

World Poverty Breeds Terrorism
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James Madison remarked in *The Federalist No. 10*, "From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of property immediately results; and from the influence of these on the sentiments and views of the respective proprietors, ensues a division of the society into different interests and parties."

Madison was describing the propensity of men to form political factions, but his logic holds true for basic instincts as well; at the heart of every conflict is an inequality, usually of property.

Palestinian and Middle Eastern terrorist actions, for example, may be explained only superficially as being motivated by religious and ethnophobic beliefs; the real heart of the matter is resource inequality. Land rights form the most crucial element, but Israel has a higher Human Development Index than its neighbors, and may be considered to join the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in May of this year.

India provides another good example. While religious and ethnic ties certainly act as major escalators in the Indo-Pakistani conflict, the territory of Kashmir has prompted three wars and continued terrorism since 1989.

Such property inequality explains not only a major part of the conflicts themselves, but the reason for the popularity of terrorist movements. More affluent societies have lower incidences of terrorism, for the simple reason that there is less dissatisfaction with the standard of living. Poverty serves as an isolator, a degrader, and people who feel isolated and degraded are eager to become part of a group, particularly movements that provide an outlet for their socioeconomic frustrations.

When the United States declared a 'war on terror', they declared war on what can only rightly be described as an effect, a symptom of the greater disease: global inequality. Like any disease, fighting the symptom can bring results, but only in each individual case. As soon as the disease infects someone else, treatment is back to square one.

To truly fight a 'war on terror', superpowers such as the United States must focus on fighting world disadvantage—the cause, not the effects. If we bring an end to the need for fourth and third world distinctions, we will be well on our way to defeating terrorism.