

**Department of Psychology
University of Pittsburgh**

**Terrorism Between Syndrome and Tool: A Tale of Two
Psychologies**

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3:00 – 4:30 PM
Martin Colloquium Center**

Two psychological perspectives on terrorism are distinguished, approaching it as a 'syndrome' and a 'tool' respectively. According to the 'syndrome' view, terrorism represents a psychologically meaningful construct with identifiable characteristics on individual and group levels of analysis. According to the 'tool' perspective, terrorism represents a strategic instrument that any party in a conflict with another may use. Research thus far found little support for the 'syndrome' view. Terrorists do not seem to be characterized by a unique set of psychological traits or pathologies. Nor has research uncovered any particular 'root causes' of terrorism. The vast heterogeneity of terrorism's users is consistent with the 'tool' view, affording an analysis of terrorism in terms of means-ends psychology. The 'tool' view implies conditions under which potential perpetrators may find terrorism more or less appealing, hence offering guidance for the 'war on terrorism'.

Reception to follow in Room 4125

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