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# ***A Practicing Muslim's View of the Terrorist Threat***

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# Terrorism and Religion

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- q No society is free of violence of one type or another. The most vicious type is that which describes itself as **religious**.
- q The attack on 9/11 raised questions about **Islam** especially on Islam's view of terrorism:
  - q Who are these Terrorists and why do they call themselves Freedom Fighter/Martyrs?
  - q Is 'Jihad' really a 'Holy War' (declaration of religious war) against other religions?
  - q Are terrorists only **Muslims** or Muslims the only terrorists?
  - q Is terrorism really a *religious* issue or is it a *political* issue?

# “Muslims” – Who Are They?

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- g Five "pillars" of Islam.
  1. **Testimony of faith** -- in the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad.
  2. **Daily prayer** -- Muslims are required to perform prayers five times a day at specified times and according to a particular ritual.
  3. **Zakat** -- Muslims are obliged to give a portion from their income beyond their own needs to the poor.
  4. **Fasting** -- During the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of their calendar, all Muslims are to fast from sunrise to sunset, taking neither food nor drink during that time.
  5. **Pilgrimage** -- All Muslims who are physically and financially able to do so should make the pilgrimage to Mecca once during their lives, preferably during the six weeks following Ramadan.
  
- g Another religious duty often mentioned along with the five pillars is that of **Jihad**. This term has the general meaning of struggling for moral perfection.

# ***“Muslims” – Where Do They Live?***

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- q **Over 1.2 billion people throughout the world are adherents of Islam.**
- q **While Islam is often associated almost exclusively with the Middle East:**
  - q **Arabs comprise only about 15-18% of all Muslims.**
  - q **The largest population of Muslims (over 160 million) is Indonesia, an island nation in Southeast Asia.**
  - q **7 million Muslims live in North America, and of these, two and a half million are Americans who have embraced Islam.**
  - q **The Muslim peoples of the South Asian subcontinent (living in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka) constitute about 25% of all Muslim.**
  - q **Africa comprise close to 20% of the total.**
  - q **Surprisingly to some, there are nearly as many Muslims in China as there are in Iran, Egypt or Turkey (over 50 million).**
  - q **Muslims constitute sizeable minorities in many Western European countries, including England (over 2 million), France (over 2 million--about 10% of the French population), and Germany (about 2 million).**

# ***“Muslim Terrorists” - Who Are They?***

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- q **“Islamic Fundamentalist” is a term misused by media to refer to terrorists who happen to be Muslim.**
- q **“Fundamentalist Islam” is simply the conservative wing of Islam (just as Fundamentalist Christianity is the conservative wing of Christianity).**
- q **Most Middle Eastern terrorists are probably Fundamentalist Muslims, but they are an extremist, radical wing of Fundamentalism.**

# Does Qur'an Teach Violence?

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- Does the quotations like the following one from the Holy Books teach violence?

*“...But if they turn away, seize them and slay them wherever ye find them; and (in any case) take no friends or helpers from their ranks.” (4:89). How can a peaceful religion teach these things? (Qur'an)*

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*“When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you. And when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. (Deutonomy 7:1-2)*

- Studying the religious texts in their proper context is very important

# ***What Turns A Normal Human Being Into A Terrorist?***

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- q **Economic problems – basic human needs are not covered e.g food and shelter etc.**
- q **Desperation and feeling of hopelessness being unable to change their environment**
- q **Lack of education or no education among many religious educators**
- q **Only bad view of west is presented by the local media, religious educators and political leaders**
- q **Narrow interpretation and communication of religion by leaders**
- q **Politics - autocratic government e.g. no freedom of speech**
- q **Their mistaken view that they are the only who can lead to salvation and everybody else is wrong**

# ***What Could Be Done To Avoid Terrorism ?***

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- q **First of all it is important to understand the objectives behind the terrorism . There is a need to recognize that disciplined terrorists who execute well-planned acts of destruction are not deranged...they have OBJECTIVES.**
  
- q **Social Interactions (from local govt. To UN):**
  - q **Create social interaction between nations**
  - q **People-to-people exchanges and individual interactions between the people**
  
- q **Education policies**
  - q **Distinction between two Islamic schools of thoughts: one that justifies terrorism and other one that abhors it**
  - q **Train the religious trainers (“Mudrasahas” – religious schools)**
  - q **Portray the west in a more realistic and positive way to youth**
  
- q **Encourage responsible reporting in the mass media and accurate portrayal of religion in the movie industry**
  
- q **Keep International politics separate from religious issues**