



PRESS RELEASE

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Alan Krueger traced an identikit for terrorists, looking at the reasons behind their action

TERRORISM DOES NOT FEED ON POVERTY AND IGNORANCE

It is a political act, a manifestation of intent, which can be compared, albeit using other means, to the vote

It is a relatively widespread opinion, also adopted by some governments after 11 September and transferred to the mass media, that poverty and lack of education are at the root of terrorism. In truth many studies show that the terrorists often come from the middle classes and have a good education. It is ethical or political reasoning that drives them to towards armed struggle using terrorism as the means. This morning at the Castello del Buonconsiglio, Alan Krueger spoke about terrorism and terrorists in his paper "Who is undermining democracy?". Basing his speech on statistical analysis he took a closer look at the genesis of the terrorist, using survey methods already tried out on the employment market together with mechanisms which lead people to choose a certain career. Krueger cited some statements made by American politicians about the birth of terrorism. In March 2002 President George W. Bush declared: "We are fighting poverty because hope is an answer to terror". In February of the same year Al Gore said "...poverty, disease and environmental deterioration make up an axis of evil which drives many people to take up terrorist activities". With the statistics to hand Krueger rejected these interpretations, highlighting that in a survey involving a significant sample of people from the Arab world, the less well educated were least likely to take a stand or justify suicide attacks both against Americans or other westerners in Iraq and against Israel. The most extremist were shown to be students. Krueger also cited the study carried out by Nasra Hassan, which dealt with international aid from the UN. She interviewed 250 militants involved in the Palestinian cause from 1996 to 1999 and concluded that many came from the middle classes and had a regular job. Comparing Palestinian suicide bombers and the Palestinian population of the same age, Krueger revealed that on average the bombers are less likely to come from poor families and that they have a better level of education as compared to the rest of the population, some even reaching a high level. The same is true of Hezbollah, Gush Emunim, an Israeli organisation, and Al Qaeda. Krueger underlined that there were also many graduates in the Brigade Rosse in Italy. Analysis of the messages contained in 40 speeches

and video clips made in 2005 and 2006 by Islamic terrorists demonstrates that the issues most frequently cited were not material problems but rather religion, the war of the West against the Islamic world and the occupation of territories. "In truth" - Krueger said – what drives people towards terrorism is the desire to state their position, possibly starting from a conviction that they are being persecuted. The underlying reason is the desire to assert one's own ideas, just as one does, in very different ways, with the vote. So, who votes within society? Those who are most educated and best integrated".

The data on international terrorism between 1997 and 2003 presented by Krueger shows that 91% of attacks were carried out by more than one terrorist and 88% by people born in the country where the attack took place, whereas in 62% of cases there was a difference in creed between the terrorists and the victims. On average the attacks were directed at countries enjoying a certain wellbeing. The terrorists came more often from countries where civil liberties are lacking or limited, or from occupied countries. On the other hand, the effects of terrorism on the economy would not appear to be significant, especially in the case of a diversified economy. The political effects depend greatly on the context in which the attacks take place. In March 2004 terrorism had an influence on the political elections in Spain, according to Krueger, leading to Aznar's government losing popular support as a result of the way in which it managed the emergency. To conclude, Krueger recalled that as one of terrorism's objectives is to disseminate fear, a decisive role is also played, in a positive or negative sense, by the mass media, which often place too much emphasis on the speed of information and sensationalism, to the detriment of precision.

Alan Krueger is Professor of Economics at the University di Princeton. His studies have mainly revolved around the economics of training, the distribution of wealth and regulation of the employment market. He is Director of the Princeton University Survey Research Center and an Associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research and of the Institute for the Study of Labor. From 2000 to 2006 he was a leader writer for the New York Times. His publications include: *Education Matters: A Selection of Essays on Education*, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd. 2000; *Inequality in America: What Role for Human Capital Policies?* (Con J. Heckman), MIT Press 2004; *What Makes a Terrorist*, Princeton University Press 2007.