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Book Examines Fractured Globalism, Terrorism

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As marginalized fundamentalist societies feel ever-more threatened by accelerating globalization, new educational approaches are needed to thwart individuals in those societies from resorting to terrorism.

That is one of the lessons from a new book authored by Fathali Moghaddam, a member of the Center for Homeland Defense and Security faculty. Moghaddam's latest work, "The New Global Insecurity," is the third in a trilogy that examines the role that culture, and what he terms "fractured globalization," plays in terrorism.

The book is scheduled for release later this month.

The book challenges traditional 'realist' and 'human security' perspectives, and presents a new 'dual-source' theory of security. Moghaddam focuses on subjective feelings of insecurity, and how they are shaped by two sets of factors: temperament and early socialization experiences on the one hand, and macro political, economic, and cultural factors on the other hand. Moghaddam's model proposes that all humans have an inherent need for security at both individual and collective levels. Fractured globalization is creating new and unpredictable security threats.



In terms of policy solutions, Moghaddam believes globalization has rendered old notions of multi-culturalism and assimilation ineffective; a new paradigm is required to address security needs in a world where globalization has benefitted many, but left others feeling marginalized and threatened.

He argues that concepts of multi-culturalism and assimilation are faulty approaches in a new globalized society. The end-goal of assimilation is to mold everyone into the same culture, something fundamentalist societies reject. And multi-culturalism "highlights and celebrates differences in an attempt to give people positive self-esteem." The poor academic performance of most ethnic minorities is just one indication that these policies are not working.

Moghaddam calls for a new approach he refers to as "omni-culturalism," a two-step approach to teach and learn about differing cultures in the world by first emphasizing the similarities of all human beings. This emphasis on universals should teach the young about universal duties and rights.

"The young are socialized to understand how all humans are similar irrespective of religion, race, etc.," Moghaddam said while on the Naval Postgraduate School campus in January. "Omni-culturalism starts by emphasizing human universals."

Only after building that foundation are young learners taught the differences among peoples and societies.

"The differences are never made the central issue," said Moghaddam, also a professor of psychology and director of the conflict resolution program at Georgetown University. "They don't start with the differences; the differences

become secondary. I believe omni-culturalism is more appropriate for the 21st Century world."

This approach, he said, will be needed as people most prone to terrorism become ever more galvanized by a global society they see as threatening their culture and by increasing competition for resources. Resource scarcity is becoming more acute as hundreds of millions of new consumers with middle-class purchasing power emerge in China, India, Brazil, and other developing countries. Expanded electronic and communications systems are spreading consumerism around the world, so that expectations are rapidly rising.

For example – an emerging young middle class in the Islamic world sees the Western lifestyle and begins to crave the freedoms and consumer products of that way of life. That threatens fundamentalists who see, often justifiably so, their young as abandoning their culture for Western ways. Also, that thirst for the consumer lifestyle results in a competition for resources such as food, water and land.

"The fundamentalists see these changes as a threat. Their reactions are intended to increase their survival chances," Moghaddam said. "The consequence is greater global insecurity."

This latest work builds upon two previous books. "The Terrorist Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy" (2006) explored societal factors that produce terrorists.

"I argued it is important to first understand the world from a terrorist's point of view in order to defeat terrorism," he said.

In a follow-up book, "How Globalization Spurs Terrorism: The Lopsided Benefits of 'One World' and Why that Fuels Violence," he explored how the inequality of globalization's benefits and the negative consequences of terrorism contribute to terrorism.

"All of these books are on the theme of people's reaction to a perceived threat," he said.

Moghaddam was born in Iran and educated in England. He worked at the United Nations and McGill University before accepting a position at Georgetown University in 1990.

"The New Global Insecurity" is to be published by Praeger Security International.

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