



The IGCC Washington Forum

UC INSTITUTE ON GLOBAL CONFLICT AND COOPERATION
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Joseph R. McGhee
Washington Representative

*The University of California
Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC)
and the UC Washington Center*

Cordially invite you to a lunch and book discussion:

Radical, Religious, and Violent: Economics and Terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq

Prof. Eli Berman

*Associate Professor of Economics, UC San Diego
Research Director, Intl. Security Studies, IGCC*

Wednesday, November 4, 2009, 12:00–2:00 p.m.

University of California Washington Center, 1608 Rhode Island Ave. NW, Washington, D.C.

How do radical religious sects run such deadly terrorist organizations? Hezbollah, Hamas, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and the Taliban began as religious groups dedicated to piety and charity. Yet once they turned to violence, they became much deadlier than their secular rivals. In *Radical, Religious, and Violent*, Eli Berman approaches the question using the economics of organizations. He argues that terrorists are best understood as rational altruists seeking to help their own communities. Yet despite a vast pool of potential recruits, there are less than a dozen highly lethal terrorist organizations in the world capable of sustained and coordinated violence. What is special about these organizations? Berman shows that the most lethal terrorist groups have a common characteristic: their leaders control defection, build loyalty through mutual aid, and produce cadre they can rely on. These insights suggest that provision of basic social services by competent governments adds a critical, nonviolent component to counterterrorism strategies. It undermines the violent potential of radical religious organizations without disturbing free religious practice, being drawn into theological debates with Jihadists, or endangering civilians.

Prof. Berman will discuss his new book, present fresh results from research on Iraq and Afghanistan, and answer questions. A light lunch will be served.

A brilliant study of terrorist violence, “Radical, Religious, and Violent” offers an innovative and powerful explanation for the lethality of violent religious groups. This is an important and compelling work by an outstanding scholar.—Richard English, author of Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA

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