

Economist suggests 3 factors lead to suicide terror

The Jerusalem Post Internet Staff

May. 9, 2003

The search for an adult identity, an oppressive environment, and a terrorist faction: these are the three factors that Professor Mark Harrison, an economic historian at Warwick University, suggests contribute to suicide terrorism.

In his paper "The Logic of Terrorism" published in the Royal United Services Institute Security Monitor and also available online, Harrison expresses skepticism that the notion of 72 virgins in paradise is what motivates the suicide phenomenon.

"As an economist, I try to understand the world in terms of people following their self-interest," Harrison explained to *The Economist*. How to resolve the seeming contradiction of ending one's life in order to serve one's self-interest? People, when growing up, have an interest in establishing an identity, Harrison points out. "It's hard to construct an identity in a society where nothing works and opportunities are severely restricted. I see [suicide terrorism] as a contract between the young person and the terrorist faction to exchange life for identity. He will die to promote the faction's terrorist objectives. In return, the faction agrees to affirm the volunteer's identity in the community as a warrior martyr."

Terrorist leaders may not be interested in winning territory as much as in maintaining a semi-lawless environment where they have power and influence, Harrison told JTA. "You must distinguish between the overt and actual aims of terrorism" he said. "Establishing a Palestinian state may not be the aim. There are clearly figures within Palestinian society who gain from there not being a peaceful settlement."

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