

Fanaticism and Modern Conflict, 1890-1990

European Studies Research Institute

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What is 'Fanaticism'?

Barrie Paskins

Fanaticism is misplaced simplicity.

Fanaticism is an attitude word, a political (not psychological) word.

Definition: dangerous extremism is too vague.

Clausewitz: 'war is politics by other means'.

War is a duel on a larger scale; applying force on the opponent to impose our will.

Elements preventing war to reach extreme violence: friction (practical imperfections) and limited political aims.

Fanaticus: inspired by a deity, temple possession.

11 September 2002: terrorist attacks; 20 September 2001: declaration of war.

Enemy to enthusiasm.

Anti-conformist.

Today's perception of fanatics: very emotional, possessed; terrifyingly calm.

Fanatic is a man of one idea.

Suicide bomber: misuse of language; they are not suicide, they are involved in politics (kamikaze?).

Terrorism: any direct attack on non-combatants by non-state actors.

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Fanaticism in the Late 20th Century Guerrilla Wars

Christopher C. Harmon

Manifestations of fanaticism in guerrilla warfare: (1) suicide military attacks: like the attack against the USS Cole in Yemen; (2) style of killing and zeal: dismemberment, multiple wound infliction, use of children, the 'Algerian smile' (throat cutting).

Motives of various fanatic guerrilla groups: (1) admiration of an individual (leader, cult of personality): Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, role of the leader and his charisma are very important (his capture can lead to the collapse of the group); (2) love of action: involves the move from academic or intellectual interest to concrete action; a lot of the actors on the field are young (bold, easy to control and influence); action = political dynamic; (3) revenge: main reason for guerrilla attacks by women; Jessica Stern includes revenge in her definition of terrorism; (4) hatred for foreign occupiers or invaders; (5) fanatical desire for sweeping change: not mere reform but revolutionary change; (6) access to a higher level of political power.

Fanaticism and the Barbarization of the Pacific War

Craig Cameron

Japanese fighters labelled as fanatical in the Pacific War: promoted Japanese barbarization and allowed American extreme violence and atrocities against these fanatics.

Labels: savage (ignoring social values); fanatical (deliberately ignoring social values).

Fanaticism by American soldiers: they were fanatical in their relationship to the killing; against their Japanese enemies, they adopted the concept of 'processing' the Japanese (systematic mass killing of sub-human creatures); impersonal, industrial-type killings.

B-29: levelled 176 square miles of Japanese cities.

Facing Satan: Perceptions of the Enemy on the Eastern Front, 1941

Ben Shepherd

The German Wermacht demonised the Soviets, channelling German's brutality on the field.

The Wermacht wanted to literally exterminate Russia.

Wermacht: institutional-level fanaticism: (1) imperialism; (2) anti-Slavism; (3) anti-Semitism; (4) anti-Bolshevism; (5) ruthless professionalism (after the lessons of defeat in World War I); (6) 'guerrillaphobia'.

German failed to see the opportunity to cultivate Soviet citizens who were mainly anti-Stalin, instead of exterminating them.

Pre-offensive guidelines to the Wehrmacht: 'criminal orders'.

Soviet primitiveness and brutality said to be characterised by primitive living conditions, 'animal-like' ferocity, atrocities, and Stalin's 3 July order (call to sabotage and extremism).

German fanaticism increased by environment, manpower quantity (low) and manpower quality (low).

Brutalising effects: fear, frustration, desire to cover for failure, uncertainty about civilians (their loyalty).