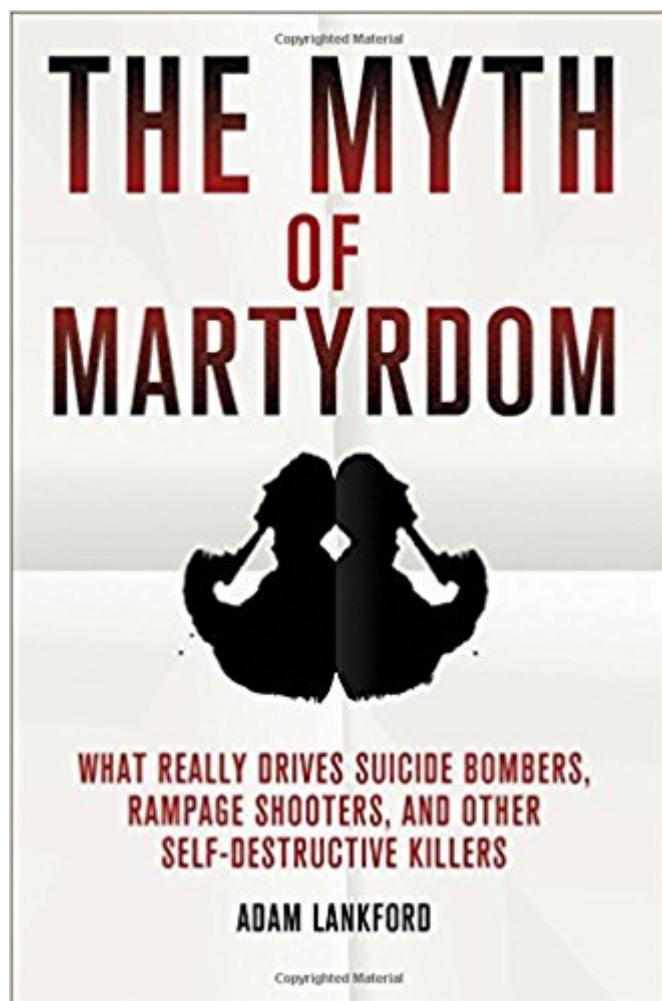


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The Myth Of Martyrdom: What Really Drives Suicide Bombers, Rampage Shooters, And Other Self-Destructive Killers



Synopsis

For decades, experts have told us that suicide bombers are the psychological equivalent of America's Navy SEALs--men and women so fully committed to their cause or faith that they cease to fear death. In *The Myth of Martyrdom*, Adam Lankford corrects this misconception, arguing that terrorists are driven to suicide for the same reasons any civilian might be: depression, anxiety, marital strife, or professional failure. He takes readers on a journey through the minds of suicide bombers, airplane hijackers, 'lone wolf' terrorists, and rampage shooters, via their suicide notes, love letters, diary entries, and martyrdom videos. The result is an astonishing account of rage and shame that will transform the way we think of terrorism forever. Lankford convincingly demonstrates that only by understanding the psychological crises that precipitate these acts can we ever hope to stop them.

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In SUMMARY, I identified the following ISSUES in Lankford's book:(1) A CONVENIENCE SAMPLE:Lankford's sample of about 130 suicide terrorists is a "convenience" or "opportunity" sample that cannot be used to extrapolate generalizations about the general population of suicide terrorists. Every basic statistics student knows this. For example, regarding convenience sampling, W. Lawrence Neuman's "Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches" (CR 2012) states:"Unfortunately,[convenience sampling] often produces very nonrepresentative samples. It is not recommended if you want to create an accurate sample to represent the

population" (p.147). Yet, Lankford continues to conjecture on the main population of suicide terrorists from his unrepresentative sample, and says that they are mainly psychologically abnormal. This is a violation of basic statistics and a reliance on faith over meaningful statistical extrapolation. Had Lankford used a random sample, for example, his conclusions would have been taken more seriously if the results demonstrated this.(2) DOUBLE COUNTING?:The sample may have double-counted some suicide terrorists, as stated by Lankford in his own words in footnote-61, Chapter-3:"All efforts have been made to reduce the chances of redundancy. However, since some of these individuals are not identified by name, it is possible that a few cases appear on this list more than once" (p.208). This means we don't know how many suicide terrorists really are in Lankford's unrepresentative sample. There may be far less than 130.(3) UNIDENTIFIED SUICIDE ATTACKERS:When I read the list of suicide terrorists in Appendix- A (p.

Adam Lankford's Myth of Martyrdom makes a compelling case that suicide bombers and other suicide terrorists and rampage shooters and other self-destructive killers are basically suicidal people who want to do either as a result of coercion, a desire for escapism, as an indirect means to get killed themselves, or out of a deep sense of personal shortcomings vis-a-vis the world at large. For example, the kamikaze pilots in WWII were beaten within an inch of their lives to commit suicide via kamikaze air attacks and sometimes the abuse was so severe they killed themselves prior to ever flying missions, and so they were coerced into doing it. Adolf Hitler, seeing the collapse of the Third Reich around him, killed himself as a means to escape. Several other people have committed suicide in a classic "suicide-by-police officer" fashion, essentially killing others with the hopes that they will be killed by police or someone else. And the final type is the conventional type, who while appearing to kill themselves and other people for some grand or social reason really do it out of a fear of their own shortcomings or misfortunes, or what have you, in life.Lankford writes that with regard suicide attacks, the killer/suicidal person need only have the intent to kill himself, have some access to weapons, and have access to whomever he perceives as enemy targets. And that's it. He argues that too long have governments focused on additional non-essential facilitators to terrorism, such as the intent to kill others, a terrorist organization to sponsor the attacks, and stigmatization of conventional suicide and/or social approval of suicide attacks.Lankford proposes a solution to identify people who might be inclined to commit suicide attacks.

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