



International Conflicts, Terrorism and Aggression: A Psycho-Dynamic Perspective

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World today is in grip to Terrorism. It has strained relations between the countries and is posing a threat to world peace and recessing economy. This paper is an effort to locate the psychological causes of international conflict and find solutions to reduce the tension. The behavioral manifestation of tension is aggression.

Forms of aggression are terrorism, violence, revolutions, political assassinations, riots and wars. The causes of which are primarily deprivation, inequality, materialism, threat, torture, and repressed hatred. There are theoretical views of aggression like instinct, territoriality, ethnological, neural, genetic, frustration and learning. Psychologists have studied campaigns of genocide throughout history and offered sets of cultural and psychological forces that make terrorism possible. Peace psychologist look for ways to help resolve competition and hostilities among nations. Democratic societies are least likely to commit mass murder. Programs fostering interaction between traditional "enemies" may help to prepare way for peace.

Tension can be reduced by developing subordinate goals, exchange of people, reciprocal tension reduction, recognizing distortions and joining hands to fight the menace of terrorism.

Series of terrorist attacks in major Indian cities lately, is a cause of concern not only for us but worldwide. Terrorism strained relations between the nations and posed threat to world peace and recessing economy. It has instilled fear in minds of people and brought countries on the verge of psychological warfare.

The behaviour manifestation of tension is aggression. The United Nations defined international aggression as the use of armed force by one state against another in the form of invasion, occupation, bombardment and blockades. The most common type of aggression is terrorism. It indicates threatening activity with the aim to spread psychological fear to undress the morale or for political blackmail. Violence, revolution, riots, political assassinations and wars are other expressions of aggression the causes of which are primarily deprivation, inequality, materialism, threat, torture and deeply repressed hatred.

Theoretical views of aggression

Biological or instinctual view - Holds that human beings are by basic nature violent. McDougall (1926), Freud (1959), Lorenz (1966, 74) believed, that instincts are basis of all behaviour. Aggression stems from powerful death wish (Thanatos). **Territoriality View** - It is a form of self-preservation, keeping oneself undisturbed and safe from dangers show ownership on land space. Borders are kept safe by military forces. Entry into the territory of another country is invasion and sign of aggression.

Neural View- There is seat of aggression in brain Levinson and Flynn (1965) found that stimulating portions of hypothalamus transform cats, and rats into aggressive demons. Moyer (1976) found involvement of limbic system in human aggression. Stimulation of amygdala increases aggressive behavior. There exist dedicated circuits within the brain that have a clear role in the generation and maintenance of an aggressive state. Critical nodes in this circuit exist as part of the “social behavior network” (SBN), a highly recurrent set of subcortical regions, largely in the hypothalamus, amygdala, and midbrain, whose functions and connectivity are extremely conserved throughout evolution (L.A. O’Connell, H.A. Hofmann, 2011). Briefly, key regions for aggression in both sexes include reciprocally connected regions of the hypothalamus (especially the ventromedial hypothalamus, ventrolateral area [VMHvl], ventral premammillary area, medial preoptic area [MPOA], and anterior hypothalamus), septal and amygdala regions (including the medial and posterior amygdalae [MeA, PA], lateral septum [LS], and the bed nucleus of the stria terminalis [BNST]), midbrain structures with connectivity to downstream motor pathways (most importantly, the periaqueductal gray [PAG]), and a newly implicated region in the basal forebrain, the posterior substantia innominate (pSI)

Frustration Aggression View: This view is most common and valid Dollard (1989),

Berkowitz (1989), Baron (1996) were of the opinion that when some want is thwarted, the individual is activated against the thwarted object. Frustration leads to arousal of a drive whose goal is that of harming a person or object primarily the cause of frustration. Within the discipline of psychology, frustration-aggression theory has been used in a variety of domains, ranging from self-regulation (Harrison, Genders, Davies, Treasure, & Tchanturia, 2011), organizational (Fox & Spector, 1999), and media psychology (Breuer, Scharrow, & Quandt, 2015)

Learning View- Bandura's social learning theory (1973) Anderson's General affective aggression model (GAAM 1996) are of the view that aggression is triggered by wide range of input variables - some kind of attack from another person (insult), exposure to other persons behaving aggressively (aggressive models), Presence of cues associated with aggression (e.g., Guns or other weapons) and anything that causes individual to experience discomfort (high temperature, dull lecture). A significant part of the violent media-aggression literature is based on the General Aggression Model (GAM, Anderson & Bushman, [2002](#)). According to the GAM, repeated exposure to violent content reinforces hostile structures by means of learning processes, leading to an overall more aggressive personality. Importantly, witnessing friends acting aggressively or being the target of their aggression could also evoke aggression. This actually constitutes a well-known pattern of aggression with some researchers comparing aggression to a contagious disease (Bond & Bushman, [2017](#)).

To learn aggression two mechanisms, work positive reinforcement and imitation. Besides their theories, there are other causes that stimulate aggression. Provocation, when aggression breeds aggression when we are on the receiving end of some form of aggression. Criticism, sarcastic remarks or physical assaults we tend to reciprocate. The firings on the India Pakistan border, entry of smugglers and aggression across the borders, marching in each other's borders are strategic aggression used by both.

Media violence - exposure to media violence increase aggression among children and adults (Anderson 1997, Berkowitz 1993).

Research has shown that more violent films and TV programs participants watched as children, the higher their levels of aggression as adults - the higher the likelihood that they have been arrested for violent crimes. (Gentile, D. A., Lynch, P. J., Linder, J. R., & Walsh, D.

A. (2004).) Individuals learn new ways of aggressing from TV and films. Another effect of watching media violence is desensitization effects. After viewing vivid scenes of violence individuals become hardened to the pain and suffering of others and this may lessen their own restraints against engaging in aggression. Violent media have also been shown to influence a wide range of other aspects of aggression, such as aggressive thoughts (Gentile et al., [2017](#)).

Additionally, exposure to media violence has been linked to decreased empathy (Bartholow et al., [2005](#); Krahe & Möller, [2010](#)) and preferences for aggressive roles in video games showed a negative relationship with the agreeableness subscale of the Big Five

Besides these, certain personality traits like type A behavior pattern, hostile attributional bias and narcissism are more likely to be aggressive.

Psychologist Ervin Staub (1989, 2000), has studied campaigns of genocide throughout history and offered an account of sets of cultural and psychological forces that make campaigns of terror possible.

- Starting point is often severely difficult life conditions for members of a society - harsh economic circumstances, political upheaval and so on.
- Under these conditions of difficulty, people intensify the impulse to define in- groups and out-groups. Out-groups become scapegoats for the ills of society.
- Because the scapegoat group is blamed for society's ills, it becomes easy to justify violence against them. The incidents of violence lead to just world thinking. (Lerner 1980). Bystanders come to believe - because we live in just world that the victims must have done something to bring the violence upon themselves.
- The violence also comes to justify itself to stop violence would mean to admit that it had been wrong to begin with.

When regimes scapegoat the "enemy" they often also dehumanize them -they attempt to convince people to conceive of group as non-human objects to be hated and destroyed. Although most cultures oppose individual aggression as crime, nations train millions of soldiers to kill. The challenge for leaders is to convert the act of murder into patriotism (Harle, 2000). Part of this mass social influence involves dehumanizing the soldiers of other side into "enemy". This dehumanization is accomplished by political rhetoric and by media in their vivid depictions of the enemy. According to army veterans, a soldier's most important weapon in war

is not a gun but this internalized view of the hated "enemy".

The major reason for these negative attitudes appears to be threat of economic and cultural competition (Watts 1996). They are protecting interests that are important to their survival and identity.

Reducing and preventing aggression

Peace psychologists look for ways to help resolve competition and hostilities among nations. People must be brought together in cooperative settings that can foster mutual trust and shared goals. Programs fostering interaction between traditional "enemies" may help prepare the way of peace.

Developing subordinate goals to wipe out distorted perceptions. Intergroup therapy (Blake 1959) engages people of two groups in common goals and activities like cultural, technological and scientific collaborations and developments. India and Pakistan can collaborate in improving the environment. Indian cultural fairs held in Moscow, Japan, Germany, USA and China and in turn their fairs held in India, help them come closer, become friendly, remove doubt and reduce international tension.

Exchange of people: The cultural, educational scientific, economic, political and technological exchanges between countries involve movement of people of one country to another. Kelman and Barlyn (1962) had shown that perceptions of people of country change when visitors and tourists come from other countries.

Reciprocal tension reduction - tensions can be reduced through planned action between two countries. USA and USSR undertook such activities as mutual disarmament policies, reduction in nuclear weapons, military forces helped them reduce tension to a great extent.

Aggressive acts should be condemned and punished. Punishment to be effective should be prompt, strong, certain and justified or deserved. Cognitive interventions like apologies for wrongdoing and request for forgiveness diffuses aggression. Exposure to non-aggressive models and training in social skills further reduces aggression.

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