

Some of the world's worst terrorists come from the best families.

Common wisdom says that terrorists are the products of poverty and despair.

But that's a half-truth, at best.

Fact is, the chieftains of global terrorism come not from poverty, but from comfortable, even well to do families.

Osama bin Laden, for example. Before he rose to ugly prominence as the commissar of al-Qaeda, bin Laden was known mainly as a rich man's kid. His father created a hugely profitable Saudi Arabian construction firm.¹

Other terrorist kingpins had a similar upbringing. In Egypt the organizer of Islamic Jihad grew up in a family of well-heeled doctors and educators. And in Europe, the guiding lights of Germany's vicious Baader-Meinhof Gang sported

impeccable, middle-class credentials.²

So where do poverty and despair fit in? The hopelessly poor are easy prey for terrorist recruiters, readily manipulated, all too susceptible to a gospel of hate and violence.³

Instead of constructive programs of social and economic improvement, al Qaeda, Hezbollah and the like offer training in the tools of terror – the shooting and bombing of innocent civilians and suicide attacks.

Instead of bringing their followers the comfort and well being that they grew up with, bin Laden & Co. offer savagery, endless war and martyrdom.

What they promise is vengeance and perhaps – some day – a better life.

What they deliver is no life at all.

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To a terrorist, the beauty part of a suicide attack is that it's so cheap.

Terrorists are calculating killers: they demand good value for their money.

And usually, they get it. It costs relatively little to blow up an airplane or an embassy. Nothing, really, compared to the cost of replacing or rebuilding it. Or the stunning cost in human lives.

Bombs come cheap after all. They can be constructed at home, from readily available material like fertilizer.

When U.S. troops raided al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan, they uncovered "how-to" manuals that explained bomb building in easy-to-follow pictures.¹

In fact, with a little ingenuity, bombs aren't ever needed. As the September 11, 2001 attack on the World

Trade Center demonstrated, you can create a world-shaking terrorist attack with nothing but audacity.

The "return-on-investment" is handsome. After September 11, bin Laden boasted that the Twin Towers attack had cost the U.S. and the world economy \$1 trillion in losses.²

Of course, sometimes bombs, mortars and assault rifles are not required. But well-financed terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda and Hezbollah³ can easily afford them.

Just as important, terrorist commanders appear to have an endless supply of young bodies to wield the weaponry.

Evidently, young bodies come cheap, too.

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1. The N.Y. Times lorem ipsum gort thidews jisdfr serctrfg unihgt hiouyt derfs polcret sercdea. 2. See Reuters dispatches lorem ipsum gort thidews jisdfr serctrfg unihgt. 3. Financiing Terrorist Operations lorem ipsum gort thidews jisdfr .

What kind of parents send their kids to a school for martyrs?

Good parents, usually.

They want the best for their kids – every parent does.

So those unfortunate mothers and fathers have only good intentions in sending their offspring to schools financed and run by terrorists.¹

Consider their plight. Submerged in poverty and helplessness, such parents can offer their sons and daughters nothing but their own dreary existences.

By contrast, the terrorist-financed schools seem to offer a way out. Perhaps the only way out.

The schools are free. Charitable “front” organizations – often backed by drug money²–foot the bills. To parents living a meagre existence themselves, the appeal is obvious.

More to the point, these schools put an emphasis on religious instruction. But it’s a peculiar kind of religiosity. It stresses an obligation to take up arms against some hated Other. And the great honour of giving up one’s life in a suicide attack.³

In a bizarre, demented way, these schools for martyrs provide the poorest kids of the world’s poorest countries a unique “career choice”.

It’s not a rational choice, of course. Not a way for these kids to improve the lot of their brothers and sisters. Or to make life better for the parents who send them to these schools, for that matter.

But whoever said terrorism was rational?

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How brave is a terrorist who gets kids to do his dirty work?

If terrorists had any conscience, they wouldn't put guns and bombs in the hands of youngsters.

But that's exactly what they do. Kids as young as six are being recruited by terrorists – and used as spies, as couriers, and yes, as foot soldiers.

In fact, according to one recent analysis, kiddie terrorists have taken part in at least 0,000 attacks over the last decade. And often it's kids killing kids.¹

Unthinkable, isn't it?

Yet it's nothing out of the ordinary for Al Qaeda and its ilk. Their operations routinely flout the rules of

war², even the dictates of common decency.

They make their head quarters among civilian populations, endangering the very people whose interests they say they're fighting for.

They've even used pregnant women as suicide bombers – because pregnant women are less likely to rouse suspicion.³

Terrorists always justify what they do as something that's required for a greater good. Something for a bigger and better tomorrow.

Trouble is, a lot of the kids they recruit will never live to see tomorrow.

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