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A black and white photograph of chess pieces on a board. A white pawn is in sharp focus in the foreground, while a black king is visible in the background, out of focus. The pieces are on a dark chessboard with light-colored squares.

COUNTERING TERRORISM



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Through our partnership with the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, the Koret Foundation brings high-level Israeli diplomats, policymakers, and scholars to the Stanford campus to engage with the Bay Area community.

Our objective in bringing these distinguished visiting fellows—in fields ranging from national security and foreign policy to economics, history, and law—is to help counteract imbalances and misconceptions about Israel and to offer a context for understanding the daily threats Israelis face. Their work helps to inform the discussions taking place at the global level about the motivations and solutions to terrorist activity.

In this issue of *Perspectives*, Koret Distinguished Visiting Scholar Dr. Boaz Ganor, a leading expert in counter-terrorism, delves into the inner workings of the terrorist mind. Understanding the terrorist model of rationality that leads to such acts as suicide bombing is critical to countering the terrorist threat.

With over 30 years of experience in the field, advising the Israeli government and military as well as high-ranking decision makers on the global stage, Dr. Ganor has spent the last year extending his research and sharing his findings through Stanford campus gatherings, appearances in the community, and teaching at UC Berkeley.

Koret is proud to support Dr. Ganor's outstanding work. His scholarship, incisive analysis, and excellence as an educator have added much to complex discussions both on the Bay Area's university campuses and in our communities.

— Tad Taube, President



COUNTERING TERRORISM: EXPERT BOAZ GANOR SHARES HIS PERSPECTIVE

By Jennifer Franco

When it comes to combating terrorism, many Westerners throw up their hands, claiming it's impossible to predict the behavior of madmen.

One would have to be crazy, they reason, to strap on explosives, walk into a crowded public place, and light the fuse. What kind of pilot flies his plane into a high-rise building?

In a culture that cherishes life, such acts are unimaginable. But in a radical Islamic context, they make twisted but perfect sense. Here, an impoverished people believes in a better Afterlife replete with rich rewards for the religious martyr; here, the government often handsomely remunerates the martyrs' families left behind; here, the fallen are deified and their families celebrated. These are profound motivations for carrying out *jihad* (holy war), according to Boaz Ganor, Koret Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, who has dedicated his career to researching terrorism and how best to combat it.

"The terrorist threat presents such significant problems in the modern world not because terrorists are irrational actors whose actions can't be predicted or who can't be reasoned with," Dr. Ganor asserts. "The terrorist threat is so dangerous precisely because these acts are the result of rational decision-making, a weighing of costs and benefits to reach conclusions on the parts of people with whom Western states do not share a frame of reference, narrative, background, or religious sensibility."

This lack of a common framework, Dr. Ganor says, presents a seemingly insurmountable obstacle, as it leads to an inability to communicate effectively and therefore to deter, understand, threaten, or make concessions. Thus, the counter-terrorist must delve deep into

radical Islamic culture to understand the mind of his subject.

"The biggest obstacle facing Western countries in the counter-terrorism struggle is not a lack of security or strategy—it is this difference in rationality," Dr. Ganor says. "Explaining the rationale of radical Islamist terrorism is a crucial factor in creating and implementing new, effective policies in derailing these terrorists' *modus operandi*."

MOTIVATION + OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY = TERRORIST SUCCESS

Dr. Ganor is founder and executive director of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, a think tank that develops innovative policy solutions to international terrorism. He defines terrorism in one short phrase: Motivation + operational capability = successful terrorist activity. From this equation comes his corollary formula for counter-terrorism: Successful counter-terrorist efforts must eliminate both the motivation and the operational capability that enable the terrorist to carry out his or her mission. Some states and decision-makers have offered limited economic assistance in an effort to improve quality of life and thus inhibit the terrorists' motivation; others have focused on eliminating weaponry at the terrorists' disposal.

A native Israeli, Dr. Ganor became interested in terrorism and national security strategies as an undergraduate at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where his political science courses generated questions about international relations and security, particularly in the Middle East, that have underpinned his work ever since. Some 30 years later, he remains dedicated to providing ways to counter global terrorism through advising decision-makers and encouraging joint international cooperation. He has lectured the Israel Defense Forces on counter-terrorism, served as a consultant to the Israeli Government Ministries on Counter-Terrorism, and is a member of various international advisory boards on homeland security, national defense, and strategic studies.

Very few states have made long-term, simultaneous efforts to eliminate both motivation and capability, rendering anti-terrorism attempts thus far to be temporary solutions at best, says Dr. Ganor,

deputy dean of the Lauder School of Government and Diplomacy at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya. The paradox, he explains, is that when these limited efforts are successful in averting a terrorist attack, an increased sense of national safety ensues when, in fact, the state has only bought itself some time until the next attempt. The false sense of security created by limited success may actually leave the state more vulnerable to terrorist threat. Dealing fundamentally and effectively with terrorism requires patience and perseverance in addressing both motivation and operational capacity.

“No state can live with ongoing, repeated terrorist attacks that threaten their daily lives and economy, so most states first address the terrorists’ operations,” Dr. Ganor said. “While this strategy may give us a temporary decrease in terrorist activity, it does not address the terrorists’ motivation, an equally important factor in the equation. Ultimately, the responsibility to undo radical Islamic terrorists’ motivation sits squarely on the shoulders of the mainstream, moderate Muslims themselves.”

While the West can help neutralize radical factions, the moderate Muslim community must be the main agent of change. Terrorists are at war with Western values, ideals, and behaviors, so any attempt by someone representing those values and ideals to change the thought processes and motivations that drive terrorist activity will be largely ineffective. It is precisely because terrorists do not want to think or act like the West that their minds will remain unchanged by Western arguments and pleas. The moderate majority of the Muslim world, with whom terrorist actors share some frame of reference, narrative, and religious sensibility—all of which create values and ideals—holds the only hope for long-term, effective action toward undoing radical Islamists’ terrorist motivations.

VALUE LESSONS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

From 1989 to 2003 Dr. Ganor served as a member of the trilateral—Palestinian, Israeli, and American—Committee on Incitement that was established under the Wye Accords signed by Yasir Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu. He has dedicated his life to counter-terrorism research and education, and his expertise is perhaps deepest when it comes to the Middle East.

Dr. Ganor believes Israel's counter-terrorism experience can provide a theoretical basis for other states in developing and implementing effective counter-terrorism strategies.

"A basic issue confronting the Western world is undoing the false foundational belief that there is no contradiction between our liberal values and our security," Dr. Ganor observes. "This vexes the West, which, rightly, is extremely hesitant to compromise any of the principles of a free society. But democratic values are inherently at odds with the need to protect national security, no matter how much we would like that not to be the case."

While the majority of the international community understood the need for increased national security after the terrorist attacks of September 11, the enactment of the Patriot Act led to much debate and controversy.

The Middle East provides an instructive model in contradiction and compromise. Because Israel has faced terrorist threats and actions since its founding, its people and government learned early on that some compromises on the side of liberal democratic values must be made in order to address and reduce terrorist attacks. Israel's citizens, in fact, demand that the government take increased security measures. Most are willing to give up certain freedoms in exchange for reducing the threat and occurrence of terrorist attacks.

Nevertheless, Dr. Ganor asserts, if a compromise on values is needed as part of a state's response, any legislation restricting those values must be limited at the outset to a specific time period, and the legislation must be open for judicial and public review. In this way, the "ethical damage" of countering terrorism is limited, and the terrorists' ability to vilify the West and justify further violence is minimized.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

The so-called "war on terror" actually comprises a third world war, Dr. Ganor asserts. Its combatants are Islamic radicalism and the rest of the world, including the mainstream majority of the Muslim world. Some have compared this war to the legendary Biblical battle of David and Goliath. In their analogy, the West, led by the military might of the United States and Israel, is Goliath, attacking a down-

trodden, impoverished, displaced David. Dr. Ganor believes the analogy is apt, except that the roles are reversed: Established states, he asserts, represent the smaller, less powerful David, constrained by international law and human rights statutes that effectively tie one hand behind his back. Unfettered by rules of engagement, national borders, and international treaties like the Geneva Conventions, the terrorist actors are the behemoth.

To bring more balance, Dr. Ganor says, the international community should add an amendment to the Geneva Conventions holding non-state actors to the same rules of engagement and human rights laws that states must follow. This would bring parity to both sides of this new war together under a common set of ground rules, providing the international community with valid avenues and responses, and ensuring that counter-terrorism measures are carried out according to the law of the land. Otherwise, abiding by our Western, democratic values handicaps our efforts to constrain, and ultimately eradicate, terrorism.

PUTTING THE PUZZLE TOGETHER

More nations than ever are victims of terrorist violence, and increased human and financial capital is directed each year toward national security and counter-terrorism. Thirty years of research has led Dr. Ganor to the conclusion that all too often, state governments make decisions somewhat hastily in response to a terrorist attack and the subsequent pressure from a frightened and victimized public, failing to take into account crucial pieces of the counter-terrorism puzzle. Accurately defining terrorism as a rational act, understanding both sides of the "terrorism equation," clearly seeing the inverse relationship between liberal values and security, and bringing both sides of the conflict under the rule of international law are integral to making rational, ethical, and effective strides in the war on terror.

"While Israel's counter-terrorism strategies have not eliminated attacks against its citizens, in certain areas Israel has made significant progress," Dr. Ganor says. "Throughout most of its existence, Israel's first goal has been to limit the scope of terrorist attacks and minimize their damage. In those terms, we must call Israel's counter-terrorism measures a success."



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