B. L., & Morgan, K. D. (1994). Terrorists right and left: Empirical Issues in profiling American terrorists. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 17, 39-57; Weisman, S. (September 8, 2003). Bush administration warns Israel not to expel Arafat. *The New York Times*, p. A3.) (Keywords: Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Terrorism, United States, War.)