This study is an attempt to expose Middle Eastern terrorism and its causes and to dispel the myths surrounding it and to make recommendations for the future.

There are many root causes of modern, Middle Eastern terrorism which include structural, facilitator, motivational, and triggering roots. These roots must be understood, so that we can understand the realities of modern Middle Eastern terrorism and dispel the myths, which are potentially leading to an increase in terrorist activities. Some of these myths include strongly linking poverty to terrorism, linking state collapse to terrorism, and the thought that terrorism is a very effective tool that works and should be feared. Middle Eastern terrorism is misunderstood by the general population, and my findings will lead not only to a better understanding of these misunderstandings, but also an investigation of where they originate and how to dispel them. Ultimately, my research and analysis suggests that we consider the following ways to aid our country in the fight against terrorism: better, more responsible reporting of terrorism by the news media, absolutely refusing to reward terrorism in any way or give them any kind of legitimacy, and a serious effort to respond and re-establish effective government in collapsed states.

DEFINITIONS:

Terrorism—“a collective action...a political act taken in the name of a group based on ethnicity, religion, nationalism or ideological orientation” (Bjorge p. 15). Or, “a set of methods or strategies of attacks that attacks both systems and causes. Dealing with systems involves military, intelligence, financial, legal and police activities to ‘root out terrorists.’” These rooting out techniques will be extremely difficult, but they will be pursued with the utmost diligence. However, they must be pursued carefully and responsibly, being careful not to justify the terrorist’s cause in any way. Terrorists will be removed from society and their operations will be stopped. “The same in their motivations. The same in their motivations. The same in their motivations.”

True Believer—individuals motivated by “ideology or the desire to enhance the welfare of the entire group” (Bjorge 19). These ideologies are carried out by the use of homicide and suicide as a tool. Terrorism is strong tied to poverty. People who suffer from poverty, lack of education, and lack of opportunity see their families as the targets.”

Mercenary—those who are motivated by self-interest and the idea that terrorism will allow them to get rich, or that they can use terrorism as a tool to further personal gain. They care little for their followers. Captive Participant—Their presence can be accounted for by the fear of not going along with the group and participating in the actions of the others. They feel if they do not participate, they will be tortured or killed. They know that the others will do the same thing over and over again, so their actions are based on fear.

Structural Causes—Structural causes effect people’s lives at a level they may not be able to comprehend. Examples of these causes are globalization, modernization, demographic imbalances, class structure, etc…

Facilitator Causes—This cause makes terrorism attractive and possible. Examples include the modern news media, transportation, weapons technology, weak state control of territory, etc.

Motiveual Causes—The actual grievances people experience personally, motivating them to act. Triggering Causes—A direct precipitator of terrorist action. This could be a political mishap, an insane act committed by the enemy, or any event that may call for revenge or action.

DISCUSSION:

According to a survey given to 48 Embry-Riddle students, the large majority believed that terrorism was effective. Only 1% believed it wasn’t effective at all. The reality is that homicide is a much bigger problem than terrorism, and an individual is forty times more likely to be the victim of a homicide than a victim of a terrorist attack. Another study showed that out of twenty-eight terrorist groups, including the complete list of foreign terrorist organizations designated by the US Department of State since 2001, they were only successful with their objectives seven percent of the time. 1.29% of those surveyed stated that terrorism was effective, while 12.3% stated that it was not effective at all.

6. Myth—Terrorism is strongly linked to poverty

DISCUSSION:

According to the survey, eighty-five percent of students believed terrorism was linked to poverty. The poverty, education, and terrorism is indirect, complicated, and probably quite weak.” (Krueger & Maleckova p. 2). In fact, “None of the 19 perpetrators of the September 11 attacks suffered from poverty, lack of education or lack of exposure to terrorism.” (Krueger & Maleckova p. 2).

DISCUSSION: According to the survey, eighty-five percent of students believed terrorism was linked to state collapse. The idea was that collapsing states such as Afghanistan and Somalia would be breeding grounds for terrorists due to the “weak or non-existent governance structures, and the inability of the international community to oversee and regulate trade or movements of people and goods through landings strips and ungoverned areas” (Hippel p. 33). While some may think this would be a perfect environment for terrorists to conduct their business, it is actually much more dangerous for them to be there. These places are hazardous to terrorists because they are operating in an insecure and foreign environment, where there is little security and the infrastructure is unreliable. It is not clear whether terrorists use these parts of states no longer controlled by the government to train and “breed” more terrorists; however, the proof is stacked heavily against it.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. More Responsible News Media Coverage

DISCUSSION: According to the survey, seventy-five percent of students claimed that news media was their main source of information on terrorism. What this means, is the news media must be extremely careful when reporting about terrorism, since their reports form the basis of a lot of people’s opinions on the subject. Also, when news media interviews terrorists, whether they like it or not, the terrorists are being treated as a legitimate news source that is worthy of a “serious public discourse” (Nacos p. 22). This elevates the terrorist to the level of a legitimate political actor, which to terrorists rationalizes and legitimizes the use of terrorism. Instead of spreading fear and giving terrorists the publicity they desire, Martha Crenshaw, a professor of political science at Stanford, states that news media should realize that “the actions of terrorists are based on a subjective interpretation of the world rather than objective reality” (Hamelit et al p. 4). This is important because all terrorists have to do is commit an act of violence, then leave it up to the rest of the world to figure out why they did it. The perception terrorists have of political and social events is through their own belief system. "Advertising, political campaigns and news media messages are all built on the premise that behavior follows attitude, and attitude can be changed by delivering the message in the right way at the right time” (Hamelit et al p. 4). The news media could be a positive force for good by doing this very thing and changing aggressive terrorist behavior by sending positive messages and focusing on the good that happens as a result of fair play, and not focusing on the fear and terror and horrible things happening because of foul play.

7. Myth—Terrorism is linked to State Collapse

DISCUSSION: According to the survey, eighty-five percent of students believed terrorism was linked to state collapse. The idea was that collapsing states such as Afghanistan and Somalia would be breeding grounds for terrorists due to the “weak or non-existent governance structures, and the inability of the international community to oversee and regulate trade or movements of people and goods through landings strips and ungoverned areas” (Hippel p. 33). While some may think this would be a perfect environment for terrorists to conduct their business, it is actually much more dangerous for them to be there. These places are hazardous to terrorists because they are operating in an insecure and foreign environment, where there is little security and the infrastructure is unreliable. It is not clear whether terrorists use these parts of states no longer controlled by the government to train and “breed” more terrorists; however, the proof is stacked heavily against it.

DISCUSSION: A second method for improvement in the area of terrorism is to refuse to support terrorism in any way and to punish those who do support them. Palestinian terrorists in the time of John Paul II relied heavily on support for their cause. As their terrorist activity increased, support for them and their cause also increased. There was a direct correlation between the targeting of innocent civilians by terrorists and the legitimization of their leaders who were employing these terror tactics for recognition and support of their cause. If this is the message being sent to terrorists, what would any reasonable person expect them to do? Keep committing acts of terror, of course. If they have no reason to stop, they won’t. We absolutely must give them a reason to stop and punish them for their actions instead of rewarding them for their actions. If we reward terrorists for their actions, we are partly responsible for their terrorist actions ourselves. 3. Re-establish Government in Collapsed States

DISCUSSION: What the US can do is effectively promote education and employment opportunities, while respecting the local culture. This may be easier said than done; however, it is imperative that we do everything in our power to help these countries without going in and trying to forcefully change things. Support for these opportunities should be directed towards “indigenous civil society organizations, which have a better understanding of how to operate successfully in difficult and often oppressive environments” (Hippel p. 36).