

Lecture 4 “Religion, religious extremism, terrorism”

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Outline

Religion is now widely recognized as an important factor in the phenomenon of global terrorism. However, it's a point of contention whether we can call it a cause of terrorism or not. Some say religion is the cause of terrorism. Others insist that religion is not related to terrorism at all. How should we take up the topic of religion and terrorism? I will address in my lecture the following themes and questions.

I. Is religion a cause of terrorism?

Is poverty “the root cause”?

Is politics or capitalism “the real cause”?

If religion is “a cause,” how and to what extent?

II. Diversity religions, multifaceted nature of each religions

Various notions of “Religion”

Legalism and spirituality

Internal faith and social praxis

Liberalism-secularism and its critics

Separation of church and state, unity of religion and state

Religio-political relations in history

Religion and war

Relationship with “non-believers”

What divides religious extremism from “true” religion?

III. Aum Shinrikyo and terrorism

Buddhism, politics and war

Japanese secular society and religion

Affluent society and the rise of new religions

IV. Christian fundamentalism and terrorism

Christianity in its original form and its relationship with politics

Politics and religion in history

Approaches to non-believers

Modern Christianity and fundamentalism

V. Radical Islamism and terrorism

History of Islam and politico-military foundation

Religion, power and rule

Status of non-believer

Concept and history of Jihad in a closer look

Polarization of religious interpretation on Jihad

VI. Measures on the religious side of terrorism and their critics

Is economic aid relevant?

Is democratization panacea?

Is the dissemination of the “true” understanding of religion a proper way?

Education: but what kind of education?

Reading materials:

Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkley, University of California Press, 2001.

Walter Laquer, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*, London, Oxford University Press, 1999.

Jason Burke, *Al-Qaida: The True Story of Radical Islam*, Penguin, 2004.

For further reading:

David Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005.

Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2002.