

**TOPICAL STRATEGIC MULTI-LAYER ASSESSMENT AND AIR FORCE  
RESEARCH LABORATORY MULTI-DISCIPLINARY WHITE PAPER IN  
SUPPORT OF COUNTER-TERRORISM AND COUNTER-WMD**

**Countering Violent Extremism**  
*Scientific Methods & Strategies*

September 2011

The views expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the organizations with which they are associated.

**Editorial Board:**

Laurie Fenstermacher (Air Force Research Laboratory)  
Todd Leventhal (United States Department of State)

**Contributing Authors:** Ziad Alahdad, Latefa Belarouci, Cheryl Benard, Curt Braddock, William Casebeer, Steve Corman, Paul Davis, Karl DeRouen, Diane DiEuliis, Evelyn Early, Mehreen Farooq, Dipak Gupta, Tawfik Hamid, John Horgan, Qamar-ul Huda, Eric Larson, Anthony Lemieux, Hedieh Mirahmadi, Robert Nill, Paulina Pospieszna, Tom Rieger, Marc Sageman, John “Jack” Shanahan, Anne Speckhard, Troy Thomas, Lorenzo Vidino

**Integration Editor:**

Sarah Canna  
NSI, Inc.  
scanna@nsiteam.com

# Report Documentation Page

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE <b>SEP 2011</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2011 to 00-00-2011</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Countering Violent Extremism: Scientific Methods &amp; Strategies</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>Air Force Research Laboratory, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, 45433</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>206</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

The views expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the organizations with which they are associated.

**CONTENTS**

Foreword (Brig. Gen. John N.T. “Jack” Shanahan) .....1

Preface (Diane DiEuiliis) .....3

Executive Summary (Laurie Fenstermacher) .....4

Section 1: Current Insights into Violent Extremism .....24

    Not All Radicals are the Same: Implications for Counter-Radicalization Strategy (Tom Rieger).....24

    Countering Extremist Violence (Marc Sageman).....29

    Understanding the Role of Narrative in Extremist Strategic Communication (Steven R. Corman).....36

    Tracking the Spread of Violent Extremism (Dipak Gupta) .....44

    Violent Extremism in Algeria: A Quest for Identity from Colonization to Globalization (Latefa Belarouci) .....56

Section 2: Prevention of Violent Extremism .....65

    Forecasting Terrorism, Predicting its Nature, and Driving Innovative Responses: “At-Risk Group Identity” as a Pivotal Concept for Understanding Political Violence (William D. Casebeer).....65

    A Strategic Plan to Defeat Radical Islam (Tawfik Hamid) .....72

    Prevention of Violent Extremism: “What Are The People Saying?” (Alexis Everington).....78

    Countering Violent Extremism: Shifting the Emphasis towards the Development Paradigm (Ziad Alahdad) .....84

    Partnering with Muslim Communities to Counter Radicalization (Hedieh Mirahmadi & Mehreen Farooq) .....90

    The Role of Non-Violent Islamists in Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization: The European Debate (Lorenzo Vidino).....101

Section 3: Delegitimizing/Minimizing Popular Support for Violent Extremism.....105

    The Mechanics of De-Legitimization (Cheryl Benard) .....106

    Exploiting Al-Qa’ida’s Vulnerabilities for Delegitimization (Eric Larson).....111

    Arab Satellite Television and Popular Culture (Evelyn A. Early) .....124

    The Role and Impact of Music in Promoting (and Countering) Violent Extremism (Anthony Lemieux & Robert Nill) .....143

Section 4: Pursue and Protect/Risk Management/Deradicalization .....153

    Using Citizen Messengers to Counteract Radicalism (Qamar-ul Huda).....153

Evaluating the Effectiveness of De-Radicalization Programs: Towards A Scientific Approach to Terrorism Risk Reduction (John Horgan & Kurt Braddock) .....158

Battling the “University of Jihad:” An Evidence Based Ideological Program to Counter Militant Jihadi Groups Active on the Internet (Anne Speckhard).....164

Mediation and Civil Wars Involving Terrorism (Karl DeRouen & Paulina Pospieszna) .....175

Deterrence, Influence, and Violent Extremist Organizations (Paul Davis).....185

Coercing Violent Non-State Actors (Troy Thomas).....193

**FOREWORD (BRIG. GEN. JOHN N.T. "JACK" SHANAHAN)**

Brig. Gen. John N.T. "Jack" Shanahan  
Deputy Director for Global Operations  
Operations Directorate, Joint Staff

While the dust has not settled on the Arab Spring (and Summer), the events have already yielded several insights. First, there are significantly high levels of perceived grievance associated with poor governance (e.g., lack of rule of law, justice, and provision of services) in the Middle East. Second, there is a direct relationship between the actions of the government and the actions of a social movement; that is, the government can fan the flames and provoke increasing violence or douse them and quell it. Clearly, ideology is not the sole factor stoking dissent in the Middle East. In fact, in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood—an Islamist group who has been accused of violence in the past—was ostensibly on the sidelines of the largely grassroots movement to remove President Mubarak. Multi-dimensional challenges call for multi-dimensional responses to mitigate the root causes of violent extremism.

The causes of violent extremism are complex and multidimensional, and the strategies to deal with them need to be as well. Any effort to counter violent extremism will require a “comprehensive approach” involving participation from the “whole of government” including defense, state, and aid departments and agencies, as well as the support of others including non-government organizations. That is because strategies are needed to address both longer term issues (development, amelioration of the source of socio-economic grievances, prevention of increased radicalization) as well as shorter term issues (e.g., security, dealing with instigators and perpetrators of violence, etc.). These strategies must be implemented through smart partnerships at various levels from national down to the individual. In many cases, it is efficacious to enlist the support of communities and families to counter violent extremism. This is a lesson learned by both law enforcement and development agencies long ago: that often, family support and pressure can prevent someone from engaging in violence. Furthermore, the buy-in and ownership of communities into development projects is directly related to their long-term success. The comprehensive approach requires a strategic view that thinks in terms of government and societal participation to reduce violent extremism.

The place to start when developing strategies for countering violent extremism is to consider how to define achievable goals. For example, achieving the deradicalization of individuals or even groups is extraordinarily difficult. Many of the notable examples of deradicalization (change in violent extremist beliefs) have been, in fact, examples of disengagement (stopping the violent behavior). Disengagement is a more achievable goal, accomplished by a variety of means. Likewise, classic deterrence may not be effective, but other influence strategies can affect a change in violent behavior. Our messaging must be consistent and credible, appropriately tailored for the audience (gender, age, motivations, etc.), and based on an understanding of the narrative and ideological lenses through which it will be interpreted. And the adage, “first do no harm,” bears repeating—it is essential to ensure that strategies do not create more problems than they solve. For example,

messages aimed at an overly general audience will likely alienate those who do not support or engage in violence and reinforce the sense of victimized. Inferring “guilt by association” in terms of membership in an ethnic or religious group is not reasonable and may provoke some individuals/groups to become violent.

The creation of a set of strategies for countering violent extremism that balances security-related initiatives with initiatives aimed at diminishing the root causes of violent extremism—and that does not duplicate or interfere with existing efforts of our current and future partners—will require the concerted effort of all involved, both governments and societies. Ultimately, if the United States Government, allies, and partners around the globe commit to addressing both short- and long-term issues over the long run, we may be able to reduce incidences of violence significantly.



**PREFACE (DIANE DIEULIIS)**

Diane DiEuliis, Ph.D.

Deputy Director, Office of Policy and Planning

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The social, behavioral, and economic (SBE) sciences are focused on understanding the actions and behaviors of individuals and groups at every level of society. In 2009, the National Science and Technology Council released a report entitled, "Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences in the Federal Context," highlighting timely research opportunities for the SBE sciences, as well as the critical advances in neuroscience, genomics, data management, imaging, and other technologies that can now provide revolutionary insights into finding solutions for a variety of societal challenges. A primary social challenge highlighted in the report is understanding, and dealing with, violent behaviors.

Previous studies in the SBE sciences on organized crime, spousal abuse, and gang warfare, have led to the development of some successful approaches for mitigating these specific kinds of violent behaviors.

Now, in a post 9-11 world, an understanding of the behavioral basis of violent extremism, radicalization, and terrorism, will be crucial to the development of programs to mitigate these behaviors and foster societal resilience. SBE studies of white collar crimes, for example, have already been shown to be valuable in the detection of terrorists and terrorist cells—more broadly applied, SBE studies can provide more tools and resources for protecting society against violence.

This report represents a distillation of current SBE research findings on violent extremism: What is the cultural basis for violent extremism and radicalization? What motivates individuals and groups to violence, and how is that risk measured? How does our understanding of these findings educate the mitigation of extremism? Can it be prevented or reversed? These and other topics are outlined here to open a forward-looking dialog in the research and policy community that will be crucial to formulating future research direction and for addressing this pressing national concern.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (LAURIE FENSTERMACHER)**

Laurie Fenstermacher  
Air Force Research Laboratory

If there were a simple solution for countering violent extremism, a solution would have been found centuries ago. Countering violent extremism successfully requires a balanced approach between security-related strategies and initiatives and those that address the underlying motivations and causes for participation in, and support of, a violent extremist organization (VEO). These strategies and initiatives need to be based on nuanced understanding of the various aspects of violent extremism—not only the environments that are likely to spawn violent extremism and sympathetic supporters, but also

- the types of grievances that predispose those individuals to join and support violent extremist organizations and how they are framed in local contexts;
- the ways in which ideologies, media, messages, and narratives are used to instigate/radicalize, mobilize, indoctrinate, inform, or deradicalize;
- the social dynamics, capabilities, and resources of organizations that are violent or that are likely to become violent and their relationship with competitors (for attention, resources, etc.); and
- the underlying motivations of individuals (whether revenge, status, identity or thrill seeking<sup>1</sup>) who join violent extremist organizations.

No single solution or solution set generalizes to all groups or locations, necessitating continuous acquisition of information and updating/adaptation of assessments and strategies.

This paper collection, entitled, “Countering Violent Extremism: A Multi-disciplinary Perspective,” aims to provide new insights on the spectrum of solutions for countering violent extremism, drawing from current social science research as well as from expert knowledge on salient topics (e.g., development programs, cultivating community partners and leaders, conflict and deradicalization). So what is new? There is a large body of literature on terrorism and violent extremism, much of which focuses on developing a better understanding of the problem, including environmental and social/cultural factors and the role of ideology. This paper collection focuses less on root causes and more on solutions for risk management, disengagement (including delegitimization), and prevention of violent extremism. It also tackles the thorny issue of state terror, a subject that must enter any discussion of solutions for countering violent extremism. Ultimately, it is hoped that the paper collection can inform a better understanding of, and suggest sets of solutions for, motivating

---

<sup>1</sup> J.M. Venhaus. (2010). Why youth join al-Qaeda. *United States Institute of Peace Special Report*. Washington DC.

individuals and groups to desist from violence and preventing other individuals and groups from seeking involvement in movements/groups that seek to bring about change through violence.

Throughout the collection, there is an undercurrent of “do no harm”; that is, concomitant with suggestions for stopping or preventing violent extremists, there are cautions and errors to avoid. These cautions implicitly ask the reader to think about things in a different way, in a way that avoids mirroring and simplistic assumptions of what others think or value and widens the timeframe in which we measure success or failure. Many goals related to countering violent extremism, especially disengagement/risk management and prevention require patience and a commitment for the long haul. Patience is required to cultivate the right partners, support the building of institutional capacity and development of leaders, fund appropriate development programs to address local grievances, and support and amplify existing programs that support moderate discourse or develop new programs to deradicalize or disengage individuals from beliefs or attitudes. Likewise, messaging must match actions and must stem from someone who is credible and has a thorough understanding of the key ideological, political, and socio-cultural issues as well as the language, narratives, and symbols.

Some of the viewpoints in the collection are surprising and challenge popular conceptions. For example, in some cases, countering violent extremism requires doing nothing; well, not nothing exactly, but rather supporting/amplifying from behind (e.g., supporting social movements seeking governance change) or supporting other leaders, organizations, or states in leading initiatives. A prime example of this is the events of the Arab Spring, which yielded the inherent lesson that, in regions with social injustice and governance grievances, and political opportunity, social movements can and will emerge that motivate change virtually on their own. Another example where a supporting role is often called for is in implementing delegitimization strategies. Delegitimization involves the initiation of a discourse questioning the legitimacy of the violent extremist organization including their performance in other assumed roles/functions (e.g., shadow government, rule of law). This questioning is often best done by others who are more credible, knowledgeable, and steeped in history, ideology, narratives, and culture.

The Crown Prosecution Service defines violent extremism as the “demonstration of unacceptable behavior by using any means or medium to express views which foment, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs”<sup>2</sup> including those who provoke violence (terrorist or criminal) based on ideological, political, or religious beliefs and foster hatred that leads to violence. Thus, countering violent extremism is something that must address instigators; however, first, countering violent extremism involves understanding and countering the ideas that leverage emotions, narratives, and ideologies that impel violence. Countering violent extremism is not the same thing as countering an ideology. This is not to say that ideology is not important or can be ignored. Current research points to ideology as a framing device or tool to rationalize or impel

---

<sup>2</sup> Violent Extremism and Related Criminal Offences, Crown Prosecution Service, UK. Retrieved from [http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/violent\\_extremism.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/violent_extremism.html)

actions. Some believe that a group ideology is effectively an appliqué on top of an ideology, using the ideology for reinforcement and justification or, said another way, “religion and questions of identity (are) interwoven with questions of resources and political economy.”<sup>3</sup> Success requires decoupling religious and political ideologies and acknowledging and addressing aspects that can foster the behavior changes we ultimately seek.

- This collection of papers yielded several insights. It is best to seek a balance between reflexive (security based) and reflective (addressing grievances, motivations) actions. Right now, solutions are overly focused on reflexive actions and thus actually create more of the problem we are trying to solve.
- Violent extremist organizations are effectively systems; thus, solution sets must contain tailored (kinetic and/or influence related) solutions for each system component (foot soldiers, instigators, leaders, supporters, logisticians, etc.) in ways that are appropriate for the culture, language, locality/region, and underlying motivations.
- Decision makers should avoid missing the “forest for the trees” by overly focusing on ideology. Local grievances trump global issues and need to be understood and addressed.
- Messengers are only effective when perceived as credible and knowledgeable; simply, if you are not credible, you should not be the messenger. Messages stick when they resonate with grievances, motivate behavior when they provoke affect, and persuade when the actions of the messenger match the words. Our adversaries understand this and employ this understanding in their messaging; thus, our counter messaging should take a “page from the same book.”
- Partners, chosen wisely, are critical in countering violent extremism with, in many cases, our partners in the lead. Without ownership, solutions will not be as successful or lasting,
- Many good things (messaging in Arab popular culture, music, grassroots deradicalization efforts), are already going on to counter violent extremism around the globe. Success, in many cases, will come from amplifying and supporting what is already working,
- Focus on small, achievable wins over the long haul (e.g., disengagement or risk management versus deradicalization, delegitimization of strategic objectives or outcomes).
- Delegitimization can be effective in exploiting vulnerabilities and inconsistencies (e.g., disconnects between the fantasy of violent extremism and the reality).

---

<sup>3</sup> R. Vernon. (2011, January). Along the fault line: Poet and journalist Eliza Griswold tells stories from the 10<sup>th</sup> parallel, where Islam and Christianity meet. *Sojourner*, pp. 39.

- Our timeframe for countering violent extremism needs to lengthen and the resources for strategies whose payoff is not immediate (e.g., development) must increase. Success will come with sustained efforts with appropriate partners, resources, and (adaptive) strategies.

The collection is organized in four sections, each of which contains papers that provide a tomography for violent extremism, highlighting factors that engender violent extremism and highlighting some of the options of the spectrum of solutions from prevention to changing the (violent) behaviors of already radicalized individuals or groups. The first section provides perspectives on factors and processes underlying violent extremisms and motivates the development of multi-layered tailored strategies. The second section focuses on the prevention of violent extremism: who is at-risk, what is important to many vulnerable populations, who should we partner with, and a variety of proposed solutions. The third section addresses solutions for affecting support for violent extremism, including delegitimization and support or amplification of existing programs (popular culture and music). Finally, the fourth section provides insights on solutions and attributes for solutions whose objective is changing the behavior and/or attitude of violent extremists including deradicalization/disengagement, deterrence, and coercion.

## **Section 1 – Current Insights into Violent Extremism**

There is a plethora of papers and books written on terrorism and violent extremism; at this point many factors, causes, and issues with past and current strategies are well known. It is understood that there is no “one size fits all” in terms of a terrorist or violent extremist profile, radicalization trajectory, level of extremism, set of motivations, organizational profile, or counter-terrorism responses/solutions. Not all extremists are violent. We are just beginning to develop an understanding of what differentiates those who engage in violence from those who do not, including differing thresholds to violence based on psychological vulnerabilities, triggers, motivations, group dynamics, opportunity, and availability. Lumping all violent extremists together (or labeling all those with same group affiliation (religion, ethnic group, etc.) as extremists may actually provoke their turn to violence. The implication of not being able to effectively stereotype is the need for tailored solutions.

The first section provides perspectives on the impact of contextual factors (environment, demographics, motivations) on types of violent extremists and the implications for tailored solutions; suggests a prototype trajectory for Islamist extremism and factors related to the whittling from many aggrieved individuals to a few who act violently; identifies key extremist narratives and stories that provide a lens for interpreting information, indoctrination, and mobilization; and discusses how (extremist) ideas spread. The final paper tackles a topic which makes many uncomfortable, that of the relationship between violent extremism and state terror. The discomfort is related to the subjective nature of labeling state actions and responses as “terrorism.” This paper discusses the evolution of violent extremism in Algeria as a response to colonization and state terror.

The first paper in Section 1 provides an answer to the question, “Why is tailoring (solutions for violent extremism) important?” Tom Rieger’s paper gives us an answer based on an analysis of Gallup data<sup>4</sup> in which two very different groups of radicals were identified: Type 1 and Type 2. Type 1 radicals were, in general, elitist and intolerant, lacked confidence in the government (especially in terms of safety and security issues), and had experienced past hardships. Type 2 radicals, on the other hand, tended to perceive themselves as victims, were both ideology- (not necessarily religion) and leader-seeking, lower income, and advocates of strong action to achieve social goals. A third group was identified: the fence sitters, or “High Potentials,” that are not quite Type 1 or 2 radicals and have not yet embraced violence. Because of these distinct differences, the solution set for Type 1 and Type 2 radicals are very different. Type 1’s are likely to respond to messages emphasizing their superiority (or other’s inferiority) and that speak of a pre-ordained destiny. However, overall, they are less likely to be turned or deradicalized. On the other hand, Type 2’s should respond to messages from or about a strong leader or those that are empowering or address. The most leverage for preventing violent extremism is with the “High Potentials.” Rieger cautioned that all messages, to be effective, need to have reach, be repeated sufficiently, and have salience.

Marc Sageman’s paper emphatically states that extremism is not the problem, violent extremism is the problem. He describes the trajectory of Islamist violent extremism from a protest community/social movement based on political grievance and neo-jihadi ideology, which frames injustice related grievances using the “West is at war with Islam” narrative, to a much smaller group of individuals who act out violently, motivated by moral outrage, small group dynamics, and norms. He counsels that a multi-layered approach is required to deal with violent extremism that avoids repression (which leads to violence), addresses discrimination, attacks the disconnects between the fantasy of being a violent extremist and the reality, and leverages the controversy surrounding issues like violence against civilians. Sageman also reinforces the need for consistency of action with words and the fair treatment of Muslims. He highlights the potential for using the Internet for effective counter messaging by credible individuals (something expounded on in the paper by Speckhard in Section 4).

When messaging, it is critical to understand the narratives in play and how they are manifested in local, national, and global discourse. Steven Corman writes of the importance of narratives, which are systems of stories that house themes, forms, and archetypes. Based on a study of Islamist extremist narrative, thirteen “master narratives” were identified. For example, the “nakba” or “catastrophe” narrative represents the stories of the loss of Palestine and Jerusalem as well as betrayal and injustice themes, implicitly calling for deliverance. In another example, the “Crusader” narrative describes the ultimate victory over an occupier, implicitly calling for a champion. Master narratives are those that are frequently retold over time. Corman relates that master narratives are

---

<sup>4</sup> Rieger, T. (2010, January). The anatomy of a swamp. In L. Fenstermacher, et al. (Eds.). *Protecting the homeland from international and domestic terrorism threats: Current multi-disciplinary perspectives on root causes, the role of ideology and programs for counter-radicalization and disengagement*. pp.76-81.

powerful because they effectively form a bridge between a story and a present day event/situation. He argues that, because narratives provide an alternative form of rationality or cognitive lens, effective counter messaging can be developed which challenges narratives based on questioning their narrative coherence or structural consistency (plausibility of story, consistency of event sequences) or narrative fidelity or truth (plausibility based on the reader's experience). He states that narratives that draw on master narratives are a special case in terms of counter messaging, requiring discrediting the argument that links a present day situation and the narrative stories by pointing out differences or by providing an alternative interpretation.

Beyond the link between narratives (or speech) and the way people think, speech is also linked to violence, as evidenced in Rapoport's research<sup>5</sup>. Dipak Gupta writes about a methodology to track the spread of ideas over time, including violent extremist ideas, using speech. He relates that information tends to pass through stages: knowledge (idea exposure), persuasion (forming attitudes), decision (choice), implementation (application), and confirmation (idea reinforcement). Various types of individuals assist in the diffusion of ideas, including opinion leaders (evaluate and seek consensus for ideas), facilitators (assist implementation), champions (proponents and leaders), linking agents (across divergent groups), and change agents. The methodology attempts to identify the geographic and chronological patterns of ideas that spread through Internet and social media, using, in part, an epidemiological model of the spread of disease. Initially, semantic maps (patterns related to words, phrases, language use) are used to characterize seed sites/individuals for the spread of ideas through various stages and then web searches enable the exploration of the dynamics and extent of the spread of those ideas.

Belarouci details the evolution of violent extremism in Algeria, from colonization to modern day. She states that Algerian violent extremism had roots in colonization and state terror, manifested in actions aimed at dispossession of identity through dehumanization and acculturation including systematic discrimination and theft (land, etc.) justified by frames relating Arabs as less than human and employment of torture and mutilation. Belarouci asserts, in the vacuum created by the annihilation of their former identity, Islam and Islamism were a means of establishing an identity and motivating resistance to the colonial occupiers. However, as Islamism grew in popularity in Algeria, it became increasingly violent, in part due to state repression, which stoked hatred and frustration in the youth population. At this point, the frame impelling action, often-violent action, involved the threat to identity posed by globalization (e.g., increasing standardization of lifestyles, increased consumption, and destruction of traditional values). These fears were exacerbated by delegitimization of role models, particularly government leaders; thus, ideology/religion replaced political identities and provided a sense of solidarity and meaning to people.

The inherent variation in the people and processes involved in violent extremism and the often recursive relationship between state terror and violent extremism pose special challenges for

---

<sup>5</sup> Rapoport, D. C. (2006). Four waves of terrorism. In Dipak K. Gupta (Ed.) *Terrorism and Homeland Security*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

effective strategies to prevent violent extremism. The following section provides some ideas on the “what,” “where,” “how,” and “with whom” for prevention strategies.

## **Section 2 – Prevention of Violent Extremism**

Much of the current effort in countering violent extremism is focused on security and law enforcement. However, research has shown that merely removing violent extremists (whether by killing, imprisonment, or relocation) is not effective as the numbers of new recruits will dwarf the numbers removed, and civilian casualties from security/military operations have similar effects on recruitment and radicalization.<sup>6</sup> The goal of preventing violent extremism is to eliminate or minimize those factors that lead individuals to join violent extremist organizations or to support violent extremism. The contributions in this section offer a variety of perspectives, based on research, as well as firsthand experience with violent extremism, on the prevention of violent extremism. These contributions include a method to determine appropriate populations to target for prevention strategies; a strategic plan for systematically addressing the Islamization process and components; suggestions of trends to exploit and perceptions/mistakes to avoid in order to prevent violent extremism; the importance of and issues associated with balancing security solutions (which treat symptoms) with a variety of development solutions that focus on the causes of extremism; and the importance of cultivating appropriate partners and supporting a variety of solutions that engage, empower, and foster the ownership of Muslim communities and leaders.

Due to finite resources, efforts to prevent violent extremism need to be focused on at-risk populations. Bill Casebeer, in his prescient paper, which adroitly analyzed the potential for violence in Egypt before the January Revolution of 2011, offers a straightforward way to do this based on identifying those “at risk” as well as assessing “group identity” of likely extremist groups based on criteria drawn from research in sociology (social movements and mobilization) and cognitive/social psychology, respectively. Evaluation of those “at risk” is based on salient factors for social mobilization including lack of political opportunity, availability of resources for mobilization, and the presence of mobilizing frames, particularly those related to justice. Criteria for assessing group identity include group identity based on self-perception and affective components of group identity and social identity (identification with a group to bolster self-esteem, in-group/out-group distinctions and related behaviors). Assessment along these dimensions of group identity and those “at risk” enables the discrimination of groups who are actively or likely to be engaged in violence from those unlikely to engage in extremist violence. However, its power is in providing insights on the nature of the underlying issues, both the “why” (identity) and “how” (at risk factors). This assessment and forecasting method provides insights on current situations and the ability to identify risk factors and locations where violent extremism is likely to emerge.

---

<sup>6</sup> L.N. Condra, J.H. Felter, R.K. Iyengar, & J.N. Shapiro. (2010) The effect of civilian casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq. *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 16152*. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16152>

After identifying at-risk populations, it is important to develop appropriate strategies for countering or defeating violent extremism. Tawfik Hamid, a former member of the militant extremist group al Gama'a al-Islamiyya, offers a "soup to nuts" strategic plan that addresses the components of the Islamist terrorism cycle at ideological, psychological, social, and economic levels including proliferation of the Salafi Islamic ideology (indoctrination, cultural practices, propaganda), creation of passive terrorists, and the transformation to active terrorists. He counsels the need for the reinterpretation of Islamic texts and the creation of education systems that counter indoctrination by interrupting cognitive radicalization and teaching young Muslims peace. He suggests strategies for disrupting Islamization, which addresses factors that foster violent extremism rooted in cultural/ideological intolerance/rigidity or deprivation (e.g., the hijab phenomenon). In addition, he asserts that improving the image of the US by the rebalancing of policies and actions between soft (diplomacy) and hard power and the appropriate provision of aid are potential mechanisms for disruption as well. He recommends, as have others, the use of the Internet to fight radicalization to weaken radical views and delegitimize violent jihadists, as well as encouraging fatwas that denounce terrorism and the use of alternative energy to weaken the financial support behind militant Islam. Hamid also cautions that while kinetic force is often necessary, it is critical to minimize the impacts of collateral damage (through messaging and compensation) in order to break the cycle of Islamization/radicalization.

The paper written by Alexis Everington provides valuable insights on how to prevent violent extremism based on the analysis of extensive survey, interview, and focus group data collected in several countries. The analysis identified a number of common threads, one of which is the existence of a "common enemy" frame through which grievances are interpreted and in which violent non-state actors (or violent extremists) are perceived as legitimate in areas where the domestic or local regional government is unpopular, especially in places where there are security concerns related to an external threat (e.g., Pakistan Kashmir, Lebanon). As a result, many counter-narratives miss the mark by not addressing local grievances and concerns versus global ones. Another common thread related to the lack of understanding of the local "lens" through which people look and the tendency to mislabel extremist groups as "terrorists" resulting in the West being a common enemy by proxy and actually compelling terrorism and a refocusing of previously inwardly-focused conflict to global jihad. The third (and related) common thread is the differentiation between internal violent jihad (domestic issues that provoke jihad) and external (based on an international extremist agenda) and the tendency to convert from fighting internal to external in response to corruption or as an alternative to reintegration. These threads all point to the need for a more nuanced understanding of the groups and their perceptions and grievances as well as opportunities to better counter violent extremism globally by addressing locally salient issues.

Everington highlights some radicalization myths refuted by empirical evidence, stating that poverty or unemployment per se do not cause radicalization; instead, it is perceptions of inequities (justice or opportunities for employment, education) that motivate individuals to join a violent extremist group/movement or supporting one. Also, modern media does not radicalize individuals; rather, it fosters the solidification of preconceived attitudes (he asserts that media can and should be used to

shape the general environment in order to prevent violent extremism by forming a social buffer). Finally, it is religiosity, not “fundamentalism” or “radicalism,” that is a catalyst for support for violent extremism when coupled with personal and social factors (alienation, ignorance, loss/trauma, peer pressure).

According to Ziad Alahdad, there are two responses to an act of violent extremism (e.g., 9/11): a reflexive response involving security measures and/or military intervention and a reflective response based on an understanding of the underlying causes and motivations behind the acts (education, economic opportunity, injustice, lack of voice, etc.) He maintains that the goal should be to balance these options, as the former is Orwellian and the latter Utopian. He contends that the balance is currently skewed towards security/military responses, shortchanging the development paradigm. Alahdad points out that this is counterproductive since any strategy to counter violent extremism must address the ideologically driven extremists (e.g., Al Qaeda) as well as “the disenfranchised.” The latter groups are the potential recruits for a violent extremist organization based on their socioeconomic grievances and frustration at not having a “voice” and, for them, socioeconomic advancement is an obvious answer. Thus, development is needed to eradicate poverty, promote inclusion and social justice, and bring the marginalized into the economic and global mainstream. However, he identifies issues in rebalancing towards development programs, including myopic time horizons of policy makers focused on immediate, visible measures of improvement and large deficits in overall development resources and efforts (on the order of \$240-420 billion shortfall between now and 2015 to successfully address Millennium Development Goals related to poverty, education, gender equality, health, etc.). These pose key challenges to overcome in order to rebalance the response to violent extremism.

Beyond addressing the huge overall shortfall in development funding, he recommends several solutions for prevention of violent extremism including expanding humanitarian assistance due to its enormous impact in terms of winning “hearts and minds” through agile grass-roots programs targeted at vulnerable areas bolstered by messaging to restore confidence that the help is “for the long haul;” strengthening global partnerships to confront terrorism, crime, and money laundering; increasing foreign assistance; reducing trade barriers and targeting protectionism; and focusing development assistance on results, enhancing productivity and jobs. He cautions that, to counter extremism, it is important to choose partners wisely (e.g., ideologically “moderate”).

The last two papers in this section also address the issue of partnering wisely and tailoring counter violent extremism strategies to the grievances and/or needs of the target audience or community and involving them as partners.

When developing strategies for the prevention of violent extremism, it is wise not to “reinvent the wheel” by repeating mistakes previously made. Lorenzo Vidino’s paper discusses the value of learning lessons from the experiences of European countries in countering extremism. One of the key lessons is that countering militant jihadi extremist groups requires the involvement of the Muslim community. However, he warns that this community is very heterogeneous and counsels

that it is important to find partner organizations that are legitimate, truly representative of the community, and influential and effective at preventing violent radicalization or deradicalization of radicals. He highlights three types of Islamist groups: violent and non-violent rejectionists (reject legitimacy of government not based on Islamic law), participationist Islamists (advocate interaction with society at large at micro (grassroots activism), and macro (participation in public life, democratic process). The European authorities have partnered with a multiplicity of organizations; however, controversy has arisen due to the fact that several are non-violent Islamist organizations and believe them to be a conveyor belt for further radicalization. It is this belief that is behind policies that limit rights (e.g., visas) for non-violent Islamists due to their belief that "...they can create a climate of fear and distrust where violence becomes more likely."<sup>7</sup> Critics of this view argue that the vast majority of radicals never make the leap to violence (a contention backed up by the research of Marc Sageman and others) and that any government would be foolish to not leverage the potential influence of non-violent Islamists based on their street credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of many individuals vulnerable to radicalization, given the experience of the London Metropolitan Police<sup>8</sup> and others. Vidino states that some non-violent Islamists do turn violent; however, there is no evidence for the "conveyor belt" hypothesis. Nonetheless, he concludes more research is needed in order to properly understand the risks and benefits of partnering with Islamists.

The next paper, by Mirahmadi and Farooq, provides insights on the into the ideological and financial roots of the Islamist threat in the United States, in which the deep pockets of the Saud family financed schools, scholarships, media development, preachers, mosques disseminating the Wahabbi version of Islam, and organizations that engage with U.S. policy makers and represent Muslim interests. They echo Ziad Alahdad's (see his paper earlier in this section) statement about balancing the response to violent extremism, stating that there is a need to augment current largely law enforcement efforts.

The authors provide several solutions for preventing violent extremism and countering radicalization through systematic efforts to develop partnerships in communities in order to empower moderate Muslims (e.g., thought leaders, teachers, chaplains) based on an agreement on shared values (i.e., religious freedom, non-violent conflict resolution, consistency with rule of law). They recommend strengthening Muslim-led efforts to counter radical ideology by bolstering institutional capacity, investing in leadership and good governance training, and media and communications development. They suggest that a public affairs campaign would assist in educating by engaging a national dialogue to dispel the misperception that all Muslims are radical, creating an educational forum for briefing policy makers, and fostering discussion on and recognition of grass roots deradicalization efforts. Finally, Mirahmadi and Farooq recommend funding for social science

---

<sup>7</sup> A. Travis. (2008, December 11). Time to tackle the non-violent extremists, days Smith," *Guardian*.

<sup>8</sup> R. Lambert. (2010) Counter-radicalization Programs: Tackling Terrorism and Hate Crime in London: A Brixton Case Study. In L. Fenstermacher, et al. (Eds.). *Protecting the homeland from international and domestic terrorism threats: Current multi-disciplinary perspectives on root causes, the role of ideology and programs for counter-radicalization and disengagement*, pp. 318-331.

research focused on radicalization factors and ideological influence, as well as factors underlying decisions to join, deradicalize, and disengage from violent extremist organizations.

Mirahmadi and Farooq state that mainstream Muslims condemn radical ideologies, thus a component of an overall plan to counter violent extremism needs to address those who are not currently radical along with those who support violent extremism either passively or actively.

The next section provides perspectives on strategies to delegitimize violent extremists and minimize their current and future popular support.

### **Section 3– Delegitimization and Other Strategies for Minimizing Support for Violent Extremism**

The vast majority of violent extremist organizations disappear within a few years of their formation.<sup>9</sup> The ones that survive are typically those that are able to secure funding/support from various sources.<sup>10</sup> Thus, any set of strategies to counter violent extremism must include strategies for countering the supporters of violent extremist organizations. Martha Crenshaw writes that for “terrorism to appear legitimate, there must be a congruence between ends and means; both the resort to terrorism and the particular form it takes should seem appropriate to the cause.”<sup>11</sup> Due to a vacuum left by a dysfunctional or ineffective government, violent extremist organization may, themselves, aspire to legitimacy by providing good governance (e.g., the Taliban provides parallel governance including services and rule of law). One such strategy is to delegitimize the violent extremist organization and their actions in order to make the organization less credible and less likely to provide alternative solutions for existing grievances. Delegitimization and other solutions, including use of popular culture (e.g., television or music) to provide countervailing images and messages, are discussed in this section.

Delegitimization can be defined as weakening a hostile movement or ideology by undermining its ability to persuade and inspire people, affecting the support and the ability to recruit new members. Cheryl Benard’s paper outlines the five sub-goals of delegitimization: delegitimization of leaders, followers, messages, methods, and outcomes. She argues that delegitimization tools and strategies should consider and address all five, with the measure of success for delegitimization being evidence of current and potential followers/supporters believing that the leaders are untrustworthy, insincere or inept; the followers being viewed as naïve, having bad motives, committing evil actions or having regretted joining the violent extremist organization; the messages being viewed as incorrect or the ideology incorrect; and the means used considered evil, unjustified, ineffective or counter-productive

---

<sup>9</sup> Rapoport, Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Gupta, D. K. (2008) *Understanding terrorism and political violence: The life cycle of birth, growth, transformation and demise*. London: Routledge.

<sup>11</sup> M. Crenshaw, I.L. Horowitz, A.C.E. Quainton, Y. Dror, C.C. O’Brien, P. Wilkinson, & R. Cox. (1983). Introduction. In M. Crenshaw (Ed.). *Terrorism, legitimacy and power: The consequences of political violence*, p. 28

and not likely to succeed and the results viewed as not making people happy or not providing what people seek.

Benard outlines strategies for all five sub goals. Delegitimization of leaders is an alternative strategy to kinetic operations that may inadvertently glamorize the leader or create a martyr. Strategies can exploit vulnerabilities based on inconsistencies (e.g., lifestyle inconsistent with espoused values such as corruption). Followers can be delegitimized by creating doubt or mistrust (e.g., characterization as criminals posing as pious believers). Benard suggests that a deglamorization strategy to highlight the disconnect between the fantasy of being a member of a violent extremist organization and the reality is likely to be effective based on evidence from interviews with deserters who expressed disappointment and disillusionment with abandonment by leaders and trainers and treatment as second class citizens, etc. She comments that most delegitimization efforts overly focus on messages and cautions that, for Islamist extremism, they not focus on Islam specifically but rather focus on violent extremism (of which militant Islamism is a variant). She contends that delegitimization of methods is likely to be effective, exploiting vulnerabilities related to controversies regarding killing innocent civilians and recruiting suicide bombers (e.g., from the ranks of widows, mentally challenged).

Benard provides a commentary on the Arab Spring, asserting that the leaders in Tunisia and Egypt fell because their leaders had lost legitimacy and were perceived as corrupt, oppressors, and not providing effective governance. She posits the “most effective way to delegitimize Islamic extremism may be to ignore it” since movements are more often motivated to mobilize in the face of social injustice and bad governance than an ideology.

The next paper provides a case study for the analysis of vulnerabilities and development of strategies for the defeat and delegitimization of a violent extremist organization, Al Qaeda (AQ). Eric Larson writes that AQ has vulnerabilities related to ideology, framing, strategic objectives and decision-making, and resource mobilization efforts that can be exploited. Ideologically, AQ espouses a salafi-jihadi ideology as the master frame for the true nature of Islam. The ideology is exclusive (defining true Muslims as those that practice according to Salafism and stating jihad is a pillar of faith) and advocates violence against “enemies,” while failing to offer a positive vision or program for governance. Larson states that the ideological and framing vulnerabilities (e.g., the backlash in the Muslim community over violence against civilians) have been effectively exploited by critics and AQ competitors and suggests that clerics and other credible messengers continue these delegitimization efforts. He suggests the possibility of delegitimization of AQ based on exploiting vulnerabilities stemming from the disagreement over choices of strategic objectives in targeting the U.S. Larson explains that many believe that the 9/11 attack was wrong because it undermined Mullah Omar’s (Taliban leader) leadership, made the Taliban Islamic Emirate vulnerable, and mobilized the U.S. but not the broader Muslim world. He suggests several lines of objectives in addition to the existing objectives for capturing/killing leaders including exploiting/disrupting propaganda networks, exploiting or creating divisions, questioning the legitimacy of narratives, and strengthening the resonance of counter-narratives. He asserts that AQ’s actions have already led to declining

legitimacy and support, and advocates continuing efforts to delegitimize them, with Muslims in the lead, while cautioning not to undertake any actions that impede their self-destruction.

An entertaining and informative paper highlights aspects of Arab popular culture that are focused on countering violent extremism. In the paper by Evelyn Early, she argues that policy makers should be familiar with pop culture's influence on public opinion. She states that Arab media supports a moderate, pro-civil society discourse, adding that Arab popular culture is simultaneously anti-terrorist, anti- U.S. government policy, pro-western, and pro-democracy, influenced by both Arab and western media and mixing the global and local. Early emphasizes that, in general, Arab media despises extremism. She relates that terrorist actions like 9/11 prompted anti-terrorism programming on drama serials. Her paper discusses and gives numerous examples of programs that support moderate discourse from Arab television drama serials (contemporary socio-political drama, epic historical drama, detective/mystery thrillers, and non-Arab dramas) and talk shows based on different kinds of religious discourse (led by salafi televangelists, "new preacher" televangelists, and moderate theologians). Why analyze popular culture? Early advances the idea that it is important to understand the influence that both U.S. culture and U.S. policies have on perceptions and attitudes in the Arab world; monitoring Arab popular culture is a very useful tool for this.

Early suggests a number of strategies to enforce/amplify themes in Arab popular culture that express support for tolerance and civil society including appreciating the role that Arab officials and local popular discourse already play in supporting moderate discourse; understanding, but not joining, the existing vigorous discourse among Muslims on religion, democracy, and human rights; understanding the importance of the Israel-Palestine issue in the Arab world on public opinion; increasing funding for public diplomacy programs, media visits to the U.S., and Fulbright exchanges; and conducting more analyses of Arab popular culture and surveys to assess the impact of media on Arab public opinion.

Music is powerful. It can help build collective identity, enhancing social categorization, dehumanizing others/out-group(s), and influence attitudes, social norms, behavior, and even the inter-group dynamics by the use of various musical elements (lyrical and musical content, rhythm, themes) that leverage the ability of affect to motivate, mobilize, and receive information less critically. Anthony Lemieux writes that music is a potential catalyst for attitude and behavior change, serving to identify the "enemy," air grievances, and create a sense of shared struggle. His study of the use of music for promoting violent extremism shows that music is being used by violent extremist organizations (e.g., Hezbollah, al Shabaab, etc.) for recruiting, indoctrination, and training to communicate information and for mobilization. Common themes/goals of jihadi music are event commemoration, heralding member sacrifices, enhanced group reputation, maintenance of group cohesion, platform promotion, and requests for support/contributions.

Lemieux gives us insights on how music motivates individuals. He writes that both hip-hop and nasheed (chant like music without instrumentation) music is used to radicalize, motivating vulnerable individuals already exposed to causes, messages, and groups to explore them further

using elements like an engaging melody or rhythm to essentially “hook” a listener in such a way that a message can be repeated. He explains that inclusion of musical elements such as negative lyrical content bolster affect (sadness and anger). Protest or social movement music serves to foster social change and to express criticism, frustration, or hate, especially hip hop, which is often linked to activism and used to express group and ethnic identity. In Egypt during the Arab Spring, music was written, recorded, and distributed (many going viral) in order to communicate the situation to the world.

More importantly, relative to the prevention and minimization of the popular support for violent extremism, music can serve as an intervention because of its ability to communicate and manipulate affect (and thus behavior). Lemieux points to several successful efforts, suggesting several uses for music: to transmit countervailing (counter violent extremism) messages (e.g., the use of rock and roll to counter violent Salafi extremism which leverages its wide appeal), as a force for mediation and social change, for promotion of tolerance and reconciliation by providing alternate messages to vulnerable populations, and for providing the basis for furthering intergroup dialogue and reducing intergroup conflict. He stresses that any music-based counter messaging should consider emotional content, the role played by the performer in framing the context and message, the broadcast medium, and the use of messaging and themes to link emotions with musical and lyrical content.

Music, as well as other art forms, can manipulate affect and serve both as a mechanism for minimizing popular support as well as to radicalize, indoctrinate, and mobilize violent extremists. The next section provides some perspectives on a variety of strategies for countering violent extremism that seek to change the behavior of the violent extremist individual or group including deradicalization, dissuasion, mediation, deterrence, and coercion.

#### **Section 4 – Counter Violent Extremism Strategies for Affecting Behavior Change: Deradicalization/Disengagement, Mediation, and Influence**

It is not possible to prevent every individual or group from turning to violent extremism. Thus, it is necessary to have strategies that seek to change the violent behavior (i.e., motivate the disengagement of the individual or group from violence against a particular entity or violence in general) or change the belief (deradicalization) such that an individual is no longer an extremist or at least not a violent one. The bulk of the research on violent extremism has focused on recruitment and radicalization rather than deradicalization and disengagement. Moreover, although other literature has focused on disengagement from cults, gangs, etc., there is still much to be learned about why violent extremists leave the group and/or abandon violence. One thing we do know, however, is that most of those who are involved in terrorism (or violent extremism) disengage in various ways.<sup>12</sup> This section motivates the need for a better understanding of how violent extremism ends, a more critical evaluation of existing deradicalization/disengagement methods, and discusses several

---

<sup>12</sup> T. Bjorgo and J. Horgan. (2009). Introduction. In T. Bjorgo & J. Horgan (Eds.). *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement*. Routledge: New York, p. 1.

techniques across the spectrum of influence (including deterrence, coercion) as well as mediation for changing attitudes and behaviors of violent extremists.

The use of “citizen messengers” could serve to both prevent radicalism/violent extremism by preventing an individual from developing a radical worldview or to disengage those who are already radicalized by disengaging them from a radical worldview, discrediting their values, and changing their beliefs. The concept, described by Qamar-ul Huda, is for messengers to employ a variety of strategies to influence, delegitimize, and foster resilience to radicalization. Huda states any citizen messenger programs should address underlying beliefs that motivated the violent behavior, not just the behavior itself, addressing the factors underlying radicalization including the need for social identity/camaraderie and the need for ideological understanding/answers regarding the world or conflict. He specifies that these messengers should be upstanding or role model citizens (credibility) with a high profile (reach) from civil society or popular culture. The messengers should also have legitimacy in an industry or society at large to support the prevention of radicalizers or instigators<sup>13</sup> or those not yet radicalized or disengage those who are radicalized. The messengers can be actors, athletes, thought leaders, talk show hosts, academics, journalists, etc.

Recommended strategies include the exploitation of inconsistencies, identifying and describing mistruths, deception, and hopelessness in violent extremism ideology, and challenging the violent extremist ideology by offering alternative interpretations. Huda endorses tailoring messages to resonate with disaffected youth and others targeted for disengagement from violence by emphasizing the counterproductive nature of the ideology and the fact that it runs counter to the rule of law based on a thorough understanding of theological, ideological, social, cultural, and political nuances. Citizen messengers can work at the local and national level to repair and rebuild communities, making them resilient to violent extremism by building community capacity and good leaders (a suggestion also made by Mirahmadi and Farooq). He advises that it is important for citizen messengers to not “sugar coat” the situation or existing grievances, but rather to acknowledge them and point out solutions for a brighter future based on rule of law, good governance, education, and institution building (jobs, health care, etc.). Finally, Huda addresses the importance of having citizen messengers belong to an organization that is balanced between defense, intelligence, and security—not a Ministry of Information or an organization responsible for propaganda.

John Horgan and Kurt Braddock write that interest in the reintegration of former violent extremists and issues with incarceration of large numbers of violent extremists has spotlighted deradicalization programs that seek to deradicalize or rehabilitate as an answer. He asserts that many deradicalization programs do not address changing beliefs, but instead are more focused on disengagement from violence or risk management. Further, he argues that not all people involved in terrorism have

---

<sup>13</sup> D. Mandel. (2010). Instigators and perpetrators of collective violence. In L. Fenstermacher, et al. (Eds.). *Protecting the homeland from international and domestic terrorism threats: Current multi-disciplinary perspectives on root causes, the role of ideology and programs for counter-radicalization and disengagement*, pp.122-128.

radical views and not all people with radical views engage in violence; thus, deradicalization is not a logical approach for achieving violence reduction or risk reduction. Their paper summarizes the objectives of various deradicalization programs, suggesting that a good method for discriminating between programs would be an assessment of their effectiveness for risk reduction. Deradicalization programs have not been systematically studied or assessed, in part due to the lack of standard process and criteria. Horgan and Braddock propose a method for the evaluation of deradicalization and disengagement programs based on the Multi-Attribute Utility Theory (MAUT). MAUT enables a systematic, quantitative comparison of programs based on the identification and weighting of goals and objectives held by various stakeholders and evidence based evaluation of the extent to which the programs meet them.

Much has been written about the use of the cyber messaging to radicalize individuals and groups. Violent extremist groups are extraordinarily adept at leveraging the Internet and other media to educate, provide information (e.g., instructions for a weapon or attack), debate (e.g., ideology), distribute video and audio statements, recruit, indoctrinate, and incite attacks. Anne Speckhard's paper describes the ability of Al Qaeda (AQ) and its affiliates to produce and disseminate products that manipulate affect, using imagery (often inducing secondary trauma and fostering a sense of identification with victims), music, scripture, and religious sayings to motivate, mobilize, and persuade. She identifies a current gap in counter messaging for multi-media Internet materials similar to those produced by AQ and proposes a program to develop countering materials for which the target audiences would be vulnerable populations in the U.S. and UK.

The proposed program would develop counter violent extremism materials through strategic placement of "intellectually and emotionally provocative materials" on the Internet in order to educate, motivate, and commence a discourse that would prevent or disengage violent extremists. This program would require the monitoring of and/or participation in websites and chat rooms, development of tested countering materials that utilize methods of persuasion (e.g., images, music, and text that evoke a narrative, idea, or provoke affect) and monitoring and assessment of effectiveness after deployment. She provides several ideas for countering materials including: "my jihad," interviews with a former mujahedeen who has deradicalized, "deconstruct" teaching unit series that modifies violent extremist messages in order to discredit their claims, interventions aimed at youth that discuss militant jihadi rhetoric (i.e., hip hop lyrics), and scholarly writings that delegitimize militant jihadi claims. Since it is critical to assess how effective these countering materials are in preventing individuals from joining violent extremist organizations or disengaging violent extremists, Speckhard suggests two methods, one direct and one indirect, for measuring the impact of the counter violent extremism materials: focus groups (during development) and measuring the impact after deployment by evaluating immediate impact as well as the impact (or "buzz") over time.

Another potential strategy for disengaging violent extremists is mediation. Derouen's paper details research that explored the question of whether mediation is effective for managing civil violence or reducing violence by extremist/rebels. He relates that terror is typically used by rebels to provoke a

response, secure compliance, demonstrate their determination, and compel an enemy to withdraw or coerce a nation to make concessions. In a study of civil wars involving terror from 1970 to 2008, Derouen identified that violent periods resulting from long-standing incompatibilities were more likely to involve acts of terror (e.g., Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka). He observed a dual relationship between terrorism and mediation: mediation is often used in intractable conflicts (in which terrorism can play a role) and terrorism can undermine stability and lead to the institutionalization of war, prompting mediation. In addition, he noted that mediated civil wars with terror tend to recur less often than non-mediated conflicts and that after mediation, the terrorist episodes (times with terror acts) experienced a reduction in violence and were less frequent. He concludes that mediation may be an effective strategy in wars with violent extremism/terrorism, but counsels that mediation does not always work (e.g., biased mediators, intransigence of governments to negotiate with terrorists).

Can violent extremist organizations be deterred? Paul Davis' paper tackles this topic in his paper. Deterrence is defined as avoiding an action by another party by threatening to punish if the action is taken. Davis contends that deterrence, in the classic sense, is unlikely to succeed against a determined violent extremist organization such as Al Qaeda as it is unlikely that the U.S. would desist from the capture/kill strategy based on a promise of restraint from AQ. He posits it would be more effective to ask how a violent extremist organization could be influenced and instead suggests thinking about the spectrum of influence (including co-opt, induce, persuade, dissuade, deter, head off, etc.). He concludes that since violent extremist organizations are systems with have components (leaders, supporters, followers, foot soldiers, logisticians, etc.), it is important to think through separately how each can perhaps be deterred or otherwise influence. This will require that cannot all be influenced, the potential to deter or influence each component needs to be assessed and appropriate strategies and tailored content need to be developed that, e.g., (e.g., address motivations, allegiances, and vulnerabilities).

Davis points out the difference between counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations, stating that the type of influence should relate to targeted behavior one is seeking to prevent and consider salient factors including motivations (e.g., *raison d'être*, identity), belief in the legitimacy of terrorism as a tactic, assessment of participation/actions being worth the costs/risks, and presence of a mechanism to mobilize (e.g., organization). Most of these factors, other than the mobilizing mechanism (more readily affected by attack), lend themselves to different influence tactics: motivations (through messages, social pressure), legitimacy of tactics (by society), acceptability of cost/risks by influencing instrumental reasoning based on values, perceptions of reality (e.g., dramatize reality of negative consequences of violence involving civilians). He stresses that to influence a violent extremist organization, it is critical to avoid actions that negatively influence or manipulate affect that can provoke anger and increase support for the organization.

Can Violent Non-State Actors (VNSA) or violent extremist organizations be coerced by threat or limited use of military force? Coercion is the application of resources in order to achieve desired results, through either compellence or deterrence, in which the minimum goal is compliance (i.e., a

desired behavior occurs). Troy Thomas answers in the affirmative; however, he explains in his paper that it is difficult to coerce a violent extremist organization, stating, “states are hard to coerce, violent non-state actors are harder.” VNSA’s are harder to find, understand, signal (e.g., communicate with), and pressure than state actors; further, VNSA’s have a goal-directed agenda (which may be transcendental or transactional) and are unpredictable, making imperfect decisions and exhibiting unexpected behaviors. Thomas explains that coercion can shape the perceptions necessary to make a decision: positive influence on a relevant audience, advancing group goals, producing positive internal reaction, risk is worth more than alternatives, sufficiently resourced, and based on “enough” information.

The likelihood of compellence (changing an violent extremist organization’s behavior) and deterrence (preventing behavior by a violent extremist organization) are both related to influence of an adversary’s “decision calculus” of costs and benefits through punishment and denial of opportunities (e.g., impact target method selection) and objectives (e.g., protect potential victims and prevent access to targets). That is, the cost (punishment or denial) of not complying must outweigh the benefits (e.g., viability of the organization, guarantees of punishment cessation). However, Thomas reminds us that in any assessment of costs and benefits, it is perception that matters not reality; for example, in terms of costs, credible punishments are difficult to identify for transcendental groups and thus denial is more effective. Coercion is typically integrated with influence tactics, inducement (increasing the cost to benefit ratio of compliance through incentives (e.g., sanctions, safe haven), and persuasion (changing the context for making the cost/benefit decision). Thomas reiterates an oft-repeated maxim that consistency between words and actions is a powerful persuasion mechanism.

The bottom line on coercion? Based on a study of 15 cases by Robert Art,<sup>14</sup> coercion works about a third of the time and the criteria for success are clarity and consistency in demands, stronger relative motivation, a sense of urgency, domestic and international support, fear of unacceptable escalation, clarity for crisis settlement, positive inducements offered, demands of less, not more, and the threat or use of military force for the cost of denial, not punishment.

---

<sup>14</sup> R. Art. (2003). Coercive diplomacy: What do we know? In R. Art & P. Cronin (Eds.) *United States and coercive diplomacy*. Washington DC: U.S. Institute for Peace Press, pp. 363.

## Conclusion

Efforts to counter violent extremism must be varied and persistent. There is no “silver bullet” strategy for countering violent extremism. Strategies are needed at different levels (national to local, group to individual) that are tailored for the target (type of role/level of involvement, type of radical [Type I, II or Potential]), and local grievance and generation (especially youth). The strategy set needs to balance strategies between security/disruption, and disengagement/deradicalization or prevention. In addition, it is critical to avoid missteps that inadvertently stoke extremism and, in some cases, provoke the turn to violence through misinformed or mis-executed policies and messaging, inconsistency (between actions and word), and perceived actions that foster “terror.”

There are a variety of existing and proposed solutions for preventing and minimizing support for violent extremism; however, several authors counsel the need for an understanding of appropriate partners. Likewise, without the necessary resources required and the perception that the “we are in it for the long haul,” their impact on behaviors and beliefs will be limited. To help in the critical decisions on allocation of resources and efforts, a new method is proposed to assess at-risk populations. Strategies, including delegitimation and deterrence strategies, need to consider the target audiences and sub goals: leaders, followers, supporters, messages, methods and outcomes, exploiting vulnerabilities related to inaccuracies or disagreements related to ideology, strategic objectives and decisions, inconsistencies between values and lifestyles and outcomes (e.g., civilian deaths), and acceptability of costs/benefits. Multi-media programs on the Internet and music are being effectively exploited by violent extremists—it is imperative to understand the messages and develop indirect or direct counter messaging, working with appropriate knowledgeable experts and partners. Popular culture (television, music, etc.) can provide a window into how narratives are shaped in discourse by location as well as insight on attitudes towards violent extremism and provide opportunities to counter violent extremism by supporting/amplifying existing programs that are working to counter extremism and support a moderate discourse.

Solutions for stopping individuals and groups from engaging violent extremism include disengagement/deradicalization/rehabilitation programs, mediation, deterrence (or influence), and coercion. All deserve consideration, based on an understanding of the likelihood of success. For example, classic deterrence with a violent extremist organization is unlikely, but the violent extremist organization components (foot soldiers, instigators, supporters, logisticians, etc.) can be influenced. Deradicalization, or changing the beliefs, is difficult and relatively rare, especially for radicalized individuals, leaders, instigators, but a strategy that focuses on disengagement or risk management may work. Coercion has worked previously, but requires a variety of conditions to be met (consistency of demands, sense of urgency, domestic and international support, positive inducements, etc.).

While research has informed our understanding of the causes and processes underlying violent extremism, there are still many areas that require research including the “lone wolf” and how they differ from a violent organization in which social dynamics are so influential, the role of non-violent Islamist organizations (firewall or radicalization conveyor belt), ideologies, narratives, music and

other media and their role in influencing violent extremism and radicalization processes, factors for leaving violent extremist organizations, and mechanisms to affect disengagement.

Finally, a thought. Focus on what is working: core values and the millions of people that share the commitment to preventing violence and support for violence and getting those who employ violence to stand down. And remember, the best thing to do, in some cases, may be to do nothing at all...



**SECTION 1: CURRENT INSIGHTS INTO VIOLENT EXTREMISM****NOT ALL RADICALS ARE THE SAME: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNTER-RADICALIZATION STRATEGY (TOM RIEGER)**

Tom Rieger  
Gallup Consulting

On Tuesday, September 7, 2010, a prominent Iraqi television broadcaster was shot and killed while leaving his home. His name was Riad al-Saray, an employee of al-Iraqiya television. As a political and religious commentator, he was known for his “attempts to narrow sectarian differences” (BBC News, 2010). Al-Saray was the 15<sup>th</sup> journalist from al-Iraqiya to be killed since the regime of Saddam Hussein ended and the 230<sup>th</sup> journalist to be killed overall (Reporters Without Borders, 2010). He was targeted, most likely, because of his moderate views. Moreover, moderate voices do not align with extremist narratives.

For those who are on the fence, or are leaning toward adopting radical views, there is a constant battle for hearts and minds of the target population. Narratives, both positive and negative, are constantly being expressed by groups, and through events, and media coverage. If someone is on the fence, a compelling narrative expressed by a credible voice (such as a prominent television broadcaster), that resonates with their views, predispositions, and experiences may be a factor that sways them toward one side or the other, either toward radicalization or away from it. While the term radicalization may be somewhat overused and vague, in this case, let us assume that it represents nothing more or less than a way to describe attitudinal acceptance of violence against civilians as a means to resolve political or social issues.

The key to determining what types of events and narratives will influence the formation of pockets of radicalization in a population lies in understanding which of these themes will or will not resonate. Many assume that the causes of radicalization are universal and straightforward. However, not all radicals are the same. Gallup’s POLRAD model of political radicalism provides quantitative evidence that there are at least two very different types of radicals: the Type One radicals, and the Type Two radicals (Rieger, 2010).

A Type One radical is characterized by strong elitist attitudes, or a penchant for intolerance toward those who are in some way different from them. These differences could be socio-economic, demographic, tribal, religious, or political. In addition, Type One radicals often lack confidence in various aspects of governance or in government institutions. As secondary characteristics, Type Ones often tend to live in areas where people are concerned about safety, and may have experienced some past hardship. However, demographically Type Ones are mainstream, and are not necessarily lower income or less educated than the rest of the population.

Type Two radicals, however, are very different. While the Type One is highly intolerant, Type Twos often perceive themselves as victims. They are also strongly leader-seeking, as well as ideology-seeking. These two factors in particular make this group especially subject to the influence of powerful narratives. It is important to note, however, that ideology is not necessarily religious in nature. It can be nationalist, social, or economic. For Type Two radicals, the function of ideology is to represent a potential solution for the perceived injustices that lead to perceptions of victimization.

Additional characteristics of the Type Two radical include a distinct tendency to be lower income, and an acceptance of and advocacy for strong action (such as use of force) as a means to achieve social goals.

**Table 1. Radical Typologies**

	<i>Type One</i>	<i>Type Two</i>
Demographics	Mainstream	Downscale
Attitude Toward Others	Elitist/Intolerant	Consider Themselves Victims
Views Toward Govt/Leaders	Lack Confidence in Current Government	Leader-Seeking
Other Characteristics	May Have Experienced Past Hardship	Ideology-Seeking
Other Characteristics	Tend to Thrive in Unsecure Areas	In Favor of Strong Action

This typology (Table 1) was originally developed based on Gallup World Poll data from 2005/2006, and further validated and replicated in 2007. Since it is based on polling data, POLRAD can be updated periodically based on new data, and also provides the unique ability to drill down to virtually any subgroup of the population. The model shows strong relationships to future events, as likelihood of activity increases once a certain threshold is reached.

Specifically, once 3% of a population becomes radicalized based on the POLRAD model, in the 6-12 months after measurement takes place, there tends to be a sharp increase in terrorist activity. Based on the 2007 World Poll estimates, and using the National Counter-Terrorism Center’s open source calendar of terrorist events, populations that reach the 3% threshold had on average 50 terrorist incidents per million people, while other populations with a lower percentage of radicalism averaged 0.8 incidents per million people (Rieger, 2010).

The concept of more than one type of radical has been described in other research as well. Mandel describes different types as “instigators” and “perpetrators” (Rieger, 2010), where the instigator has characteristics similar to the Type One, and the perpetrator is more analogous to the Type Two. Sageman (2010) also describes different types, such as the “entrepreneurs” and the “active core,” which may follow a similar pattern. Thomas and Kiser (2002) describe similar groups as “ideological entrepreneurs” who attempt to convert the victimized poor. Given the prevalence of evidence in the literature regarding these two different yet complementary types, it seems reasonable to assume that both types exist.

Regardless of the terms used to describe these two distinct groups, the key point is that they have very different characteristics. If they have very different characteristics, then it follows that they may be influenced by different types of strategies and/or narratives, or at a minimum, they may find different aspects of a narrative to be more or less salient.

Given that the Type One radicals tend to be more intolerant and elitist, messages conveying a belief in their superiority, preordained destiny, or implied inferiority of others may resonate. In addition, since this group lacks confidence in governmental institutions, they may also be attuned to and weigh the importance of instances of failure by various governing institutions.

The Type Two radical, however, may not find those same messages quite as appealing. This group may be more likely, given their characteristics, to respond to messages that directly address a means to overcome their perceived victimization or perhaps shift their identity as a victim. The degree to which a strong leader can utilize an ideology to galvanize and motivate this group may determine the degree of resonance.

Additional research is needed to determine the exact types of narratives that will resonate with each group. However, it is reasonable to assume that themes congruent with their attitudes will be more effective than those that contradict their values or perceptions of current conditions.

Countering these narratives and messages is certainly possible. Having credible “moderate” voices promote tolerance, and reinforce successes of governance can to some degree dampen Type One radicalism, while more peaceful means of addressing perceived deprivation and victimization may provide a means of preventing Type Two radicalism.

The efficacy of government institutions certainly plays a strong role. Any strategic communications designed to build confidence in government needs to be based on actual success, and backed by visible and credible proof. Widely publicized incidents of corruption, disputes over election results, high profile criminal trials, inefficient or insufficient response to natural disasters, success or failure of the military, or other examples of government response to high profile national events can all impact the Type One’s views on the effectiveness of governance. Response to each of these types of scenarios, as well as others, can be a moment of truth that decides whether levels of Type One radicalism increase or decline.

In addition, identification of key leaders and credible voices that are trusted by these two groups can help to provide direction on key leader engagement strategies. Because the data required to calculate the levels of radicalism in this case were polling data, it is a very simple exercise to cross-tabulate membership in the Type One, Type Two, or non-radical categories versus which leaders and public figures are most trusted. Similar analysis can also be done versus media outlets in order to determine sources of influence.

While efforts to decrease levels of Type One radicals and Type Two radicals are certainly worthwhile and should be pursued, the most success is likely to be found in what Gallup calls the ‘High Potentials. The High Potential is someone who is almost, but not quite, at the point where they truly fit in the Type One or Type Two category. Most importantly, they have not yet embraced violence as a means to address social or political issues.

Over time, as High Potential levels decline, and if there is no associated increase in levels of Type One and Type Two radicalism, a reasonable conclusion would be that the battle over hearts and minds among that group has likely been successful. If, on the other hand, radicalism levels rise when High Potential levels fall, it is quite possible that those individuals have progressed to a more extremist view, and therefore the ‘battle for hearts and minds” among that group is being lost.

In the battle to counter violent extremism, there will be many messages and voices that are competing for the attention of the High Potentials. Some may be more moderate, while some may be more inflammatory. Typically, the question for this group becomes one of credibility of the messenger and the stickiness of the message.

Basic advertising theory tells us that awareness of a message comes from both reach and frequency. Reach is the percentage of the target population that received a message, and frequency is the number of times that the message is conveyed. In broadcast media, a commonly used metric is “Gross Rating Points” or GRPs. GRP is the product of reach times frequency.

Another factor to consider is message salience. The degree to which a message is believed or appears to be credible or truthful may go a long way toward breaking through the clutter of various narratives. McEwen (2010) has theorized that in order to be salient or effective, a message must meet the “three C’s:” be credible, compelling, and able to connect with the intended audience.

The battle for the hearts and minds of the High Potential is one that needs to include all of these factors:

- Reach: To what degree is the message reaching the intended audience?
- Frequency: Relative to more harmful narratives, how often is the message repeated or reinforced?
- Salience: Is the message credible and compelling, and does it present themes that connect with the intended audience?

For each of these three factors, consideration needs to be given to the different types of radicalism that can form. For example, reach involves choosing media outlets that have strong penetration among Type Ones, Type Twos, or High Potentials in the area of interest. Frequency should be evaluated in terms of the relative exposure with respect to more harmful narratives (including not only print and broadcast media, but also local events and influencers). Salience, as noted above, is gained when the message itself has credibility with the type of radical being targeted, is compelling (i.e., backed up by actual events or credible voices), and connects with the intended audience (appeals to the underlying factors that drive toward radical views and beliefs).

All of these considerations must be included in a strategic communications strategy. If the wrong vehicle is used, the target market will not be reached. If the message becomes lost in the clutter, it will be ineffective. If the wrong messaging is used, the content will not resonate. In addition, if the message is not believable, it will be discounted.

However, if the proper research is done ahead of time to identify the type of radical and relevant issues, the prevalence and characteristics of those who are on the fence, and the most salient messages and narratives, it is more likely that a communications campaign will succeed in changing the number of Type One or Type Two radicals while dampening the overall level of potential support for violent activity.

## References

- BBC News. (2010). *Gunmen kill prominent Iraqi TV presenter Riad al-Saray*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11217922>
- Mandel, D. (2010). Instigators and perpetrators of collective violence. In L. Fenstermacher, T. Rieger, L. Kuznar, & A. Speckhard (Eds.) *Protecting the homeland from international and domestic terrorism threats: Current multi-disciplinary perspectives on root causes, the role of ideology, and programs for counter-radicalization and disengagement*, 122-128. Retrieved from: [https://nsiteam.net/x\\_sma](https://nsiteam.net/x_sma)
- McEwen, W. (2010). *Married to the brand*. New York: Gallup Press.
- Reporters without Borders. (2010). *The Iraq War: A Heavy death toll for the media*. Retrieved from [http://en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/rapport\\_irak\\_2003-2010\\_gb.pdf](http://en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/rapport_irak_2003-2010_gb.pdf)
- Rieger, T. (2010). The anatomy of a swamp. In L. Fenstermacher, T. Rieger, L. Kuznar, & A. Speckhard (Eds.) *Protecting the homeland from international and domestic terrorism threats: Current multi-disciplinary perspectives on root causes, the role of ideology, and programs for counter-radicalization and disengagement*, 76-81. Retrieved from [https://nsiteam.net/x\\_sma](https://nsiteam.net/x_sma).
- Sageman, M. (2010). The turn to political violence. In Proceedings from *Defining a Strategic Campaign For Working with Partners to Counter and Delegitimize Violent Extremism Conference*, 19-20 May 2010 Washington DC: Rand Corporation.
- Thomas, T. & Kiser, S. (2002). Lords of the silk route: Violent non-state actors in Central Asia. *INSS Occasional Paper*, 43, USAF Institute for National Security Studies.

## COUNTERING EXTREMIST VIOLENCE (MARC SAGEMAN)

Marc Sageman, Ph.D.

Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Research Institute

Terrorism, like all politics, is mostly local. We wonder how local people come to embrace a foreign ideology and later commit terrorist acts. The way we frame this problem causes us to focus on the latter process, leaving us to ponder questions such as

- Why do they hate us?
- How did they get radicalized?
- How did they get recruited? and
- Is there something different about potential terrorists?

We examine the background and history of terrorists to search for answers. Some commentators attribute the transition to endogenous factors—that is, caused by an inherent predisposition within the individual. Other commentators attribute it to exogenous factors—recruiters, mastermind, and other external parties that influence or brainwash individuals to adopt the terrorist ideology. Results of this line of inquiry have been discouraging.

To bring the context of terrorism back to the field of inquiry, I propose an alternative perspective: that terrorism is an act of political violence by non-state actors. Political violence in the liberal democracies of Western countries grows out of political protest communities in a distinct two-part process. Individuals first join the protest community, and later turn to violence. Joining a protest community is legal and legitimate in Western liberal democracies; however, committing violent actions is neither legal nor legitimate. The generic term radicalization obscures these two distinct steps of the political violence process. Most often, radicalization refers to the process by which individuals develop extreme views and join a protest movement, which are both protected in Western society. Sometimes radicalization describes an individual's turn to political violence, or sometimes the entire process.

Protest communities may be the catalyst for change in Western liberal democracies. For example, in the U.S., protest movements led to the abolition of slavery and creation of universal suffrage. Participants in protest movements often use belligerent metaphors to express themselves. Using this lexicon gives participants the feeling that they are part of an important movement. In my opinion, young people like to boast about their bravery and independence and show off their anti-establishment views. While thousands of protesters use the violent language of war, very few actually take violent actions.

Western security analysts and governments describe both the counter-cultural beliefs and advocacy of political protest movements and the violent acts that emerge from these communities as violent extremism. This broad phrase obscures the difference between words and actions. Unless they are part of a conspiracy to incite violence, these violent words are just words. Western liberal democracies protect the use of words, no matter how perverse and hurtful they may be. In the U.S.,

people cherish their protected freedoms of speech and assembly, and may be wary of any governmental attempts to counter extremist speech, even when this speech is linked to violence.

Eruptions of violence may cause protest movements to lose credibility among political protesters, who may redirect their efforts to mainstream political institutions. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, anarchists advocated the violent overthrow of the class system on behalf of the working class (in which countries? What were the results?). They were discredited after working classes in Europe and the U.S. turned to more peaceful institutions like unions and syndicates to promote their interests. During the 1970s, three Leftist terrorist groups known for their indiscriminate use of violence—the Red Brigade in Italy, Baader-Meinhoff's Red Army Faction in Germany, and the Weather Underground in the U.S.—lost the support of sympathizers once political institutions passed legislation that addressed civil rights issues.

These three examples demonstrate that political violence is not limited to Muslims. In the West, political violence may be a self-defeating activity, as Western governments do not crackdown on their speech and assembly rights. However, government-sponsored violence against these groups could motivate sympathetic observers to take action. On the other hand, observers could view the government-sponsored crackdown on extremist violence as legitimate and appropriate, provided the governments' actions were perceived as proportional to the extremist violence.

Some readers in the West may object to the above analysis for two reasons. First, they could argue that because global neo-jihadi terrorism is based on foreign ideology, it is fundamentally different from previous waves of terrorism. Second, they may perceive the counterculture of protest movements to be malignant, rather than benign.

Indeed, the roots of global neo-jihadi ideology originated from a splinter group of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. However, previous waves of political violence were deemed to be imports to western, English-speaking societies. Anarchist terrorism was thought to have been imported from continental Europe and controlled by a mysterious international committee. Nevertheless, it became American over time and spawned a large set of American anarchists. Leftist terrorism of the 1970s was also viewed as emanating from Moscow, and carried out by people that Lenin might have referred to as “useful idiots.”

Arguments that foreign ideology fails to resonate with local youths underestimate the way that protest movements assimilate ideas. The diffusion of ideas often takes place via intimate group discussions; local brands of the formal ideologies emerge from these discussions. Local protesters are typically not scholars of their adopted ideologies, but embrace the ideology because it reflects their own experiences. The local ideology continues to spread through the intimate group discussions and it continues to evolve.

Members of the global neo-jihadi protest counterculture believe the West is at war with Islam. They believe that discrimination against Muslim immigrants and Islamophobia in the West—such as the Rev. Jones threatening to burn to the Quran to commemorate the anniversary of 9/11—reflects Western countries' aggressive foreign policy in Muslim countries. Because they avoid showing Muslims dying and suffering, Western media outlets have presented biased coverage of the invasion of Iraq, events in Afghanistan and Somalia, and the Israeli military incursions against its Muslim neighbors. Western countries also fail to adequately punish Western troops and mercenaries for

committing gratuitous murders or systematically humiliating prisoners. After President Obama's speech in Cairo, Muslims hoped that the American foreign policies would change; many Muslims have been disappointed by the apparent lack of change in policy. More locally, surveillance of Muslims in the West and instances in which disaffected young people have been set up by law enforcement authorities reinforce these feelings.

These examples of Western injustice have changed the minds of many western Muslims. Surveys of Muslims in western countries found that many are disturbed by these events, although they do not support terrorism. The ideology of global neo-jihad is no longer foreign to the West.

Governmental attempts to develop a counter-narrative have been unsuccessful, in part because the same laws that shield Islamophobia also protect the protest counterculture. Limiting the speech of Islamist preachers of hate, but not of nativist and anti-Islam bigots would fuel additional protests. Western countries, to gain the trust of Muslim populations, must demonstrate consistent justice and fairness, which is the essence of their espoused values. These countries must condemn bigotry from all sides. In the U.S., the public outcry that pressured Rev. Jones to not carry out his inflammatory act was a positive example of consistent justice and fairness.

The second objection that the protest counter-culture leads to violence is only partially true. People do not turn to political violence in the name of the community of protesters before joining and they do not do so after they leave this community. So, yes, the protest counter-culture may facilitate the turn to political violence. However, the overwhelming majority of the protesters do not turn to political violence. Effectively countering extremist violence requires that state interventions do not lump everyone in the same category but rather specifically focus on those that turn to political violence. Such an intervention should rest on an understanding of the process of turning to political violence.

A study to distinguish those who participate in protest from those who turn to political violence found that the turn to violence frequently comes from a sense of moral outrage against some large moral violation involving killing, rape, or obvious injustice, which leads a few of the protesters to reject the protest counter-culture as completely ineffective because it had failed to prevent the moral violation. These disillusioned protesters come to believe that it is their personal duty to protect their imaginary community and appoint themselves as soldiers protecting it. Throughout this process of turning to political violence, the importance of small informal group discussions cannot be over-emphasized in the hardening of young militants' beliefs and convictions that it is right to go beyond peaceful protest. Through constant discussions, potential conspirators generate their own understanding of the world, incorporating available ideas from the global neo-jihadi ideology because most of them do not have a sophisticated enough understanding to generate their own ideas. The diffusion of neo-jihadi sound bites by the Internet, especially chat rooms, plays an important role in providing these ideas.

A good illustration of the above process is provided by the Overt case in England, the plot to bring liquid bombs on transatlantic airplanes in 2006. In this plot, the conspirators' disillusionment and frustration with the protest counter-culture led them to reject its non-violent tactics as just talk, talk, talk. There was an implicit anti-intellectualism in this position: "the time for talk is over, let's act now." As Waheed Zaman, one of the convicted defendants in this case said in his suicide video, "All of you so-called moderate Muslims, there's only one way in which to solve this crisis, the problems

will not be solved by means of campaigning, big conferences, peaceful negotiations with the disbelievers.” (Suicide Videos, 2008). Convicted co-defendant Ibrahim Savant agreed, “Cease debate and enter the battlefield seeking paradise.” The moral outrage against Western policies is demonstrated by the ringleader of the plot, Abdulla Ahmed Ali: “Enough is enough. We’ve warned you so many times... but you have persisted.” They appeared to believe it was their personal duty (*fard ‘ayn* in Arabic) to protect the Muslim community worldwide. As another convicted defendant Umar Islam said, “This is an obligation on me as a Muslim to wage Jihad against the Kuffar.” This call to duty did not require parental approval, as did most other actions. To them, it was like prayer: one had to do it to be counted as a “true” Muslim. This belief in the personal duty to fight the “infidels” is contrary to traditional Islamic jurisprudence that argues that it was the collective duty of the community under a legitimate leadership that could declare jihad against the infidel. This collective duty would be discharged in the creation of a legitimate Muslim army under legitimate leadership. The notion of such personal duty runs counter such traditions. However, young *takfiris* (militants who reject fellow Muslims as true Muslims because, according to them, they no longer live according to the letter of the Quran and the spirit of the Prophet) rejected these age-old traditions and decided to take matters into their own hands.

Conspirators in these plots singled out the foreign policy of their respective countries as the major reason behind their actions. They viewed their country as a major moral violator. They started to think of themselves as soldiers, protecting the *ummah*, their imagined global Muslim community. As Mohammed Siddique Khan, the ringleader of the 7/7/05 London underground bombings, explained, “We are at war and I am a soldier.” (Khan, 2005). The conspirators now viewed themselves “soldiers of Allah.” This is a crucial step for becoming a soldier at war who legitimizes violence and regards the unfortunate loss of non-combatant lives as “collateral damage.” As Tanvir Hussain, another convicted defendant of the Overt case, said in his last will and testament video, “and collateral damage is going to be inevitable and people are going to die” (Suicide Videos, 2008).

As the conspirators turn their gaze to domestic terrorism, they face the question of legitimacy of targeting innocent civilians. This is a difficult issue because the Quran and Hadith specifically prohibit the murder of innocent civilians. This disconnect motivates the development of contorted justifications of civilian fatalities, which are prominent in all the suicide videos of Western global neo-jihadi terrorists. Mohammed Siddique Khan of the 7/7/05 London bombings provided the following rationale: “Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brother and sisters” (Khan, 2005). His fellow conspirator, Shehzad Tanweer, started out his video with the following justification: “To the non-Muslims of Britain, you may wonder what you have done to deserve this. You have those who have voted in your government, who in turn have and still continue to this day continue to oppress our mothers, children, brothers, and sisters from east to the west in Palestine... Iraq and Chechnya. Your government has openly supported the genocide of over 50,000 Muslims. You’ve offered financial administrative support to the U.S. and Israel in the massacre of our children in Palestine. You are directly responsible for the problems in Palestine and Iraq to this day. You have openly declared war on Islam and other foreigners in the crusade against the Muslims” (Tanweer, 2006). These rationalizations of civilian fatalities were, of course, copied from the standard al Qaeda justification of civilian fatalities, but put in their own words.

The suicide videos of the Overt case conspirators also deal directly with this troublesome issue regarding legitimacy of civilian targeting. In Abdulla Ahmed Ali's video, a voice off camera asked, "What about the innocent people? Surely just because the *Kuffar* kill our innocent doesn't mean that we should, that we should kill theirs? What about this so-called 'collateral damage'? What about it?" Ahmed Ali dismissed these questions, "You ... show more care and concern for animals than you do for the Muslim *ummah*" (Suicide Videos, 2008). Umar Islam took this issue more seriously and suggested revenge in the fashion of Hammurabi's Code for Western actions in Muslim lands. "I say to you disbelievers that as you bomb, you will be bombed. As you kill, you will be killed. And if you want to kill our women and children then the same things will happen to you. This is not a joke. If you think you can go into our land and do what you are doing in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine, and keep on supporting those that are fighting against Muslims and think it will not come back on to your doorsteps, then you have another thing coming. You are just sitting there, you are still funding the Army, you have not put down your leader, you have not pressed them enough" (Suicide Videos, 2008).

Waheed Zaman followed suit in the revenge argument, "America and England have no cause for complaint for they are the ones who invaded and built bases in the land of the Muslims. They are the ones who supply weapons to the enemies of Islam, included the accursed Israelis" (Suicide Videos, 2008). Tanvir Hussain preferred the inevitable "collateral damage" in war argument. "People keep on saying, you know, that we keep on targeting innocent civilians, yeah. We're not targeting innocent civilians. We're targeting economic and military targets. They're the battlegrounds of today, so whoever steps in these trenches, they, yeah, you haven't got us to blame. You've got to blame yourself, and collateral damage is going to be inevitable and people are going to die, besides, you know, it's work at a price [sic worth the price]" (Suicide Videos, 2008).

This understanding of the process of turning to political violence may provide a fruitful plan of attack to counter extremist violence, rather than extremism. Cracking down on the larger protest counter-cultural community may backfire. Repressing these peaceful and legitimate social movements in Western liberal democracies may give rise to more violence as peaceful demonstrators may become enraged and conclude that violence is the only avenue for protest. An alternative is to focus specifically on those that are in the process of turning to political violence. Culturally, there is a clear lack of justification for, and even a very explicit prohibition of, killing innocent civilians in Islam. Socially, people in the protest counter-culture—family, friends, wives, and girlfriends—of these terrorists reject violence against innocent civilians. Most of the time, the conspirators do not talk very much about this ethical problem of their activity. As is clear from the transcripts of secretly recorded conversations, they talk more about the glory of neo-jihadi activities and very little about the victims. However, when they have to explain their violent action to outsiders, both to Muslims and non-Muslims, they cannot escape this looming ethical issue and have to come up with a justification for the legitimacy of their action, no matter how weak. Each of the recovered suicide videos of Western global neo-jihadi terrorist addresses this difficulty, often through a convoluted and unconvincing rationale. This lack of a defensible justification for murdering innocent civilians is a potentially fruitful theme to attack the legitimacy of global neo-jihadi terrorism. People who have credibility with them, namely other protesters or people they admired, like neo-jihadis who fought foreign forces in legitimate theaters of operations, may stress that the killing of innocent civilians is not part of jihad. A similar rejection of indiscriminate killings has already been voiced, namely in the global neo-jihadi rejection of the 1990s Algerian atrocities, perpetrated in its name, and more

recently by leaders of the global movement recanting their former belief in the benefits of global neo-jihadi terrorism in the West. Several radical imams in the Middle East and the West have also explicitly rejected this strategy of indiscriminate killings against innocent civilians. These moderate voices should be amplified, and their arguments must be introduced in the neo-jihadi chat rooms on the Internet.

Another potential fruitful area of countering extremist violence is to attack the large gap between the dreams and fantasies of potential global neo-jihadi terrorists and reality. As mentioned above, secretly recorded conversations of these terrorist wannabes show their desire to become a glorious *mujahed* (one who fights a jihad). Testimony of former fighters abroad or local terrorist wannabes who have abandoned this path is especially powerful to puncture these fantasies and discredit their dreams of glory. The reality of global neo-jihad never lives up to its fantasy. Amplifying the voices of those that experienced the hardships and disillusionment with the global neo-jihad, especially in Internet forums glorifying jihad, would be especially powerful.

With the high state of vigilance of Western law enforcement agencies, the environment for domestic neo-jihadi terrorism has become hostile. Global neo-jihadi terrorism infrastructure in the West has been practically eliminated. Terrorist wannabes can no longer go to radical mosques, where global neo-jihadi promoters facilitate their introduction to international terrorism. They have taken refuge in neo-jihadi chat rooms on the Internet, where the semi-anonymity of computer mediated communications partially protects them from local law enforcement. These chat rooms currently serve to provide the general guidance to this global movement in the West. The Internet has become the battleground of a progressively more scattered, disconnected, and uncoordinated global neo-jihadi social movement, slowly moving to a state of "leaderless jihad." Effective counters to this extremist violence require penetration of these chat rooms to enter in order to influence these discussions.

An effective strategy to counter extremist violence is necessarily a multi-layered approach. First, on a more general level, the West must live up to its ideals, which would serve to undermine many of the grievances of the new Muslim community in the West. This multi-layered approach should include justice and fairness in its foreign policy, especially dealing with states having a Muslim majority. Unjust wars and incursions against Muslim countries should be avoided and condemned. The U.S. government did this well in the 1950s when it condemned European attempts to invade Egypt in 1956 and suppress Middle Eastern independence movements. The counter extremism strategy must also demonstrate fairness in its treatment of new Muslim immigrants, eliminate discrimination, especially in the labor market (more of a European problem than an American one), condemn nativist rejection of new immigrants, and promote fairness in law enforcement. Second, a strategy must focus specifically on violence, not on provocative words, which must be condemned verbally but not subject to arrest and prosecution, consistent with the ideals of liberty in the West. This more specific targeting of those who are turning to political violence means that the new battleground is the place where discussions leading to the acceptance of indiscriminate violence are taking place, namely neo-jihadi chat-rooms, especially those that are in Western languages – English, French, German, Spanish, and Dutch, etc.

Credible voices must challenge the legitimacy of indiscriminate killings and the fantasy of glorious *mujahed* life on these forums. The goal is to prevent the recruiting of potential global neo-jihadi

terrorists and convince those ready to kill indiscriminately that their nascent conspiracy is simply plain murder and has no legitimate justification. With no newcomers joining global neo-jihadi terrorism, this violent splinter of a legitimate social movement will rapidly decay from its internal rot. Poorly conceived Western attempts to counter violent extremism rather than extremist violence, based more on prejudice than empirical evidence, will only prolong this inevitable decay.

## References

Suicide videos: What they said. (2008, April 4). *BBC News*. Retrieved from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/7330367.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7330367.stm)

Khan, M. S. (2005, September 1). London bomber: Text in full. *BBC News*. Retrieved from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/4206800.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4206800.stm)

Tanweer, S. (2006, October 15). Extracts of Tanweer's speech. *The Observer* (London).



**UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF NARRATIVE IN EXTREMIST STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION<sup>15</sup> (STEVEN R. CORMAN)**

Steven R. Corman, Ph.D.  
Arizona State University

It seems that everyone is talking about narrative these days. The Global Language Monitor (2010) listed it as the top political buzzword of the last U.S. presidential campaign. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has expressed concerns about the negative narrative surrounding the war in Afghanistan (Wallace, 2010). The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has talked about the need to “supplant the extremist narrative” (Mullen, 2009, p. 4). In recent congressional testimony, Daniel Benjamin (State Department Counterterrorism Office, 2011) described delegitimizing extremist narratives as one of the top priorities of the Office of Coordinator for Counterterrorism.

Yet, for all of this interest in narrative, there is little consensus about what it is and how it is used. My colleagues and I at the Consortium for Strategic Communication have been conducting a research project on Islamist extremists’ use of narrative for the past two years, focused on developing a pragmatic perspective on narrative that is useful for strategic communicators in the government and military. In this piece I begin by outlining the narrative framework we have developed. I illustrate the basics with examples from U.S. culture because they will be familiar to many readers. But then I turn to some findings from our research on how al Qaeda and other extremist groups use narrative for persuasive purposes. I conclude with some implications for how extremists’ narrative efforts can be countered.

**What is Narrative?**

There is little consensus in the academic literature about distinctions between concepts like story, narrative, and discourse. Most work in this area is done in the humanities, which has a tradition of individual scholarship and favors unique analysis over generalization. It is not far from the truth to say there are as many theories of narrative as there are theorists. This sea of competing ideas and definitions is of little practical use to non-academics. Practitioners, for their part, have the opposite problem: They tend to use ideas like story and narrative interchangeably, glossing over what are important (and useful) distinctions.

For a pragmatic perspective on narrative, we can begin by distinguishing story from narrative. A *story* is a sequence of events, involving actors and actions, grounded in desire (often stemming from conflict) and leading to an actual or projected resolution of that desire. An example of a story in American history is the “midnight ride of Paul Revere.” The desire was to protect the Patriots from a surprise attack by the British Army. The sequence of events involved Revere and Dawes riding from Boston to Lexington, warning Patriots along the way, and ultimately delivering word of British

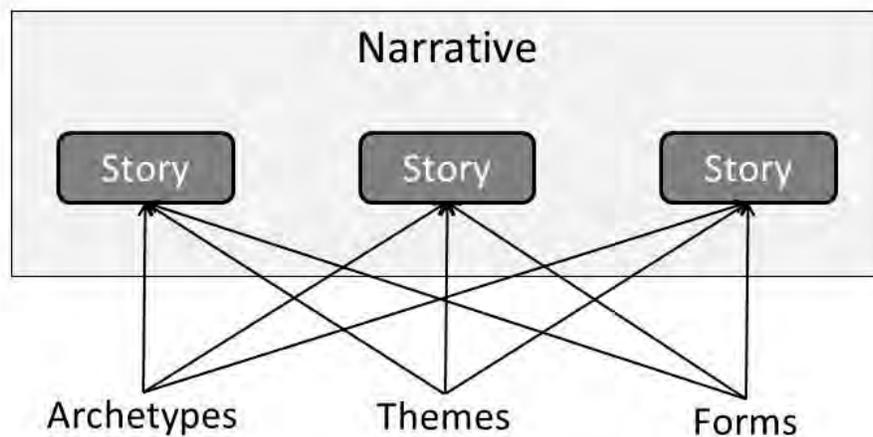
---

<sup>15</sup> This paper was supported, in part by Office of Naval Research Grant N00014-09-1-0872. The author wishes to thank Daniel Bernardi, Pauline Cheong, Bud Goodall, Jeff Halverson, Chris Lundry, Scott Ruston, and Angela Trethewey, who contributed significantly to development of the perspective described in this paper.

movements to Adams and Hancock. Meanwhile, colleagues hung lanterns in the Old North Church to convey the same message as a backup, in case the riders were captured. The resolution is that, because of the warning, the militia was able to force the retreat of the British to Concord.

Though some stories are unique, they more typically follow *story forms*, standard patterns on which stories may be based, defining typical actors, actions, and sequences. An example of a story form is the rags-to-riches story and it underlies films as different (in content and quality) as *Citizen Kane*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, and *Beverly Hills Chihuahua*. Revere's ride is an example of a *deliverance story*: A community is menaced by a threatener, who is countered by the efforts of a champion who repels the threat and restores the community to normality. Often, story forms also employ *archetypes* like the champion, standard characters expected in stories to have or demonstrate standard motives and behaviors in particular situations.

A *narrative*, then, is a system of stories that share themes, forms, and archetypes (Figure 1). Every story in a narrative need not have exactly the same characteristics; however, they relate to one another in a way that creates a unified whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. So for example, there is a narrative about the American Revolution that includes Revere's ride, as well as other stories of political decision-making, decisive battles, hardship, British treachery, etc. Taken as a whole this ensemble has deep meaning for citizens of the United States.



**Figure 1. Narrative Elements**

Some narratives, whose stories are widely known in a culture and consistently retold over time, rise to the level of *master narratives*. The American Revolution is an example. Master narratives are so deeply engrained that they can be invoked by words and phrases without actually telling the stories that comprise them. These references automatically call up the narrative for an audience. Consider the recent use of “tea party” to describe a political interest group in the United States. Using this phrase as a label invokes not only a particular well-known story from the Revolution, but the values, actions, and archetypes that are part of the larger narrative, and associates them with the modern political group.

As the difference between a narrative and a master narrative implies, narratives can apply at different levels of specificity. Betz (2008) refers to this as *vertical integration*, and I adapt his idea here. There are other master narratives in U.S. culture besides the Revolution. Other examples are the: The Civil War and Reconstruction, the Industrial Revolution, World War II, the Cold War, the Civil Rights Struggle, 9/11, and so on. The master narratives in this collection knit together to form what Bormann (1972) called a *rhetorical vision*:

Once such a rhetorical vision emerges, it contains *dramatis personae* and typical plot lines that can be alluded to in all communication contexts and spark a response reminiscent of the original emotional chain. The same dramas can be developed in detail when the occasion demands to generate emotional response (p.398).

Therefore, the rhetorical vision contains a stock of values, morals, story forms, archetypical actors that can be used in narrative action.

Moving towards greater specificity, master narratives can be used to create *local narratives*, about events in particular times and places. The “tea party” seeks to do just this by invoking values of the Revolution in modern political debate. Furthermore, individuals have their own life stories, or *personal narratives*, through which they can project themselves as characters in local narratives. This happens, for example, when a “tea partier” attends a local rally or protest.

One more question remains before turning to the case of Islamist extremist narratives: Why are narratives important? Because they present an alternate form of rationality. Whereas rationality is typically conceived as something that flows from facts and logical reasoning, narrative rationality is based on whether an audience can see positive outcomes from a story and can align it with their values (Fisher, 1987). Narrative rationality can trump logical reasoning (for example, in the case of conspiracy theories) because it is an alternate way of thinking about the world that has close connections with desires and emotions, and is deeply involved in how we make sense of events in everyday life (Campbell, 1991).

Having outlined this pragmatic framework on narrative, I now examine the use of narrative by Islamist extremist groups for strategic communication purposes. Our research shows that they have a definite rhetorical vision composed of a number of master narratives, and consistently make use of these resources to persuade their audience to support or tolerate their actions.

### **Islamist Extremism and Narrative**

In a recently published book (Halverson, Goodall, & Corman, 2011) my colleagues and I outlined 13 master narratives of Islamist extremism. We discovered these by examining several hundred public statements, video transcripts, and texts from al Qaeda and other Islamist extremist groups. We observed that members of these groups consistently referred to certain stories from religious texts and Muslim history to interpret events, justify their actions, and influence behavior of their followers (and would-be followers).

While all of these master narratives make up the extremists’ rhetorical vision, three in particular are heavily used—and frequently used together—in their texts. The most common is *al-Nakbah*, Arabic for “the catastrophe.” It tells the stories of the loss of Palestine to Israel in 1948. However, the narrative goes beyond the immediate loss to the Palestinians. It also invokes stories of Jerusalem

being the original point of orientation for prayer in the time of the Prophet, home of the sacred al-Quds Mosque, and greater Palestine being the burial place of earlier prophets and patriarchs of the faith. It is also the site of a miraculous Night Journey and Ascension to Heaven by Muhammad.

Illustrating the vertical integration model described previously, local narratives are systematically connected to this master narrative. Here Shaykh Hamid al-Ali (al-Ali, 2010) of Kuwait tells stories to accuse Arab governments of complicity in deepening the catastrophe:

Let us take a quick look at some events in history. The first decade was marked by the selling of Palestine in the so-called Al-Nakbah, after which the Zionist entity was declared, and then was sold the biggest area of Palestine and some Arab lands around it in the so-called Al-Nakbah. The decade after, Egypt was sold to the Zionists in the accord of humiliation and insults known as “Camp David,” which was followed by the sale of the blockade of enmity with the Zionists, with the opening of the first embassy for them in an Arab country. This was followed by the most ignoble deal in the history of Palestine, the Oslo [Accord]. Thus, they kept saying that they would never give up Jerusalem in public, but in secret they were racing to see who would get the prize of historical humiliation by selling it to the Zionists. Thus, the deterioration of the Arab system started selling Jerusalem in all its parts, in addition to the judaization of its landmarks, even the ones around the Al-Aqsa mosque.

The story form behind the *Nakba* is deliverance (described previously). But because the narrative is unresolved, it implicitly calls for a champion to step forth and restore the community. Shaykh al-Ali plays on this structure by predicting the ultimate defeat of the “Zionist entity” through steadfast efforts of the *ummah* (worldwide Muslim community).

The second most common master narrative invoked by the Islamist extremists is the *Crusaders*. This refers, of course, to stories of the Christian invasions of the Middle East in the 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. It treats an earlier invasion by the Mongols as a parallel case. The common *Invasion* story form involves a colonizing force that invades and subjugates a community until it is repelled by the actions of a champion.

Again, this master narrative is regularly invoked to contextualize local events and persuade people to assume the role of champion or support other champions. Here is a portion of a statement released by al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM, 2011) in January 2011 to those conducting the revolt in Tunisia:

The tyrant, Ben Ali, is one of the pharaohs and most dangerous criminals of our time. He was appointed by the crusaders, on behalf of them, in our countries to slaughter the ummah and to deviate it from its religion. ... The battle that you are fighting today is not isolated from the general battle waged by the whole Islamic ummah against foreign and local enemies. The battle, intended to uproot oppression, maintain justice, liberate the Muslim lands from the conquerors, dismiss their apostate quislings, and implement the Shari’ah is one battle. Neither freedom nor justice will be achieved without an Islamic government, which cares for the people’s rights, protects honors, spreads justice, and implements the Shura [an Islamic principle upon which a ruler is selected by a high committee of scholars and he consults them in all matters]. This government will only be existent by performing jihad against the crusaders and the Jews, and by toppling their agents, the treacherous rulers like Ben Ali, Bouteflika, Muhammed VI, Al-Qaddafi, and others.

This AQLIM statement also invokes the third most common master narrative of Islamist extremism, the *Pharaoh*. It is based on a story from the Qur'an about a confrontation between *Musa* (Moses) and the Pharaoh of Egypt. The story is similar to that in the Old Testament, but ends with God delivering Divine retribution by drowning the Pharaoh and preserving his body as a warning to future tyrants (and anyone else) who would doubt His sovereignty. The *Pharaoh* master narrative is based on the ancient story form of conflict with God. It is invoked to contextualize local events (as in the AQLIM statement) and encourage the audience to resist the tyrant and/or take on the role of God's agent to help smite him.

There could hardly be a better illustration of the vertical integration principle than the case of the Sadat assassination. In October 1981 President Anwar Sadat of Egypt was killed by military personnel during the Suez Canal victory parade. The squad that killed Sadat was led by Lt. Khalid al-Islambouli, who upon shooting the President shouted, "I killed the Pharaoh!" and repeated the same claim at his trial (Beattie, 2000). So here is a case where a master narrative drawn from an extremist rhetorical vision, based in the Qur'an, provided framing for local narratives about Sadat's corruption. Influenced by these, Lt. al-Islambouli cast himself in the role of the agent of God in his personal narrative, and led the plot to kill Sadat.

The pharaoh label is usually applied to "apostate" leaders in Muslim countries, as in the example above. However, it is also applied to leaders elsewhere who the extremists consider corrupt or tyrannical. Figure 2 shows a poster that circulated during President Obama's trip to Indonesia in October 2010. U.S. born Yemeni extremist Anwar al-Awlaki made similar allusions in an interview in 2010 about Obama's Cairo speech: "Is it a blessed hour to welcome Obama, the commander of today's crusade, and the leader of the war against Islam, and the Pharaoh of the age?" (al-Awlaki, 2010).



**Figure 2. Poster of President Obama circulated during his recent trip to Indonesia**

The *Nakba*, *Crusader*, and *Pharaoh* master narratives are only three among the 13 we have identified (albeit the most commonly used) and there may be more that we have not yet identified. Nonetheless, they provide a good picture of the rhetorical vision of Islamist extremists. They see the world as a dangerous place for Islam and Muslims. Enemies stand ready to invade, subjugate, and humiliate, as they have done repeatedly throughout history. They are chipping away at the land promised to Muslims by God. Corrupt leaders collude with the Crusaders and also oppress their people. In many cases the narratives are unresolved, so the situation implicitly cries out for Muslims to come forward as champions to rectify the injustice. This simultaneously allows the extremists to position themselves as the champions, and implies that those on the sidelines should join them.

It is important to point out that not all local narratives are based on master narratives, which grow from local narratives over time. For example we have detected a story form we call *victorious battle*, which is the basis for reports like this one (ar-Rahma, 2010):

Mujahidin Imarah Islam Afghanistan attacked a military base in Hisarak district of Nangarhar province with heavy weapons on Tuesday. Reports indicate about 22 mortars landed on the base and causing a fatal loss enemy side.

Scores of stories with this same basic structure are published on an ongoing basis by ar-Rahma and other sites like it in South Asia and the Middle East. They make up a narrative projecting the mujahideen in Afghanistan as an effective force that is winning battles against the Afghan government's military and its Western allies. These stories do not usually invoke any master narrative. Yet they seem to be intended to enhance recruiting so they are important nonetheless.

### **Contesting Extremist Narratives**

There are two approaches for contesting or countering the kinds of narratives described above. The first applies to stories in general. Fisher (1987) describes two aspects of narrative rationality. *Narrative coherence* is the tendency to assess communications based on whether their stories (or implied stories) make sense structurally. This considers factors like whether the sequence of events is consistent, the actors and their actions are plausible, and the resolution happens as it should. *Narrative fidelity*, on the other hand, involves assessing whether the stories “ring true,” whether they are plausible with respect to the experiences and values of the audience.

Stories like those of the victorious battle narrative might be challenged on either of these grounds. The stories are incoherent because taken as a whole they indicate rates of loss for the extremists' opponents that are wildly implausible and inaccurate. Preliminary results from our review of these stories indicate that they depict the United States as losing approximately a half-battalion per month in the Afghan conflict.

A fidelity basis for undermining the battle stories is that “mujahideen operations” frequently kill innocent Muslims, accounting for as much as two-thirds of civilian deaths in Afghanistan (UNAMA, 2010). What kind of champion kills the people he is trying to save? This seriously violates both the social and religious values of the audience. The extremists realize this because they expend an inordinate amount of effort developing strategic communications to making excuses for such casualties.

Narratives that draw on master narratives are a special case in terms of contesting narratives. They gain coherence and (especially) fidelity from a comparison between a present-day, local situation and the stories of the master narrative. The comparisons depend on a class of techniques known as observational arguments (Smith, Benson & Curley, 1991), including arguments from sign, analogy, and parallel case. The technical differences between these forms are not important for the present purposes. It is enough to know that they rely not on deductive logic, but rather on observing similarity between a known situation and a target situation, and reasoning from the known to the target.

Usama bin Laden made an argument from parallel case in 2002. He invoked the Crusader master narrative (as well as the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, another invasion narrative). Based on this he projects ultimate defeat for the U.S.:

If you refuse to listen to our advice, then be aware that you will lose this Crusade Bush began, just like the other previous Crusades in which you were humiliated by the hands of the Mujahideen,

fleeing to your home in great disgrace. Your end will be like the soviets that fled from Afghanistan after suffering a colossal military and economic defeat. This is our message to them answering their inquiries and Inshallah the victory will be ours.

There are two options for refuting observational arguments, both aimed at disrupting the observation of similarity between the known and target situations. With this link broken, the story being told about the target loses its coherence and/or fidelity. First, one can identify aspects of the observation that do not make sense—in other words, find reasons why the known and target situations are not as similar as they are being made out. The bin Laden argument above might be questioned on the basis of dissimilarity between the U.S. case and the actual Crusades. The U.S. invasion was not sanctioned by the Catholic Church, was not designed to capture Holy Lands, and participants were not promised absolution of sins for participating.

Second, one can advocate a different or better interpretation for the target, i.e. relate it to a different known situation. Here the Iraq war might be offered as an alternative target for bin Laden's Afghanistan analogy. Though U.S. forces had a difficult time in Iraq, in the end it has not suffered a "colossal military and economic defeat." On the contrary, it prevailed against groups affiliated with al Qaeda, turning the local population against them. Today the U.S. is preparing to withdraw all combat forces from the country as it said it would do, undermining claims that it is a Crusader aiming to permanently colonize the country. Based on the alternate analogy, we can expect that the U.S. will also turn Afghans against bin Laden and his associates, and eventually leave that country victorious.

## Conclusion

Narratives are powerful resources for influencing target audiences. They offer an alternative form of rationality deeply rooted in culture, which can be used to interpret and frame local events and to strategically encourage particular kinds of personal action. Analyzing and developing an understanding of extremist narratives can make U.S. strategic communication more effective in two ways. First, it affords a better understanding of what the extremists' rhetorical tactics are and why they are often very effective. When we ask, "How has one man in a cave managed to out-communicate the world's greatest communication society?" (Kishore Mahbubani, quoted in Halloran, 2007, p. 5), the answer is "effective use of narrative." Second, by better understanding how narrative is used for argumentation, we can see options for contesting the arguments by using comparisons and alternative framing.

## References

- al-Ali, H. (2010). Jihadist writer depicts imaginary meeting on "Deal To Sell Jerusalem." *CSC Extremist Narrative Database*, onr-me0155.
- al-Awlaki. (2010). Al-Malahim establishment posts exclusive interview with Anwar Al-Awlaki. *CSC Extremist Narrative Database*, onr-me0189.
- AQLIM. (2011). Al-Andalus releases audio by AQLIM leader on recent unrest in Tunisia. *CSC Extremist Narrative Database*, onr-base-0242.

- ar-Rahma. (2010, March 30). Afghan mujahideen military operations. *CSC Extremist Narrative Database*, onr-sea0119.
- Beattie, K. J. (2000). *Egypt during the Sadat Years*. New York: Plgrave-MacMillan.
- Benjamin, Daniel. (2011). Testimony. Budget, reorganization, policies: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, 112th Cong.
- Betz, D. (2008). The virtual dimension of contemporary insurgency and counterinsurgency. *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 19(4), 510-540.
- bin Laden, U. (2002). Islamist site publishes Bin Ladin's "Letter to the American People." *CSC Extremist Narrative Database*, AQP0226.
- Bormann, E. G. (1972). Fantasy and rhetorical vision: The rhetorical criticism of social reality. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 58(4), 398-424.
- Campbell, J. (1991). *The power of myth*. New York: Anchor.
- Fisher, W. R. (1987). Human communication as narration: Toward a philosophy of reason, value, and action. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Global Language Monitor (2010, September). Top political buzzwords: Negative narrative entangles President and his party. Retrieved from <http://www.languagemonitor.com/obama/top-political-buzzwords-negative-narrative-entangles-president-and-his-party/>
- Halloran, R. (2007). Strategic communication. *Parameters*, 37, 4-14.
- Mullen, M. (2009). Strategic communication: Getting back to basics. *Joint Force Quarterly*, 55, 2-4.
- Smith, G. F., Benson, P. G., & Curley, S. P. (1991). Belief, knowledge, and uncertainty: A cognitive perspective on subjective probability. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 48(2), 291-321.
- UNAMA (2010, January 13). UNAMA calls for civilian safety first as Afghan casualties rise 14%. *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan*. Retrieved from <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Press%20Releases/Jan13POCEng-UNAMA%20PRESS%20RELEASE%20Afghan%20Civilian%20safety%20first%2013%20Jan%202010%20ENG.pdf>
- Wallace, C. (2010, June). Transcript: Secretary Robert Gates. *Fox News Sunday*. Retrieved from <http://www.foxnews.com/on-air/fox-news-sunday/transcript/transcript-secretary-robert-gates/>

## TRACKING THE SPREAD OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM (DIPAK GUPTA)

Dipak K. Gupta<sup>16</sup>

Brian Spitzberg, Ming-Hsiang Tsou, Li An, & Jean Mark Gawron  
San Diego State University

### Ideas and Violence

The question of a link between idea and action came directly to the fore in the aftermath of the shooting at a town hall meeting in Tucson, Arizona, which left six dead and nearly twenty injured. Immediately, many on the “left” assumed a connection between the action of the gunman, Jared Lee Loughner, and the current confrontational discourse of the political “right.” Those on the right just as quickly asserted that the responsibility for the shooting rested solely with the one who pulled the trigger. Amid the finger-pointing and heated debates, most, including the President, were happy to take the safe middle ground by absolving provocative words as cause for violent actions. While not condoning, *Time* magazine concluded that the link between incendiary talk and “...Loughner’s action is, to put it charitably, completely idiotic” (Cloud, 2011). It is, of course, impossible to link the behavior of an individual—mentally deranged or not—to “fighting” words uttered by an opinion-maker without having made any direct contact. What is lost in the debate is whether violent speech can lead to violent acts against those whom the perpetrators have never met.

Major Nidal Hasan opened fire on his colleagues at Fort Hood, Texas on November 5, 2009. He was found to have corresponded with radical Islamic cleric Anwar al-Awlaki. There is no evidence that al-Awlaki actually urged Hasan to shoot his fellow servicemen (Ross & Schwartz, 2009). Therefore, if Mr. Awlaki were to be brought before a U.S. judge, it is doubtful that his culpability for mass murder could be proven or successfully prosecuted. It seems clear that evidence linking ideas and violent acts cannot be generally established by looking at an individual case; instead, such clues must be sought at a macro-societal level.

The best evidence of a link between the speech and violence can be found in the “wave” theory of terrorism, proposed by Rapoport (2006). Rapoport argues there have been four waves in the history of modern terrorism (anarchism 1880-1920; anti-colonialism 1920-1960; new-left movement 1960-1990; religious fundamentalism 1990 - present), where a central idea has spurred violence across the world. The “waves” are characterized by: a) a cycle of activities revealing both expansion and contraction phases, b) which cover multiple nations, and are c) “driven by a common predominant energy that shapes the participating groups’ characteristics and mutual relationships” (p. 10).

According to Rapoport, the fourth wave, whose primary driving force is religious fundamentalism, started in the early 1990s. The existence of a minority group in a large country with a strong ethnic

---

<sup>16</sup> Mapping ideas from Cyberspace to Realspace is funded by National Science Foundation, Division of Computer and Network Systems, NSF Program CDI-Type II Award # 1028177. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the National Science Foundation.  
<http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward.do?AwardNumber=1028177>

identity often coincides with religious differences and conflict. For example, the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, the Hindu minority in Buddhist Sri Lanka, or the Sikh minority in Hindu India are cases where religion and national aspirations are closely intertwined. However, the central force of the fourth wave is different: today's fundamentalist movements aim not only to replace current governments but also to transform their nations into a manifestation of their image of religious purity. Thus an understanding of how ideas spread and what makes certain messages "stick" is central to understanding how individuals are motivated to join extremist organizations and engage in violence.

### **The Process of Spreading of Ideas**

If the global spread of radical political ideology seems surprising, we should note how freely other ideas flow, inundating us. From fashions to toys—bell-bottom pants to cabbage patch dolls—trends seem to appear suddenly from nowhere. In the Western cultural ethos, the idea of individualism is pervasive. Advancements in the fields of social psychology (Tajfel, 1978, 1981, 1982), experimental psychology (Kahneman and Tversky 1984; Haidt 2006), evolutionary biology (de Waal, 2006), and cognitive sciences (Damasio, 1994; Pinker, 2002; Westen, 2007) clearly demonstrate the importance of group behavior and identity in our decision-making processes (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Denissen, Penke, Schmitt, & van Aken, 2008; Fiske & Yamamoto, 2005; Gaertner & Iuzzini, 2005; Geer & MacDonald, 2010; Leary & Cox, 2008). Research clearly links the power of perception regarding in-group status and the prejudices that arise between groups (Hewstone, 1993; Mullen, Migdal, & Hewstone, 2001). This diverse body of research demonstrates that, as social beings, we crave to belong to groups (Maslow 1968) and when we do, we derive great satisfaction by adhering to their explicit rules and implicit norms. We tend to be altruistic toward members of our chosen group(s) and oppose, sometimes violently, any perceived rival groups. Furthermore, some argue that people follow cultural dictates (Staub, 1989) not only because they generate personal utility, but also because through "doing" (or "consuming") they "become" somebody (Schuessler, 2000). So when we choose to wear a certain article of clothing, buy a certain gadget, or drive a certain car, we not only derive pleasure the consumed goods generate for us (the instrumental part of our demand), but also they help us establish our *identity* (the expressive aspect of our demand) as members of our chosen groups (Gupta, 1990, 2008). Similar to these consumers, the participants in a global terrorist movement, beyond satisfying their own personal needs—varying from power, prestige, monetary gains, salvation, or even the otherworldly hope for 72 virgins--*become* the person they want to be as members of the group to which they belong. As a result, when an idea gains momentum, the number of people increases who are seeking to identify with the idea by being part of the growth community/movement.

## Spreading of Ideas: A Broad Theoretical Perspective

Joining a social movement is a matter of inspiration and opportunity; therefore, look first at inspiration and the four key components involved in the inspiration process are the messengers, the environment, the message, and the receivers.

According to Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations theory, information tends to traverse the stages of *knowledge* (exposure to the idea), *persuasion* (attitude formation), *decision* (activities of choice), *implementation* (application), and *confirmation* (seeking reinforcement for choices), regardless of the scale or group at which such diffusion occurs. Throughout these stages, certain individuals or groups play important functional roles in mobilizing the diffusion through time and space, including *opinion leaders* (those who evaluate initial information and seek group consensus), *facilitators* (those who assist groups in implementation of ideas), *champions* (rhetorical proponents and transformational leaders), *linking agents* (liaisons who facilitate work across divergent groups), and *change agents* (those who facilitate the self-sufficiency of the adopting group).

Journalist Malcolm Gladwell (2002; see also Barabási, 2002, 2010; Lewis, 2009), in examining the question of how innovations or information spreads, asked: How do we arrive at the tipping point, after which, a new idea, a fad, a fashion, or an ideology floods the world? Whereas Rogers (2003) proposed a model in which innovations diffuse rather gradually, Gladwell studied the prototypical success stories of businesses such as the popular footwear, hush puppies, and children's show *Sesame Street*. When we examine the process by which a wave of international terrorism spreads throughout the globe, we observe that this is the same process by which ideas spread, some of which end up becoming global while others remain localized; some make a great impact, but most others disappear within a very short time. In the process, by which little things can make a big difference, Gladwell finds the workings of three broad forces: (1) the messenger(s), (2) the message, and (3) the context.

## The Agents of the Spread of Ideas

Social thinkers from the time of antiquity have argued that gross imbalances within the social structure, such as poverty, income inequality, and asymmetry in power, lead to political violence. However, when these factors are put to empirical tests they, despite age-old assertions of their salience, produce only ambiguous results or weak correlations (Krueger and Maleckova, 2003). The reason for this puzzling dissonance rests with the fact that the factors of deprivation—absolute or relative—only serve as the necessary conditions for social unrest. For the sufficient reason, we must look into the role that “political entrepreneurs” and opinion leaders play to translate grievances into concrete actions by framing the issues in a way that clearly identifies the boundaries of the aggrieved community and its offending group (Gupta 2008).

Gladwell makes a finer distinction within the category of what we generally call, the “political entrepreneurs.” He calls them the connectors, the mavens, and the salesmen. The *connectors* (or linking agents, Rogers, 2003) are the primary nodes of a communication network. These are the

people who know a lot of people and are known by a lot of people as a result of who they are (position, power, money, etc.) or by personal attributes. Maven is a Yiddish word meaning the “accumulator of knowledge” (analogous to Rogers’ “change agents” and “facilitators”). The *mavens* are the so-called “theoreticians” of a movement, the pundits and gurus, who can provide a cogent explanation of the current crisis based on their knowledge and observations. The *salesmen* are those who through their power of persuasion can attract groups of followers (analogous to Rogers’ “champions”). Although there are no specific boundaries separating these three groups of key individuals, any analysis of a global movement will clearly identify people with characteristics of all three. Since the number of people who initially get involved is small, something Gladwell calls “the power of the few.” However, a careful analysis of the spread of ideas would indicate that Gladwell’s scheme is incomplete and there are several other important factors behind the start of a mass movement, namely an understanding of incentives.

### **The Incentive Structure**

The noted economist William Baumol (1990) attempted to answer this important question by arguing that it is the incentive structure within the structure of an economy that creates what he calls, “productive,” “unproductive,” or even “destructive” entrepreneurs. Baumol, of course, does not examine the case of radical political leaders, but he argues (1990: 893) that “while the total supply of entrepreneurs varies among societies, the productive contribution of the society’s entrepreneurial activities varies much more because of their allocation between productive activities such as innovation and largely unproductive activities such as rent seeking or organized crime.” He establishes his hypotheses by drawing historical examples from Ancient Rome and China, Middle Ages in Europe, and the Renaissance. Baumol points out that a society that provides incentives for creative activities, which may go against the accepted norms, practices, and ideologies, fosters more creative entrepreneurs, while those that develop institutional restrictions on free ideas, tend to produce unproductive or destructive entrepreneurs. We can extend his logic to see that the Arab/Islamic nations have largely been non-democratic, where often the only expression of moderate dissent or frustration can take place is within the confines of religious discourse. As a result, many of the people in these societies have channelized their frustration, anger, and a perception of humiliation through religious fundamentalism. This is true even for Muslims living in democratic societies in the West, whereby the frustration and feelings of alienation and anger resulting from discrimination following 9/11 and other attacks and prolonged involvement in warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan has resulted in the radicalization of many youth, particularly in France and England (Sageman, 2008b).

### **The Message**

The information age literally bombards us with innumerable pieces of information every single day of our lives. As we see, listen and/or read them, very few get through our conscious awareness. For example, we may see a billboard while driving or a commercial while watching television or listen to a lecture, and yet may recall absolutely nothing about the specific message they contain only a moment later. On the other hand, sometimes we recall something we heard, saw, or read many years

ago. The question is, what causes some messages to stick? The secrets of stickiness have been the focus of research of psychologists, communications specialists, and scholars from diverse disciplines. Rogers (2003) argues that innovations are more likely to spread to the extent that they (can be rhetorically shown to) demonstrate relative advantage, compatibility with existing ideas, relatively low complexity (i.e., simplicity), trialability (ability to ‘try the idea or innovation’ out before adopting), and observability (perceptual salience in context). Likewise, messages that reinforce these characteristics in an idea, ideology, or course of action, are more likely to lead to adoption. In a related vein, more suited for characterizing the messages of adoption, Heath and Heath (2002), identify six factors that cause messages to stick. They argue that a memorable message must be *simple, concrete, credible*, and have contents that are *unexpected*, they must appeal to our *emotions*, and should contain a compelling *storyline*.

Simplicity is one of the foremost requirements of a “sticky” message. In the area of political communication, where a leader attempts to inspire a large number of people, sticky messages depend on the simplicity of thought. When we look at the messages of bin Laden, we can clearly understand that in his vision, Islam is under threat from the “infidel” West, the Jews, and their collaborators in the Muslim world. All his communications, long and short, contain this message (Lawrence, 2005). These messages are not simply a litany of grievances, but are concrete in their action plan: It is the religious duty of every Muslim to join the jihad against those who are putting the followers of the Prophet in peril.

The “unexpected” part of a memorable message is experienced when the leader “connects the dots” and explains clearly the confusing world in which they live. To many in the Arab/Muslim world, the message must come as a revelation as they begin to see how the “unbelievers” have been undermining their rightful place in history. Through extreme cunning, the “infidels” not only sapped the energy of the Islamic Empire, but also are plotting to destroy it militarily, politically, financially, and even spiritually. This sudden realization often lies at the core of successful recruiting of new believers to the cause.

Coming from the son of one of the wealthiest families, living an ascetic life, waging war against injustice, bin Laden cut a God-like image in the minds of many in the Arab/Muslim world. These images, often carefully chosen by al-Qaeda gave his messages an immense and immediate credibility.

As human beings, we remember messages that evoke emotions, particularly those that paint a portrait of an impending threat. Fear is most often the primary motivator for collective action. Evolutionary biologists have bolstered the findings of experiments underlying the development of Prospect Theory by Kahneman and Tversky (1979). Prospect Theory simply states that, in the process of evaluating benefits and costs of an action, human beings often place a far greater weight on the fear of a loss than the prospect of a gain. As Heidt (2007, p. 29) points out: “If you were designing a fish, would you have it respond as strongly to opportunities as to threats? No way. The cost of missing the sign of a nearby predator, however, can be catastrophic. Game over, end of the line of those genes.” Thus, fear affects us in a profound way. Hence, it should come as little surprise

that the messages of bin Laden were strewn with dire predictions of the destruction of the Islamic world, which are sure to pass if believers fail to act (Olsson, 2008).

Finally, memorable messages come with stories (Fisher, 1984). Experimental studies (Pennington and Hastie, 1988) show that when two similar messages are presented to an audience, one with supporting statistics and the other with a suitable story, the latter (story) inevitably sticks more than the former (statistics). Any good public speaker knows the power of a storyline. Thus, when someone evokes the name of the former British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in a negotiation, we immediately decode the implicit meaning regarding the follies of trying to appease an impeccable enemy. Similarly, the mere reference of Vietnam, Watergate, or the Edsel tells a storyline to the listener. Like all other political communicators, bin Laden's speeches were chock full of analogies of stories from Islamic history, which carry important symbolic messages. Thus, when he calls the Westerners, "the Crusaders," or George W. Bush, "Hulagu Khan," their implied meanings leave little doubt in the minds of his intended audience. Similarly, in the radical messages of the white militia groups, the utterance of Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG) or the "tyrant" leaves no doubt among their intended audience as to the identity of the enemy.

Thus, throughout history, the mavens have concocted coherent stories, by borrowing from religion, history, and mythology, with complete sets of heroes and villains, allies and enemies, good and evil that have resonated with the masses. The connectors have spread the stories far and wide, and the salesmen have exploited their power to communicate to recruit eager volunteers.

### **The Context**

There may be great messengers, but the stickiness of their message depends on the sociopolitical, historical, and cultural context. Rapoport (2006) highlights three historical and cultural factors responsible for the spread of one form of the religious fundamentalism (terrorism) wave: Islamism. He argues that the beginning of a new Islamic century, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the Afghan War paved the way for it this wave. The success of the Ayatollah Khomeini in bringing about a fundamental change in Iran by driving out the Shah, the closest U.S. ally in the Islamic World, provided a tremendous impetus to many Muslim radicals to choose the path of violent revolution to drive out the infidels and the apostates. Second, a millenarian vision of the arrival of redeemer coincided with the Iranian Revolution, giving the fundamentalists one more sign of a propitious time to rise up in the name of Allah. Finally, the Afghan War resulted in victory for the Mujahedeen against the mighty Soviet military. In their retelling of this victory, the religiously inspired totally disregard the role that the covert U.S. and Pakistani operation played; they simply interpret it as yet another sign of their inevitable victory.

## Opportunity

The explanation of the waves of terrorism included the charismatic connectors, the knowledgeable mavens, and the energetic salesmen. Although these roles explain the spread of ideas, fashions, or ideologies, there is one significant gap in the puzzle with regard to the spread of violent extremism. While ideas spread and many get inspired, only a few actually join violent extremist groups. Literature (Horgan, 2005; Sageman, 2008b) shows that, regardless how inspired message recipients are, few people join violent dissident groups as a result of epiphany; most join due to friendship and kinship and become more active/violent slowly over time. When people get deeply affected by the sight of the suffering of their own people or by listening to inspiring speeches, they seek out friends or relatives with similar reactions or beliefs and, as a result, some of them get involved in political activism. Such people serve as powerful opinion leaders. This has been documented, for example, by O'Duffy (2008), who narrated the process of radicalization of Muslim youths in the UK. Yet, one curious phenomenon has generally escaped notice of most researchers: there is a significant difference in the rates of actual activism between the various national groups. Thus, in Pakistan, while many young men and women from Pakistani background join violent extremist movements, few from the Bangladeshi or the Indian community do so. On the other hand, young men and women from the Maghreb community, similar to the Pakistanis, find ways to become active in the movement. This differential rate may be the outcome of opportunity. Let us explain.

Pakistan was created with a deep scar in its collective psyche. Apart from the trauma of horrific mass killings that preceded the partition, it also inherited the persistent problem of Kashmir. As a result, from the beginning, Pakistani leaders framed the Kashmir issue as an integral part of national identity. Facing a much stronger enemy, Pakistan turned to the jihadis and, in effect, outsourced its war of attrition (Swami, 2007). Since terrorist training camps were established and administered with the full support of the Pakistani government and its ISA intelligence service (Stern, 2003), the camps operated in the open; those who wanted to join extremist groups had full knowledge of their location. Similar training camps, built around extreme versions of Islam, flourished in the North-West Frontier provinces during the Afghan War against the Soviet military with tacit endorsement and resources from the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf States. These camps became the preferred destination of all the “wannabe” jihadis and provided unprecedented opportunity to those similarly inspired all over the world. Apart from the jihadi training camps, radicalism blossomed in the Islamic schools and madrassahs, many of which were financially supported by Saudi Arabia as a part of their war of religious hegemony (Fair, 2008). By providing opportunity to join and/or to train to the inspired, Pakistan quickly became known as the “most dangerous place on earth.”

Sageman (2008b, p. 85), based on his dataset of terrorist profiles, found that most of the violent activists are not only of Pakistani background, but also a disproportionate percentage comes from Mirpur district, a small area in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. These findings provide evidence for his earlier (2004) “bunch of guys” hypothesis, where a group of (mostly) men join, create a cell, and adhere to the norms of their group. These men may come together at a mosque, initially for no reason other than finding *halal* food or looking for people of similar language and culture. As they

get to know one another, many of them find a strong bond in uniting against a common enemy. Slowly, they may form an informal group of like-minded individuals. Their vociferous vilification of the enemy helps to establish a strong bond among themselves. They tend to seek out information that confirms and reinforces their beliefs from the media and from the Internet. They, in effect, create their own “echo chamber,” where only acceptable voices are heard and opinions reinforced. Those who disagree or have contrary opinions quickly peel off, leaving behind a hard-core group that increasingly becomes more and more radicalized. They only read, listen, or view materials that buttress their own worldview.

These sorts of groupings are common in all social settings. However, if these radicalized members develop the capability and find a way to act upon their conviction, a terror cell is born. As groups are formed, leaders emerge. In the network, they act as central node or “hub,” making contact with other groups or the central core of a movement. As ideas spread, inspiration meets opportunity to produce terrorist attacks. This is why the establishment of strongly Taliban and al Qaeda dominated regions in Afghanistan and Pakistan poses a great security threat to the rest of the world (Hoffman, 2008, McConnel, 2008). Similarly, the failed states of Yemen and Somalia have become a destination of those who are seeking to join the “jihad” against the infidels, non-believers, and apostates.

In the next section we will present a brief explanation of a new methodology for observing the spread of speech associated with such causes. The detailed explanation of continuing work on this NSF funded project can be found on our web site: <http://mappingideas.sdsu.edu/>

### **Mapping Ideas: The Outline of a New Methodology**

The previous section offered a historical perspective on how violent ideas have spread across the world creating waves of terrorism. In this section, we describe an approach that would enable us to understand the process by which the impact of a single event or idea disperses throughout the world over time and space. We believe that this approach can help us detect and track violent extremism.

Before the rise of written communication, people joined violent groups through direct contact with the leaders. Today we are facing a new world, where ideas not only spread at the speed of light they can foster virtual communities of like-minded individuals strewn all over the globe. As a result, today’s violent movements are not top-down systems with a strict hierarchical chain of command (Sageman, 2008b). Today’s groups are less like the old-fashioned Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) with Yasser Arafat as the undisputed head of the organization. These days, most groups are expansively networked, open-sourced, decentralized conglomerations of small, quasi-independent individuals hewn together largely by a common source of inspiration (Robb, 2007). They are bound by a loose set of ideas, heavy with symbolic understanding of the actual world. Individuals form virtual communities, their own “small world network,” access one another through computer terminals. Computers are not simply points of information exchange, such as “how to make a bomb;” through these interactions in virtual communities, individuals develop social capital, share ideological interpretations, provide emotional support, raise money, stoke the fires of hatred towards out groups, and plan future attacks. As a result, there are numerous insurgency groups in many parts

of the world that are no longer a single organizational entity. Thus, today, al Qaeda is less of a group than a multi-headed militant movement. So are many radical groups including the white supremacists in the United States and the Naxalites in India (Gupta, 2008).

Hence, the spread of ideas in the age of the Internet is a double-edged sword; it can enhance our collective welfare, as well as produce forces that can destabilize the world. Our research aims at understanding the process by which the impact of a single event or idea disperses throughout the world over time and space and impact far flung groups around the world. Traditional approaches to understanding the spread of ideas or events are based on 20<sup>th</sup> century media—such as newsletters, advertisements, physically proximal group meetings, and telephone conversations. However, with the new media of the Internet to the Twitter and Facebook providing new methods of lethal connection, it is important to discern geographic and chronological patterns by which some of the most destructive ideas can threaten our world. These spread of ideas are accentuated by the occurrence of dramatic events such as the killing of Osama bin Laden, the decision to burn the Koran by an American preacher, or even the election of an African American man as the President of the United States. Dramatic events, especially when reported through the new media of cyberspace, have the potential to transform ideas into realities, in ways that can inflame the passions of a small group of targeted audience. A few key examples will elucidate the goals of the research.

The news of Terry Jones, an obscure preacher of a small church in Florida, and his intention to burn Korans spread like wildfire through various media inundating much of the world in general and in the Islamic world in particular. This singular announcement made by a single person touched off violent protests that cost the lives of many and threatened to further escalate tensions and rifts between the West and the Islamic world. This episode illustrates the potential of relatively isolated events to destabilize the world in unforeseen ways and with far reaching consequences.

Today the biggest security threat to the United States comes not from the Arab fighters of the al-Qaeda Central, previously headed by bin Laden, as it did in 2001, but from Western youths inspired by their call for jihad against the U.S. and the West. These messages propose the central idea that Islam is under attack from non-believers. As a result, each incident is picked up by the numerous web sites and discussion groups, which call their various audiences, mostly youth, to arms. However, not all the sites that report or discuss the events are the recruiting tools for the “Jihadis.”

In the aftermath of Katrina, H1N1 outbreaks and immunization campaigns, and the BP oil disaster, the societal absorption and utilization of cyberspace resources becomes an increasingly critical factor in facilitating public and political response to such crises. The public is increasingly merging its reliance on the traditional media of television, radio, and newsprint with its use of the World Wide Web and Internet. Understanding information diffusion (e.g., searching, sending) and acquisition patterns in response to such disasters may significantly facilitate intervention responses, and eventually, prevention responses.

One way to analyze the spread of ideas is to develop and use semantic maps—words, phrases, and patterns of language use—which characterize the seed sites in the spread of ideas. The science of

mapping terrorist activities and memes are already developing at a rapid pace (e.g., Brown, 2009; Chau & Xu, 2007; Chen, Chung, Qun, Reid, Sageman, & Weimann, 2008; Chen, Reid, Sinai, Silke, & Ganor, 2008; Qin, Zhou, Reid, Lai, & Chen, 2007; Reid & Chen, 2007; Seib & Janbek, 2011; Stohl & Stohl, 2007; Xu & Chen, 2008). “Seed sites” are the most influential sites that frame the issues, set the agenda, and lead the first wave of reaction to an idea or event. In the example of sites discussing Pastor Terry Jones and Koran burning, this approach would find, among the seed sites, groups that truly are recruiting tools for the Jihadis. To do this requires the development of semantic maps using basic language analysis tools. Using these maps to guide web searches would provide a detailed picture of how seed sites are reporting an event. By using this linguistic framework, a sophisticated web search would indicate how these groups are reporting an event and influencing each other. To visualize how the ideas are spreading, data could be collected on the spread of these web sites over time and space. By mapping these sites on a world map, the plotted path would reveal that the spread of ideas is not random. That is, there are places that are more prone to host these sites (and accept an idea) than others. Statistical analyses (including spatial statistics and space-time analysis) could be employed to develop an understanding of the potential reasons for a particular course along which an idea spreads. In other words, potential factors that cause “susceptibility” to and “immunity” from a particular set of ideas will be identified.

This methodology has other applications other than homeland security. For instance, it can be used in the area of public health, where after the outbreak of small number cases of an infectious disease in one part of the world, other parts will start reporting its occurrence. By mapping and understanding the causes of “susceptibility” and “immunity” a deeper understanding of the causes of the spread of such a disease may be gained.

It may assist disaster planning and response by clarifying the role of new media in distributing information and influencing public understanding of impending risks. This methodology can also be used in the private sector, where the acceptance of a new product can be traced over time and space giving new tools for marketing strategies.

In summary, ideas are linked to violence. Understanding the spread of ideas and what makes them compelling is essential for developing strategies for the prevention, detection of the emergence, and tracking of violent extremism. A capability to map both the geography and the chronology of ideas over cyberspace, as the ripples of information usage radiate outward from a given event epicenter, will provide new insights into the role of new media in biasing, accelerating, impeding, or otherwise influencing personal, social and political uses of such information and ultimately highlight new solutions for countering violent extremism.

## References

Brown, C. (2009). WWW.HATE.COM: White supremacist discourse on the internet and the construction of Whiteness ideology. *Howard Journal of Communication*, 20, 189-208.

- Chau, M., & Xu, J. (2007). Mining communities and their relationships in blogs: A study of online hate groups. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 65, 57-70. doi:10.1016/j.ijhcs.2006.08.009
- Chen, H., Chung, W, Qin, J., Reid, E., Sageman, M., & Weimann, G. (2008, April). Uncovering the dark web: A case study of Jihad on the web. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 59, 1347-1359. DOI: 10.1002/asi.20838
- Chen, H., Qin, J., Reid, E., Zhou, Y., & Sageman, M. (2008). Case study of jihad on the web: A web mining approach. In H. Chen, E. Reid, J. Sinai, A. Silke, & B. Ganor (Eds.), *Terrorism informatics: Knowledge management and data mining for homeland security* (pp. 221-236). New York, NY: Springer.
- Chen, H., Reid, E., Sinai, J., Silke, A., & Ganor, B. (Eds.). (2008). *Terrorism informatics: Knowledge management and data mining for homeland security*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Cloud, J. (2011, January 24). A mind unhinged. *Time*. Special report: Tragedy in Tucson, p. 34.
- Gupta, Dipak K. (2008) *Understanding Terrorism and Political Violence: The Life Cycle of Birth, Growth, Transformation, and Demise*. London: Routledge.
- Gupta, Dipak K. (2011) "Waves of International Terrorism: An Explanation of the Process By Which Ideas Flood the World." In J. E. Rosenfeld (ed.) *Terrorism, Identity, and Legitimacy: The Four Waves Theory and Political Violence*. London: Routledge: 30-43.
- Qin, J., Zhou, Y., Reid, E., & Chen, H. (2008). Studying global extremist organizations' internet presence using the dark web attribute system: A three region comparison study. In H. Chen, E. Reid, J. Sinai, A. Silke, & B. Ganor (Eds.), *Terrorism informatics: Knowledge management and data mining for homeland security* (pp. 237-266). New York, NY: Springer.
- Qin, J., Zhou, Y., Reid, E., Lai, G., & Chen, H. (2007). Analyzing terror campaigns on the internet: Technical sophistication, content richness, and web interactivity. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 65, 71-84. doi:10.1016/j.ijhcs.2006.08.012
- Rapoport, David C. (2006) "Four Waves of Terrorism." In Dipak K. Gupta (ed.) *Terrorism and Homeland Security*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Reid, E. F., & Chen, H. (2007). Internet-savvy U.S. and Middle Eastern extremist groups. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly Review*, 12, 177-192.
- Reid, E. F., & Chen, H. (2007). Mapping the contemporary terrorism research domain. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 65, 42-56. doi:10.1016/j.ijhcs.2006.08.006
- Reid, E., & Chen, H. (2008). Domain mapping of contemporary terrorism research. In H. Chen, E. Reid, J. Sinai, A. Silke, & B. Ganor (Eds.), *Terrorism informatics: Knowledge management and data mining for homeland security* (pp. 3-26). New York, NY: Springer.

- Robb, John (2007) *Brave New War: The Next Stage of Terrorism and the End of Globalization*. Hoboken, N. J.: John Wiley & Sons.
- Ross, B., & Schwartz, R. (2009, November 19). Major Hasan's e-mail: 'I Can't Wait to Join You' in afterlife; American official says accused shooter asked radical cleric when is jihad appropriate? *ABC News*. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/major-hasans-mail-wait-join-afterlife/story?id=9130339>
- Seib, P., & Janbek, D. M. (2011). *Global terrorism and new media: The post-Al Qaeda generation*. New York: Routledge.
- Stohl, C., & Stohl, M. (2007). Networks of terror: Theoretical assumptions and pragmatic consequences. *Communication Theory*, 17, 93-124.
- Xu, J., & Chen, H. (2008). The topology of dark networks. *Communications of the ACM*, 51(10), 58-65.
- Xu, S., & Zhang, J. (2008). Data distortion methods and metrics in a terrorist analysis system. In H. Chen, E. Reid, J. Sinai, A. Silke, & B. Ganor (Eds.), *Terrorism informatics: Knowledge management and data mining for homeland security* (pp. 347-364). New York, NY: Springer.

**VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN ALGERIA: A QUEST FOR IDENTITY FROM COLONIZATION TO GLOBALIZATION (LATEFA BELAROUCI)**

Latéfa Belarouci, M.D., Ph.D.

psychologue, docteur en psychologie, enseignante à l'université d'Amiens

[latefa.belarouci@yahoo.fr](mailto:latefa.belarouci@yahoo.fr).

**Introduction**

Why is it that today, throughout the world, men, and women often identify themselves through their religion? What drives them to assert themselves through a religious group? Why are so many men and women rediscovering their religious affiliation? To answer these questions, this article offers an exploratory analysis of the situation in Algeria. To understand what is happening in this country, we must make a detour through history, placing particular emphasis on the colonial period, decolonization, and the postcolonial period, along with different economic and political crises. These elements help to illuminate how an individual or a population met with violence, humiliation, and death cannot but feel its identity threatened and in such circumstances, religion can then be used as a refuge for identity.

**Colonization, Violence, and the Denial of Otherness**

Colonization is a process of domination and exploitation of people and goods, and thus it involves violence and destruction of colonized societies. Algeria has been the subject of many occupations, the latest and most brutal being the French colonization that began in 1830. This conquest, which lasted twenty years (until 1850), was very violent, as it set about destroying the economic system and institutions of Algeria, in order to break any hint of resistance.

A principal feature of French colonization in Algeria was the annihilation of the identity of the Algerian population. During the colonial period, Algerians were treated not as equals, but rather as members of a race inferior to Europeans. According to the Europeans, to be “Arab” was considered akin to being a barbarian or wild animal, something cunning, dangerous, and to be pursued. Hain, (Hain, 1832, p.57), one of the founders of the Colonial Society of Algiers, described the colonized as “a hyena” or “a wild beast” that one must “drive away.” “Arabs” were also described as lazy, a characteristic associated with the long standing practice of engaging in piracy, and which, in the views of the colonizers, made Arabs unfit to cultivate land. This framing effectively resulted in justifying the Europeans replacing the “Arabs” as landowners for all fertile land, labeling “Arab” men and women as lazy, useless, unproductive, and a danger to morale, family, and public hygiene. Hain wrote that the “Kabyles” and the “Arabs” were “people who will never adopt our manners or our practices...Their simple and ferocious manners have been preserved intact across the centuries...they probably always will be”(Le Cour Grandmaison, 2005, p. 31).

Doctors and psychologists, including Antoine Porot, who taught for more than thirty years at the University of Algiers, contributed to this “identification” of the “native” by claiming that his “superior and cortical activities are unsophisticated,” which explains why “he is a being whose essentially vegetative and instinctive life is above all governed by the diencephalon.” Thus Porot and his disciple Sutter developed an entire psychiatric approach called the “Algiers School,” a theory about the mental functioning of a people “that is half way between Western and primitive man.” They went so far as to promote the idea that the “native,” devoid of morality, also lacks the frontal lobe of the brain. These scientists justified through arguments about brain structure Western superiority, and thereby the inequality of races. L. Moll, a professor at the Royal Conservatory, would say that “any race that is not capable of civilization must necessarily disappear as animals disappeared before the Flood” (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2005, p. 115).

This “identification” prevailed for many decades, in fact until after the Second World War, at which point the term “native,” considered too dismissive, was replaced by the phrase “French Muslims of Algeria.” These designations were used in many official documents to denote a particular national category identified by a combination of racial and cultural criteria, enabling differentiation and thereby separated from the rest of the population. The *code de l'indigénat*, enacted in 1882, formalized discrimination between Algeria’s settlers, who called themselves “Algerians,” and the inhabitants of the country, called “Muslim natives.” Thus native Algerians were identified primarily through religious affiliation, reinforcing Islam as the salient identity.

Convinced that the war in Algeria was a race war in which the weakest should disappear, the military used unusually violent tactics. For example, Lieutenant Colonel Montagnac proposed, “To kill all men over the age of fifteen, take all women and children put them in buildings, send them to the Marquesas Islands or elsewhere—in a word, to annihilate everyone who does not crawl to our feet like dogs” (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2005, p.117). Destruction and annihilation was not to be limited to a few tribes of “natives,” but was to extend to all “Arabs,” whose disappearance, it was thought, would promote the emergence of a greater, purer, and more equal humanity.

### **Expropriation**

Colonization in Algeria, as is typical, involved expropriation of land. It is for this reason that “more than one million hectares of Algerian land were transferred from Muslims to Europeans between 1860 and 1918 (Stora, 2001, p.36). In 1919, the colonial agenda would see to the “allocation” of 7.5 million hectares of land to Europeans. The mass expulsion of “natives” and mass influx of Europeans and Black Africans reflects a policy to alter the racial make-up of Algeria. Among the methods used to capture land or people were raids, or *razzias*, which aimed to capture men and herds of livestock. This method proved very effective in destroying or chasing away rebellious tribes, or precipitating their surrender. Poverty and hunger became weapons of war on the status quo, fostering relentless terror through a veritable strategy of annihilation.

### **Acculturation**

Besides the dispossession of land and the violence against the population, French colonization was

characterized by the dispossession of the individual identity through acculturation. Indeed, people were expected to assimilate to the French model, especially the French language, but without access to French education or culture. The Algerian population remained deprived of formal education despite the fact that under Jules Ferry's Third Republic, countless schools were built in Algeria. Moreover, the "Arab" was regarded as a being "poorly civilized," a fact intimately linked to his religion. Thus followers of Islam, believers in the word of the Prophet Mohammed, were considered victims of a strategy to obscure facts and details to oppose advances in civilization and the positive influences of education and Western science.

### **Torture and Mutilation**

A tactic used by the colonial army demonstrates quite well the disregard for the "natives," namely that they could be tortured and torn to pieces after their death. Both combatants and civilians were subjected to torture and mutilation. Many soldiers published books in which they described in detail the methods they used in these practices (St. Arnaud, 1845; Montagnac, 1844). Prisoners were mutilated by French soldiers, heads and ears exhibited as trophies to terrorize the population. The most common method was to decapitate the dead, effectively depriving the victims of their individuality and identity. This practice was also based on the religious belief that a Muslim beheaded by a Christian could not go to heaven. Not only were mutilations common, but also the exhibition of body parts as trophies. It was as if physical death was not enough, but had to be reinforced through the symbolic death, expressed through the dismembering of the body. The victim lost not only his identity, but also his humanity, reduced to a shredded carcass. This dehumanization was also extended to include desecration of graves in cemeteries there. The main purpose of these practices was to terrorize those that refused to comply and might be tempted to rebel.

The violence of colonization was thus effectively a mutilation of identity as well. It was inevitable that this situation created the conditions for future uprisings and, above all, strengthened the desire for revenge on the part of Algerians.

### **Islam, Means of Resistance and Existence**

The dislocation and exclusion induced by colonization turned Islam into the focus and rallying point for the Algerians' resistance. Islam was embraced by members of the community due to its identity and cultural aspects, as well as to support resistance and self-assertion. Islam also permeated the entire Algerian national movement. Dispossessed of their land, deprived of their places of socialization, many Algerians turned to Islamic schools (*madrasas*) and centers of religious and cultural education (*zawouias*). These sites were considered not only places to socialize, but also places of religious healing. In effect, excluded from the colonial system, the Algerian population turned toward religion and tradition in order to survive and to continue to exist as a community with a distinct identity.

This drive to understand and practice religion gave rise to a vast reform movement called the Association of Algerian Muslim *'ulama*, founded in 1931 by Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis, who advocated a return to the sources of Islam. The Association worked to open independent schools,

particularly to enable the poor to have access to education while reviving their religion and language. The Association also created journals that became sites for reflection and forums for addressing questions of identity. At the same time, the *'ulama* developed a network through cultural, social, and sporting clubs that strengthened and reinforced the feeling of belonging to a community. The promotion of the Arabic language, Arab culture, and Islam became the basic elements of Algerian identity. Religion thus became a force of resistance against conquest and assimilation, and later it would serve as an excellent mobilizing agent by nationalists.

### **Birth of Islamism**

In the aftermath of independence being declared and due to the perception that the socialist orientation of the new government was anti-Islamic, members of the Association, that were opposed to the direction adopted by the country, slid slowly toward Islamism. In 1963, an association “to defend Islamic values threatened by a century and a half of colonization,” called “El Qiyam el Islamiya,” or Islamic Values, was created by El Hachemi Tidjani, the Secretary General of the University of Algiers. This association was closely associated with Ahmed Ben Bella, the first President of independent Algeria, and was well represented in state institutions. It counted among its members religious figures that subsequently played a role in the establishment and growth of a radical Islamist movement. The Qiyam association soon moved toward a more political discourse that provoked violence and clashes with the secular Left elements of the unions and universities.

Islam, as perceived by the reformists, was reassessed and “corrected” by the Islamists in order to give the religion a political and social dynamic. Through their sermons and speeches, the Islamists used Quranic verses and traditions of the prophet (*hadiths*) to legitimize their political goals. One strategy was to label Muslims who did not agree with this “correct” version of Islam by calling them ignorant, suggesting that they must therefore be brought back to (the true) Islam. Abdelhamid Ben Badis, the primary leader of the reform movement, had already set this tone with slogans like ‘Algeria is my country, my religion of Islam and Arabic my language’—which later became the slogan of independent Algeria. Its members invested in: schools and mosques, effectively multiplying conferences, get-togethers, and meetings (*halakates*) where religion was studied to propagate Islamist ideas and “reconcile” Algerians to their religion.

By investing in spaces for social gatherings, setting up associations in different neighborhoods, taking care of the poor, and providing free lessons to students, the Islamists put in place a structured and organized framework for social support and service. Characteristic of the development of collective identity for a movement, the first signs were changes in clothing and appearance: beards, *kamis* (a long tunic) for men, and headscarves for women. This step is called *marbaliya*, from *marbala* or “step.” This change in appearance was the first step of ideological propaganda used by the Muslim Brotherhood, and others.

This Islamist movement grew and reached broad segments in all social categories of the population. Its members opted for the “re-Islamization of the population from below.” The approach was called *dawa*, or “preaching,” and its purpose was to undermine the existing “miscreant” powers. Alliances

forged with merchants and large landowners who were threatened by Algeria's socialist orientation provided financial and material support. However, some considered "re-Islamization from below" too slow and too uncertain for the establishment of an Islamic state. This led to the radicalization of some Islamists, supported by advocates of armed struggle for whom employment of violence was a means of struggle. Acts of violence began to occur aimed ostensibly at improving morals, especially against girls who did not wear the headscarf, those drinking alcohol during parties, and so on. The first acts of sabotage also occurred.

Universities provided a framework for mobilization, as well as a place of confrontation between French and Arabic-speaking students. Graduates forming the political and economic elite were from the French schools and French university system. They were also favored in the labor market. This caused resentment on behalf of young Arabic-language graduates who found themselves excluded, despite their skills. This situation fostered a rapprochement between Islamists and Arabic-language students, both of whom adhered to the notion of the education system's deviation from the core Arab-Muslim identity of the Algerian people. Students thus became a force fueling the Islamist movement. For their part, Islamists used confusion regarding Islamic ideology on the part of the Arabic-language students to establish their claims. Thus during the late 1970's the so-called *djazz'ara*, or Algerian, trend was born, which was in effect a mix of Algerian nationalism and Islamism. The popularity of Islamism continued to grow in the universities during the 1980s.

### **Socioeconomic Context**

Moreover, the economic crisis that struck Algeria in the mid-1980s had a profound impact on the social and political scene. Under Chadli Bendjedid, the government gradually shifted away from the socialist oriented projects defended and enforced by the late President Houari Boumediene. It engaged in a process of liberalization, which actually entailed an atomization of the economy, its institutions, and society in general. The liberal policies of Bendjedid accentuated inequalities, resulting in the enrichment of certain social classes, both civilian and military. Liberalization, in the form of lessening state involvement in the economy, along with a strengthening of presidential powers and prerogatives, resulted in a phase marked by the disintegration of the economy, state, and society, ending with the disengagement of the state vis-à-vis its citizens.

From 1986 on, indicators of an impending crisis factors began accumulating. That fall, the price of oil fell from 40 to 18 dollars per barrel in a few months, cutting resources in half. Caught by the need to compensate for declining oil revenues through foreign aid, the ruling class cut back on programs focused on youth, who were experiencing mass unemployment, and lost the support of the middle class. This situation, interpreted as a veritable betrayal, caused deep feelings of enmity and desire for revenge among the youth vis-à-vis those in power. The population was angry with those in power for having put themselves in a position to enter into disadvantageous economic and political relationships without having the means to react or respond. The deteriorating social and economic situation gradually created an opening for social movements with a religious discourse that proposed to bring together the Algerian people by restoring the *'umma* (community of believers) as a substitute for the failed political community.

The riots of October 1988 exposed the depth of the social and political crisis. They were preceded two years earlier by riots in Constantine and Sétif. The riots involved mainly young people protesting against the declining quality of life, scarcity of consumer products, higher prices, and so on. Everything that represented state institutions, which for the youth represented symbols of oppression, deprivation, injustice, and corruption, was burned: town halls, courts, and the headquarters of Algeria's only official political party (FLN). This situation worked to weaken the government, which—overwhelmed by the magnitude of the movement—appealed to a man of religion, Sheikh Sahnoun, to contain the youth and restore calm. However, it would be another imam and idol of the youth, Belhadj, who, through the initiative of a march unifying 20,000 Islamist sympathizers, would successfully disperse the crowds. Islamist leaders co-opted the youth movement by instilling, from the first day on, a sense of crisis or emergency. A declaration by Sahnoun was distributed to the people, in which he asserted that the solution lies in “the return to Islam as sharia and methodology, after the failure of corrupt regimes” (Boumezbar, 2002, p. 75). The Islamists cleverly played on popular feelings of anger and frustration while focusing on the errors of the government, in order to emerge as the only political alternative.

From the outset, members of the Islamic Salvation Front (*Front Islamique de Salut*, FIS), formed in March 1989, took positions with doubly symbolic register: religion and history. The FIS invented the expressions “The FIS is the people” and “Islam is the solution,” which constituted the foundations of a new identity. Its militants invented new modes of dress, a new way of life, just as they reinvented a new form of mutual assistance, solidarity among “brothers,” virtues strongly described and highly recommended by the Muslim tradition. The conviction that belief and tradition are the solution to all problems thus took on increasing importance.

For young people who had clashed with police during the riots of October 1988, the success of the FIS in the 1990 municipal elections reflected an undeniable revenge. The party knew how to maintain the hatred of its constituents against the political class and the rage of the poor against the rich during its appearances in the popular community assemblies and municipal elections in 1991. Through their many political and social activities, the elected officials of the party gave the sense of importance to previously marginalized populations. The FIS was able to talk to these people and express their aspirations, just as it was able to integrate young people and older people in a political context. The cancellation of the electoral process in 1992, followed by the dissolution of the FIS in March of that year, left its young supporters in disarray. Resorting to armed action was regarded as the ultimate stage in confrontation, and thus initially avoided. While increasing their violent actions, Islamists did not fail to continue their recruitment work among disaffected youth, offering them arms and money and promising them paradise, where they would enjoy eternal life and a thousand delights with *houry* (beautiful maidens who live with the blessed in paradise).

State repression, after the interruption of the electoral process in the FIS-controlled suburbs of Algiers, in the form of intimidation by security forces, magnified the hatred and frustration of the youth, who were convinced that without the FIS, the future would look like the present. The youth

were not yet engaged in armed struggle and did not use Islamist rhetoric to express their convictions. Rather, students in some universities or institutes used a politico-religious language. According to them the political crisis, created in 1992 by the cancellation of the first round of parliamentary elections, revealed the apostasy of the political and military leaders, described as “enemies of Islam” for opposing the establishment of an Islamic state . This discourse of “Islamic militants,” which remained until 1993 confined to university milieu, reflected the political vision of a large part of educated and uneducated youth after 1994. In two years, supporters of militant *jihad* managed to impose their ideology within a population that was disgusted, but devoid of constructive ideas or projects. This is how the GIA and AIS came to represent, in 1994, legitimate opposition forces in the eyes of much of the youth, especially those from the suburbs.

The circle of those impacted by the GIA and AIS attacks gradually expanded without calling into question the sympathy and support of the population. The continuing attacks were proof that the strategy of terror being implemented was successful. The acts committed by armed Islamic groups were of indiscriminate violence, in the sense that there was no distinction between victim and target. Through the representation of a world divided between friends (“us”) and enemies (“them”), terrorists authorized the killing of all—including babies, “future enemies.” The particularity of Islamist terrorism is that it does not attack individuals or states but “identities.” It strikes individuals, civilian or military, not for ‘what they do’ but for ‘who they are,’ thus targeting a community on the basis of its entities and identity.

### **Radical Islam and the New World Order**

In order to understand the causes and motivations of radical Islam, it is important to analyze the foundations and manifestations of globalization, which is perceived as a threat to identity. Beyond its economic dimensions, globalization has two social and cultural aspects, namely the standardization of lifestyles and consumption on one hand, the destruction of traditional values and cultures on the other. This process is experienced by the people it affects, but in some cases—such as in the Arab-Muslim world, including Algeria—it manifests as a veritable aggression, as a threat to identity. Indeed, the impact of modernization is not neutral, often resulting in the subordination of individual behaviors and social life to market values based on money and consumption that spread globally via new information and communication technologies. It also has deeper and more adverse effects, as it affects the cultural and religious foundations of societies already weakened by colonization, wars, economic and social crises, and so on. Faced with massive unemployment, many young people do not have the means or access to consumer goods or the hope of social inclusion. Frustrated, they are drawn sooner or later into revolt (e.g., riots of October 1988). They are motivated by a sense of injustice, known as *hogra*, to which is added traumatic memories passed along from parents and grandparents who also lived with injustice, deprivation, violence, terror. These ingredients resonate with Islamist ideology. Indeed, faced with this daily assault, values and traditions, the cultural foundation upon which societies are based, are shattered. The destabilizing effect is profound, because it affects both individuals as well as societies, resulting in the compulsion to return toward tradition, an exacerbation of religious and cultural demands, and an explosion of identity crises. The

destabilization caused by this cultural aggression causes a withdrawal of identity and an exacerbation of rejection reactions, especially rejection of the West. This helps to explain the resurgence of the headscarf, seen as a way for women to rediscover their roots and to reaffirm their Muslim identity. It is possible, therefore, to assume that fundamentalism is not only a political ideology, but also a means of reconstructing new identities in a time of globalization.

### **Conclusion**

The crisis in Algeria is the expression of a triple rupture, similar to the one experienced across the entire Arab world: a political rupture, an economic rupture, and a cultural rupture. Whole categories of the population have been affected by the destruction of identity. The social, cultural, economic, political, and historical conditions have delegitimized the organizations, institutions, and figures that should serve as role models. The appearance of divided identities reflects a crisis of identification models. Religion is then sought as a means to an identity to substitute for bankrupt political identities. It also plays a unifying role to establish political solidarity when the national community is in crisis of links, benchmarks, values, and, above all, meaning. Indeed, today's social bonds are in crisis; personal interests and individualism predominate. Economic weaknesses, even the global economic crisis, reinforce the fear of the other—the “other” who becomes someone strange or even a stranger, though he is of the same community. The other becomes an enemy to destroy. The violence Algeria is experiencing is the violence of otherness. Moreover, when religion is manipulated by ideologues, it becomes a tool to foster of division and violence within a population. Violence occurs when the sacred and the political are intertwined, and especially when cultural representations and ideologies exploit religion to strengthen national identities.

The questions that arise are: how to achieve separation of religion from identity in order to stop fuelling fanaticism, extremism, and terrorism? The idea of delegitimizing violent extremism is certainly seductive. But what is to be done if an entire nation is caught in the spiral of a quest for identity? Where being different is a sign of life for some and a call to violence for others? How can globalization be made an enrichment of, and not a threat to, identity? How can identity be built to be the sum of all its members, where membership in the human community would be more important than religious affiliation, and where the need for spirituality is divorced from the need for an identity?

It may seem utopian to say that every society should embrace its assets that served to forge its identity throughout history. Each society should also make an effort to embrace its cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, to enable identification with those around him. And finally, each society should freely grant citizenship, long denied by colonialism and different regimes, citizenship devoid of any religious affiliation.

## References

- Belarouci L. (2009). *Perspectives of parents and children on the deliberate trauma and its consequences on families: victims and terrorists in Algeria*. France: Rouen University.
- Boumezbar A. & Azine D. (2002). *L'islamisme algérien. De la genèse au terrorisme*. Chihab édition. Alger.
- Hain, V. A. (1832) *A La Nation : Sur Alger*. Paris : 8vos.
- Le Cour Grandmaison O. (2005). *Coloniser, exterminer. Sur la guerre et l'Etat colonial*. Casbah édition. Alger.
- Montagnac, L. F. (1844). *Lettres d'un soldat*. Paris: Christian Destremeau, 1998, 153.
- Saint Arnaud, J. L. (1845). Lettre du 15 août 1845, in *Lettres du Maréchal de Saint Arnaud*. Paris, 1855; 2nd Edition with memoire by Sainte-Beuve, 1858.
- Stora B. (2001). *La guerre invisible*. Algérie, années 90. Press de sciences Po. France.

**SECTION 2: PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM****FORECASTING TERRORISM, PREDICTING ITS NATURE, AND DRIVING INNOVATIVE RESPONSES: “AT-RISK GROUP IDENTITY” AS A PIVOTAL CONCEPT FOR UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL VIOLENCE (WILLIAM D. CASEBEER)**

By William D. Casebeer, PhD<sup>17</sup>

Multiple categories can be used to conceptualize the political ontology of states in general, let alone those astride the “arc of conflict” in regions such as Southwest Asia or North Africa. However, the usefulness of any particular categorization varies dramatically with the problem the academician or policy-maker is concerned with. Even the idea that the thing we must be concerned with categorizing is “states” is laden with assumptions—true only in certain contexts—about the importance of the nation-state in understanding any particular political phenomenon. Here, I argue analysts concerned with the potential for non-state political violence—especially terrorism<sup>18</sup>—ought to pay close attention to salient group identities, especially for groups at risk for mobilization in a given state. “At-Risk Group Identity” (ARGI) will be the classification scheme, and it will allow us to array states along a continuum from those containing group identities most ripe for mobilization to those where there are few politically salient in-group/out-group distinctions. Operationalizing this categorization is difficult, admittedly; this is an especially theory-laden scheme I am proposing. However, even if my enterprise ultimately fails to convince, my desire is that it do so in an illuminating way.

I hope this exploration accomplishes three tasks. First, policymakers would like to at least be able to forecast where terrorist organizations may emerge, allowing them to focus preventative resources appropriately. The ARGI Index can, at relatively high granularity, inform such forecasting. Second, academicians have been concerned to articulate a “third way” between treating terrorism as something to be managed or contained, and treating it as something to be eradicated. Understanding the components of the index can shed light on how other instruments of state power besides “the police” and “the military” can have a critical role to play in counter-terrorism activity and perhaps allow us to steer between two evils: the Scylla of hastening great power competition and the Charybdis of allowing Weapons of Mass destruction use. Third, new forms of terrorism resemble violent social movements and franchise operations more so than traditional organizations; the ARGI

---

<sup>17</sup> At the time of the Countering Violent Extremism conference, Bill was a US Air Force Lieutenant Colonel working at the Joint Warfare Analysis Center. Bill can be reached at [drenbill@gmail.com](mailto:drenbill@gmail.com). The views expressed here are his own and not necessarily those of the Air Force, the Department of Defense, or of any other organization.

<sup>18</sup> Terrorism—the intentional killing of innocent people for a political purpose, often with a focus on the achievement of second-order effects—is both a strategy and a tactic, and can be adopted by both states and non-state actors at various times. It is not *necessarily* the tactic of choice for violent non-state actors (though asymmetry of resources often means that it is widely used during some phases of the non-state actor life-cycle, especially when violent social movements are struggling against better-armed and resourced governments). For the purposes of this paper, I set aside these complications.

index will serve as an all-too-brief introduction to some findings from the field of social movement theory that can inform our understanding of terrorist groups.

We can begin by carving the scheme at its joints: what does “at risk” mean and how is it measured; what accounts for the formation of “group identity” and how is it assessed? States with at-risk group identities will be those that measure high on both dimensions: there are strong heterogeneous group identities at play in the social and political ecology of the area, and these identities feed directly into the mechanisms and resources necessary to mobilize them thus making them more at risk. States with low at-risk group identities will be those that measure low on both axes: weak or homogenous group identities, little mobilization potential. States in between present interesting cases: some possess strong heterogeneous identities with little currently at-risk vis-à-vis indigenous mobilization, while others may have high at-risk factors with little current group identification. Consider first the “at risk” part of the scheme.

The social mobilization literature offers an interesting perspective on what it means for a state to be “at risk” for the emergence of a violent non-state political actor. At its core, this body of work postulates three factors which contribute to social mobilization: lack of political opportunity,<sup>19</sup> availability of mobilizing resources, and presence of mobilizing frames<sup>20</sup> (especially “justice frames”).<sup>21</sup> The first component of my proposed classification scheme focuses on an aggregate measure of these three factors; in some cases, this may confound understanding, as a state could have lots of mobilizing resources but not be susceptible to a mobilizing frame, or vice-versa. While more synthesis of the literature is needed, for present purposes these factors will be weighted in this order: lack of political opportunity, mobilizing frames, and resources (highest to lowest). The theoretical reason for this owes to the importance of “pull factors”—if there is no perceived political opportunity and a great framing story, the actors in question will proactively seek to acquire the resources necessary to foment mobilization. Setting aside this ordering for the time being, however, we can think of “at risk” on a zero to one scale. The three factors I just mentioned will each be rated from zero to one and then multiplied by each other, giving a total at risk rating that drops to zero if any of the three factors drops to zero.

The second part of the categorization is the “group identity” dimension. Again, to do a disservice to a considerable literature, we can operationalize group identity as “a subjective sense of membership

---

<sup>19</sup> Keep in mind that perceived political opportunity is not necessarily granted by democratization; the relationship is more complex than that. See Tarrow’s 1998 book, cited in full in footnote 5.

<sup>20</sup> Dynamic frames are, essentially, stories or narratives. As Steve Coll points out several times in his 2004 book *Ghost Wars* (The Penguin Press: New York, NY), these framing devices are extremely important for mobilization and shoring up stakeholder support (he explicitly discusses how the Taliban’s justice frames play well with the Afghan population).

<sup>21</sup> Some of the best literature here includes: Sidney Tarrow’s 1988 *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Cambridge University Press: New York, NY), Mohammed M. Hafez’s 2003 *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World* (Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder, CO), and Quintan Wiktorowicz’s 2004 edited volume *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Indiana University Press: Indianapolis, IN).

usually involving attachments related to social identity or realistic interdependence”<sup>22</sup> Generally, group identity evolves via four mechanisms: cognitive (self-perception of group membership is emphasized, usually with an affective emulation related component—think of the “I wanna be like you” song from the animated children’s movie *Jungle Book*), realistic interest (groups which initially see themselves as separate which, nonetheless, share a common fate will come to see themselves as being part of the same group), social identity (which stresses the importance of interaction between group and non-group members for group formation, and usually emphasizes the psychological need for social identity in order to have positive self-esteem), and social constructivism (which takes social identity a step further and stresses the constructed nature of all aspects of identity).<sup>23</sup> For a first hack, then, we could ask which states have histories and experiences that make it likely that groups would self-consciously attempt to emphasize in-group/out group distinctions (this can be seen in places where colonial powers attempted to set up proxy groups that vied for power), where groups of people were forced to share a common fate, where certain markers of identity become especially salient, and where social forces are at work to actively construct and reinforce identity every day. So, the values on the “group identity” axis will also range from zero to one, based on the product of two factors, both of them weighted from zero to one: one factor is whether or not the society is homogenous (= 0) or heterogeneous (= 1) and the other is whether or not group identities are weakly held (= 0) or strongly held (= 1). At this point, the general outline of the scheme should be clear, even if a lot of academic hand waving is still needed to translate it into an actionable category.

Keep in mind that the purpose of this group identity dimension is not to explain all of the historical events in a given region or area, but rather to elucidate why certain groups become politically active and violent at one point rather than others. While the framework is theoretically rich enough to explain much political violence, keep in mind that it is not intended to explain state-on-state organized warfare. It may also “fall down on the job” as states become more democratic (while beyond the scope of this paper to justify or discuss in detail, I suspect that the relatively “thin” identities generated in broadly inclusive democratic polities—especially those which resist the temptation to violently or indiscriminately crackdown on nascent political violence—will not be sufficient to marry-up with the mobilization factors in an interesting way).

This classification process/scheme can shed light on past events related to political violence. Consider Iraq, where British colonial administration of the Mandate serves as an interesting case study. An intelligence official working for the British government in 1920 would have had no problem ranking Iraq “high” on the ARG I (At-Risk Group Identity) scale. On the identity side, Faisal<sup>24</sup> had already stoked Arab sentiment during his resistance to Ottoman rule; on the “at risk”

---

<sup>22</sup> See Shelley Taylor, “The Social Being in Social Psychology,” in Gilbert et al’s *Handbook of Social Psychology, Fourth Edition: Volume One* (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1998), p. 66.

<sup>23</sup> See Taylor (Ibid), p. 65 – 70 for more detail; see also Troy Thomas et al, *Warlords Rising: Confronting Violent Non-State Actors* (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 74 – 80.

<sup>24</sup> Leader of an Arab revolt against the Ottoman empire and crowned king of Iraq in 1923.

side, owing to the intrigues of Sykes-Picot<sup>25</sup>, mobilizing frames involving colonial themes would be all too easy to draw upon. While mobilizing resources were hard to come by, they were available, and would (perversely) actually be increased by British presence in the Mandate as the British cultivated a *sheikh*-related proxy class (itself actually ill-suited to accomplish the economic reforms the British had in mind). Political opportunity was limited owing to British paternalism, and to Orientalist blinders that prevented the British from engaging politically with some of the most important actors on the politico-economic side (such as *sarkal* intermediaries in native marketplaces). When indiscriminant British airpower reinforced despotic frames at play among the disaffected population, multiple rebellions were spawned.<sup>26</sup> Viewing the region through an ARGI lens could have enabled British planners to better prepare for an even more humane Mandate administration.

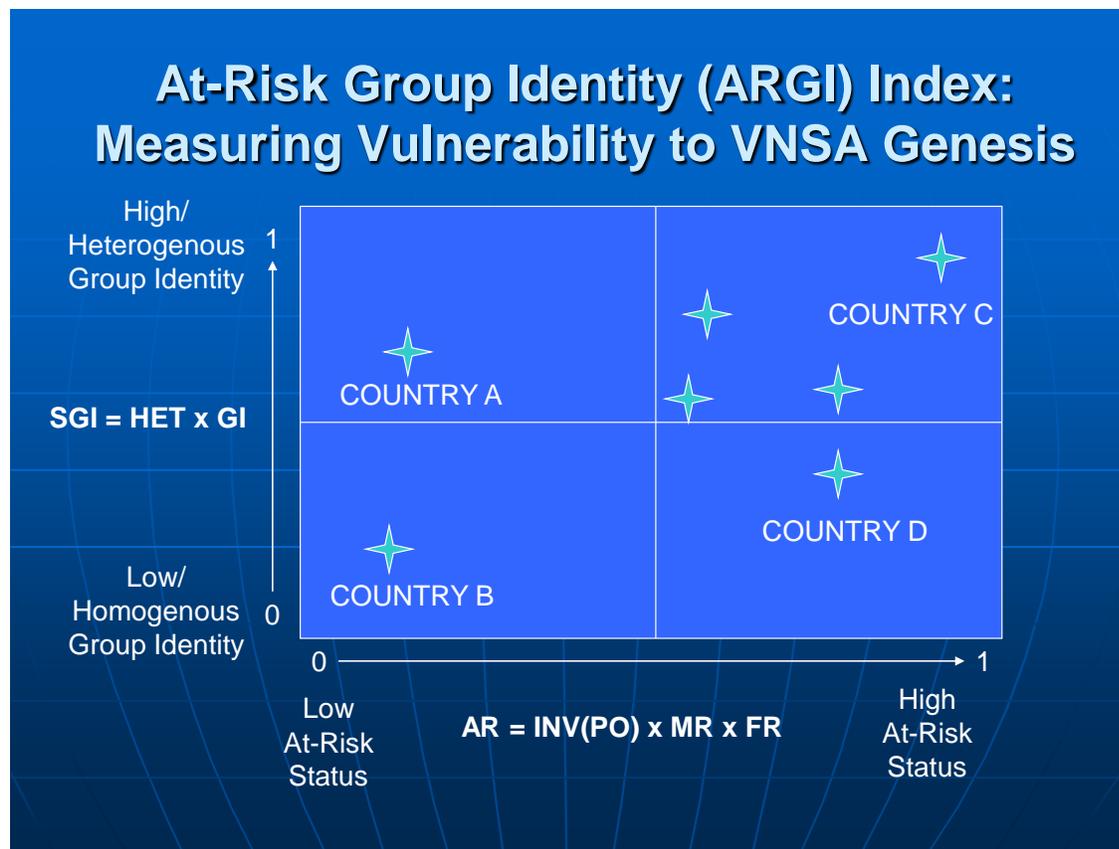
More so than most, the categorization of “At-Risk Group Identity” is loaded with conceptual baggage, as this all-too-brief summary makes clear. Exogenous or difficult to forecast events, can influence its usefulness; when critical turns of events occur, the efficacy of frames used to mobilize group identities towards political violence can shift, or extra-regional actors can intervene to change the salience of indigenous dynamics to give only two examples. This makes it a difficult and contentious classification scheme to use. On the other hand, for academics and policy-makers concerned with non-state political violence, this at-risk group classification is critically important. It points out, especially for those charged with wielding instruments of state power, the importance of psychologically rich concepts such as “identity” and “framing” for helping us come to terms with history so as to forecast and influence its future development. In addition, in an ironic upending of the concept of Orientalism, this classification process may enable us to recognize similar factors at play in our American political history and, hence, may boost awareness that our own story is of a piece with those of the people of other regions, even if it differs greatly in historical detail. This recognition may prevent overly ambitious (and probably false) “clash of civilization”-style worldviews from driving policy.

The substance of this paper can be summarized in the following graphic: the “x” axis represents being at risk (AR) and consists of the multiplication of the inverse of political opportunity available (INV(PO)) by the availability of mobilizing resources (MR) by the presence of mobilizing frames (FR). The “y” axis represents salient group identities (SGI) and consists of the multiplication of a measure of identity heterogeneity (HET) by a measure of the strength of group identification (GI).

---

<sup>25</sup> Sykes Picot was a secret agreement made during World War I which divided Arab provinces outside the Arabian Peninsula of the Ottoman Empire into British or French controlled or influenced areas.

<sup>26</sup> An excellent reference here is Toby Dodge’s (2003) [Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied](#) (New York, NY: Columbia University Press). See also Casebeer & Salmoni (“The Importance of Treating Culture as a System,” *American Intelligence Journal*, Volume 26, 2006; an earlier version of this essay was also published as a “Strategic Insight” in the Naval Postgraduate School’s online journal).



There are several interesting things to note about this graph. First, the nations identified in the upper right hand quadrant (the “one/one” states, such as “Country C”) face active or incipient violent non-state organizations (for example, multiple insurgencies for Iraq, a resurgent Sendero Luminoso for Peru, the Uigher rebellion for China, and simmering Tuareg and salafist Islamic activity for Mali). Second, the nations in the lower right quadrant face latent *slow-burning* non-state violence (“Country D”), while those in the upper left hand quadrant (“Country A”) face latent *fast-burning* non-state violence. The slow-burners will move in fits and starts into the active quadrant only because, in general, changing or influencing identities is a process that takes many years—a sudden influx of finances, for example, would not immediately change the identity dynamic at play in many regions (although the salience of those identities could change quickly in light of external intervention). On the other hand, the fast-burners are already “pregnant” on the identity axis, so a sudden influx of mobilizing resources, or a gestalt shift in the “frame game” (brought on by a critical event or a harsh government crackdown), could put those identities at risk very quickly. Finally, the “zero/zero” states (such as “Country B”)—relatively homogenous states with very few justice frames at play—have no violent non-state actor (VNSA) activity.

The ARGI index not only elucidates those states with actors likely to engage in terrorist tactics, but also highlights policy options for diminishing the likelihood of non-state political violence. For example, in contemporary Iraq, one of the most important things the coalition arguably accomplished to demotivate the Sunni-based aspects of the insurgencies was to convince Sunni

Iraqis they had a genuine chance of political opportunity in the new Iraqi regime. Or, speaking more generally, as we take concrete action to diminish the basis for justice frames driving a rebellion, we could also ensure that credible regional actors with ethos for the audiences we wish to address act to undercut the rhetorical dimensions of those same frames.<sup>27</sup> Tackling mobilizing resources may be more difficult but it is, nonetheless, one facet of a comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy (e.g., by interdicting financial networks related to violent non-state actor activity or by identifying and isolating individuals with improvised explosive device construction expertise). Relative to the group identity axis, there are actions policymakers can take to consolidate and develop common identities that make the development of in-group/out-group divisions more difficult, whether by emphasizing common aspects of history or ensuring the development of robust social capital. Environmental shaping and prevention are important components of counter-terrorism (CT) strategy.

The ARGI index can be one useful tool in the CT “bag of tricks.” It can help us inform our analysis regarding what nations and regions are at risk for the development of non-state political violence and can also point out appropriate alternative methods for influencing the genesis of violent non-state actors via non-traditional uses of the instruments of state power. While much work remains to be done to realize its promise, this index may prove to be a useful concept for helping us understand political violence in general. At the very least, it forces us to think creatively about the causes of political violence, and hence may have heuristic value despite its simplicity.

## References

- Casebeer, W., & Russell. (2005, March). Strategic insight. Retrieved from <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/Mar/casebeerMar05.asp>
- Casebeer, W., & Salmoni. (2006). The importance of treating culture as a system. *American Intelligence Journal*, Volume 26; an earlier version of this essay was also published as a “Strategic Insight” in the Naval Postgraduate School’s online journal.
- Coll, S. (2004). *Ghost wars*. The Penguin Press: New York, NY.
- Della Porta, D. (1995). *Social movements, political violence and the state*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Dodge, T. (2003). *Inventing Iraq: The failure of nation building and a history denied*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

---

<sup>27</sup> For discussions of justice frames and narratives, see Donatella Della Porta’s 1995 book *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press). See also Casebeer and Russell’s March 2005 “Strategic Insight” on counter-narrative strategies, available here: <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/Mar/casebeerMar05.asp>. Some “war of ideas”-style articles focus on the role public opinion plays in ensuring success in CT operations; I think that the framing and narrative struggle encompasses much more than shifting public opinion, however, and believe we need to move beyond thinking of framing interactions as being only or primarily struggle-oriented.

Hafez, M. M. (2003). *Why Muslims rebel: Repression and resistance in the Islamic world*. Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder, CO.

Tarrow, S. (1988). *Power in movement: social movements and contentious politics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Cambridge University Press: New York, NY.

Taylor, S. (1998). The social being in social psychology. In Gilbert et al. (Eds.) *Handbook of social psychology*. Fourth Edition: Volume One, Boston, MA, p. 65-70.

Thomas, T. et al. (2005). *Warlords rising: Confronting violent non-state actors*. New York, NY: Lexington Books, pp. 74 – 80.

Wiktorowicz, Q. (Ed.) (2004). *Islamic activism: A social movement theory approach*. Indiana University Press: Indianapolis, IN.



## A STRATEGIC PLAN TO DEFEAT RADICAL ISLAM (TAWFIK HAMID)

Dr. Tawfik Hamid, MD<sup>28</sup>  
Potomac Institute for Policy Studies

## Introduction

No single, magical solution exists for defeating Islamism (i.e., an interpretation of Islam that permits the use of violence to achieve political or religious objectives), nor Islamist terror. Neither military power nor education can overcome it. Instead, a combination of tactics can achieve a lasting victory against global terrorism. This paper explains factors that contribute to Islamism; this understanding is a necessary step toward developing an effective integration of strategies and tactics to counter Islamism.

Numerous scientific methods and analytic techniques are available to aid in the fight against Islamist terrorism. Clear, consistent definitions for terms such as moderate or radical Islam will contribute to the process. Analysis based on unbiased, measurable data is necessary to counter the bias, emotion, and political correctness that may cloud our own thinking. For as Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War*, "If you know your enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles" (Sun Tzu, 500 BCE).

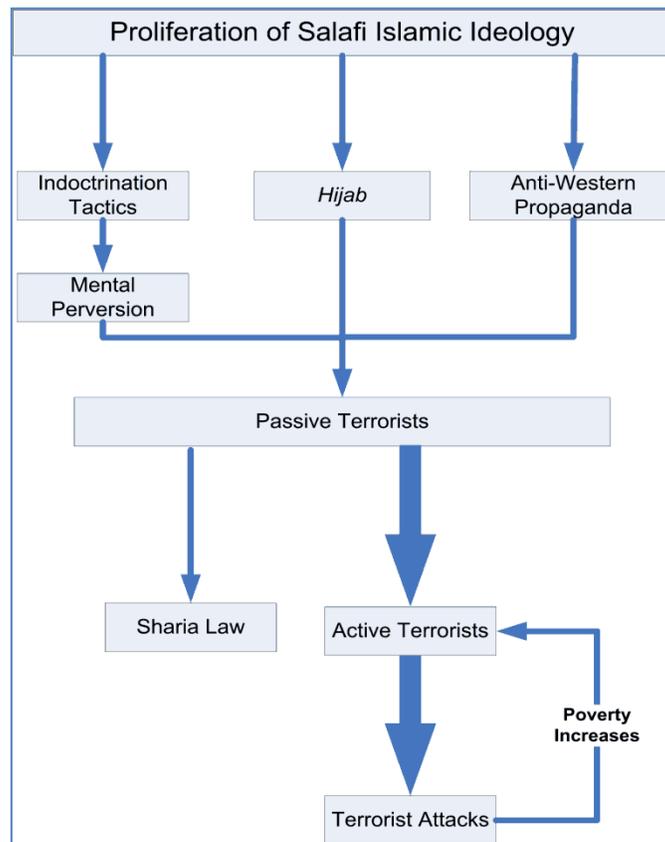
## Islamist Terrorist Cycle

The proliferation of violent Islam in Islamic societies has typically followed the same pattern. From close observation of Islamic communities in the Muslim and Western worlds, I believe the development of jihadists follows the pattern depicted in Figure 1. The process begins with the propagation of *Salafi jihadist* ideology within a community. Increasing numbers of women begin to wear the *hijab*, which is both a symptom of Salafi proliferation and a catalyst for Islamism (see, e.g., Mahmood, 2005). In turn, the proliferation of militant Salafism and the *hijab* contribute to the idea of passive terrorism, which occurs when moderate segments of the population decline to speak against or actively resist terrorism.

Islamists suppress critical thinking and desensitize the population to violence, which can lead some people to become passive terrorists. They disseminate anti-American and anti-Western propaganda to incite hatred and increase support for their cause. A very small fraction of passive terrorists develops into active terrorists. However, while they do not conduct terrorist attacks, passive terrorists fail to denounce active terrorists. Because they agree with the strict implementation of *Sharia* law and reject secular rule, the growth of passive terrorism can be seen as a threat to free societies. Countering the growth of passive terrorism will reduce the supply of people willing to become active terrorists and ultimately lead to fewer terrorist attacks.

---

<sup>28</sup> Dr. Hamid ([www.tawfikhamid.com](http://www.tawfikhamid.com)), a former member of the Islamic radical group Jemaah Islamiyah, is an Islamic reformer and senior fellow at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies.



**Figure 1. The Islamist Terrorism Cycle**

Young Muslims become attracted to terror groups for several reasons. For example, they may desire to

- serve Islam and become more religious,
- overcome extreme poverty,
- achieve respect in the Muslim society,
- feel supported by a powerful community,
- enter into marriages, which Islamic radical groups often facilitate for their members, or
- exact revenge on perceived enemies or all of society for negative personal experiences.

The indoctrination process changes the minds of the young, impressionable Muslims and motivates them to join the radical groups. Over time, established members encourage the recruits to carry out the violent actions associated with Islamism.

## Countering the Cycle

Focusing only on preventing terrorist attacks ignores many levels of the indoctrination process. An effective strategy should include techniques that address multiple steps of the Islamist Terrorism Cycle depicted above.

The first strategic step to combat Islamization is at the ideological level. A new interpretation of Islamic texts is needed to counterbalance the violent interpretations of the Salafists. Simply omitting the violent passages from school curricula and replacing them with peaceful ones is insufficient. Muslim children will learn peaceful verses at school during the day and learn the violent passages at mosques in the evening. Some Salafists reject the peaceful passages of the Qur'an (see, e.g., al-Jaza'iry, 2001). A rigorous peaceful foundation for Islam would place the violent verses in their historical context and create opportunities to study the more peaceful verses of the Qur'an.

Reforming educational systems would also interrupt the radicalization process by teaching Muslims peace while they are young. The curricula should be structured to promote critical thinking and oppose *Salafi jihadist* ideology. Peaceful education should begin early, before *jihadists* reach young minds. The curricula should be based on sound cognitive psychology principles, and also promote the values of modernity and humanity. Encouraging peaceful sects in Islam such as 'true' Sufis, those who clearly reject the use of violence to enforce their religious values or political views, or other genuinely peaceful groups will help foster change at the ideological level.

Weakening the *hijab* phenomenon is pivotal to stopping the growth of Islamism at the ideological level. Wearing the *hijab* is discussed as a cultural phenomenon, rather than an individual choice, as many Muslim women are peaceful people (Hamid, 2007, pp.120-121). I have observed that, over the last few decades, terrorism was preceded by an increase in the prevalence of the *hijab*. In Sunni Muslim areas such as Kurdistan in Iraq, most women did not wear the *hijab*; these areas experienced fewer acts of terrorism than areas where the *hijab* was common, such as Al-Anbar Province.

Speaking from my own experience with the radical groups, I believe young Muslims are motivated to join radical groups because of sexual deprivation. Addressing the factors underlying this deprivation can reduce the number of potential suicide attacks and other violent actions by *jihadists*. There exists a common teaching in Islamic theology that holds that Muslims, who die as a *Shabeed*, or martyr, will be rewarded in the afterlife. Specifically, they will be able to have sex with multiple beautiful women in Paradise (see, e.g., Warraq, 2002). Addressing the factors causing deprivation in this life can interrupt the radicalization process, and reduce the number of suicide attacks by *jihadists*.

The view that sexual deprivation plays an important role in developing suicide bombers is based on the following observations and research:

- Observations that suicide bombing is prevalent among young males when the testosterone level is highest.
- Observations that suicide bombing is far less prevalent among young Shia Muslims compared to Sunnis. *Mutta* marriage, a temporary marriage entered into for reasons such as cohabitation, or to meet emotional or human needs, can provide relief from this deprivation. *Mutta* marriage is permitted in Shia theology, but NOT Sunni theology.

- A limited body of psychiatric research suggests a link between sexual deprivation and formation of the mind of a suicide bomber (“Our Teenage Suicide Bombers,” 2011).

Improving the image of the United States in the Islamic world will also help disrupt the Islamization process, and facilitate ongoing counterterrorism efforts. A program to win the “hearts and minds” of Muslims must be carefully prepared and implemented. Apologizing for a few military personnel, for example, would be inadequate. On the other hand, granting too many concessions would be perceived as weakness. A balanced approach to U.S. diplomacy will demonstrate respect for the Muslim world without appearing weak to radical Islamists.

Negative images of the U.S. exist at a basic perceptual level in the Muslim world. Improving America’s image will not come from drastic changes in policy, but instead from efforts to change the Muslim world’s perception of U.S. policies. For example, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) sent food aid to Egypt. Images of chickens wrapped in bags adorned with the U.S. flag significantly improved Egypt’s perceptions of the U.S., even though it had not altered its pro-Israel policies. However, simply reusing previous tactics may not have the desired outcomes. Efforts to win the hearts and minds of Muslims must account for culture, history, and other factors.

In addition, Western governments should work together to disrupt the worldwide communication and financial networks that support the radical Islamist groups. The Internet has become a tool for rapid, widespread dissemination of radicalized propaganda; it should also be a tool in the effort to counter the spread of Islamism. For example, Western governments could sponsor counterpropaganda campaigns aimed at countering positive images of Islamist martyrs with violent, harmful images of *jihadists* conducting acts of terrorism that harm innocent bystanders.

Western governments should also break up the financial support for radical Islamism. For example, they should promote the use of alternative, renewable energy sources and mandate the use of more efficient engines. These actions would reduce the U.S. addiction to foreign oil, especially oil coming from countries that support *Salafi jihadist* ideals. Also, a small number of active terrorists or *Jihadists* can cause significant damage because the degree of damage they inflict depends more on the type of weapons used rather than the number of weapons used. The U.S. and other governments should make every possible effort to deny these radical groups access to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

Islamic scholars should issue *fatwas* that strongly denounce terrorism. To be effective, these statements should use specific words and expressions that deter young Muslims from pursuing the path of terror. A weak *fatwa* would help the terrorists achieve their political goals.

Covert and overt psychological operations are fundamental to weakening the radical groups and hindering their efforts to recruit more moderate individuals. The dissemination of rumors and negative reinforcement can be very effective tactics. Understanding the mentality and mindset of the Muslim world and the radicals is fundamental to developing effective messages.

Finally, the use of kinetic military force in some situations is critical to the overall fight against global terrorism, but it should not detract from efforts to address Islamism at the ideological level. World War II offered an outstanding example of the dynamic relationship between military force and

ideological and educational transformation. While everyone hopes that terrorists will renounce violence through dialogue, the reality is that military defeat is needed to accelerate the process of educational reform. Unfortunately, at this point in time, I believe the U.S. has shown insufficient military resolve. Firing cruise missiles at select targets is like using half a dose of antibiotics to treat an infection—the infection is not cured, but resistant strains of bacteria arise.

## Conclusion

The integration of effective intelligence, ideological, and psychological tactics will impede the transformation of passive terrorists into active ones, and decrease the frequency of terrorism incidents. Encouraging and supporting the truly moderate elements within Islamic societies is an extremely important step to winning the war against terror.

If we obsess about the humane treatment of our enemies, we jeopardize the lives of our own people. It is also true that terrorists use human shields to discourage attackers, or in the event of casualties, to win a propaganda victory. These tactics should not deter us from occasionally using force. Nobody supports the intentional killing of innocent civilians. But in war, as in medicine, good cells die when we treat bad ones. Chemotherapy and radiation treatments kill cancer cells, as well as non-cancerous cells. It is unfair to blame the doctor for killing good cells, because doing so is inevitable to save the patient. As in cancer treatment, we must seek to minimize collateral damage, but we must also realize that it cannot be completely avoided.

The following recommendations can help minimize the effect of the collateral damage, which increases radicalization of young Muslims:

- Provide monetary compensation to families of innocent victims.
- Clarify that killing innocents is ‘unintentional’ and reiteration of the verse, “But there is no blame on you if ye make a mistake: (what counts is) the intention of your hearts” (Qur’an 33:5).
- Explain that the radicals are to be blamed for the killing of innocents since, if the radical groups had stopped their terror acts against civilians, the U.S. would not have launched attacks against them.

In conclusion, Islamism is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that includes ideological, psychological, cultural, political, military, and economical components. Solving this problem cannot occur *without* addressing each of these factors. No one solution can address them all. The integration and synchronization of the power of different strategies is needed to weaken this phenomenon.

**References**<sup>29</sup>

Al-Jaza'iry, A. B. (2001). *Minhaj al-Muslim* (The way of the Muslim). Dar-us-salam Publications. (Arabic).

Hamid, T. (2007). *Inside jihad: Understanding and confronting radical Islam*. Self-published manuscript. Available through Amazon.com, ASIN 0981547109.

Lugo, L., Marshall, P., Woolsey, R. J., & Voll, J. (2005, May). The global spread of Wahhabi Islam: How great a threat? Event transcript. Pew Forum, Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/The-Global-Spread-of-Wahhabi-Islam-How-Great-a-Threat.aspx>

Mahmood, S. (2005). The subject of freedom. In S. Mahmood, *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist*, pp. 1-39. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Our teenage suicide bombers. (2011, January 26). *Journal of Psychiatric Orgone Therapy*. Retrieved from <http://www.psychorgone.com/tag/teen-suicide-bombers>

Sun Tzu. (500 BCE). *Art of War*.

Warrag, I. (2002, January 12). Virgins? What virgins? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2002/jan/12/books.guardianreview5>.

---

<sup>29</sup> Most of the information and analysis Dr. Hamid provided in this document are based on his personal observations of the Muslim societies, his hands-on experience with Radical Islamic groups, and his efforts to reform Islam for more than 30 years.

## PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM: “WHAT ARE THE PEOPLE SAYING?” (ALEXIS EVERINGTON)

Alexis Everington  
Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL)  
alexis.everington@scl.cc

When it comes to violent extremism, western publics are fixated on ‘expert’ mantra and language, too quick to subscribe to oversimplified and black/white explanations and stances, and too comfortable to challenge a western worldview developed in ignorance and based on missing or absent data. These failings have led us to overestimate both our nation’s relevance and influence capability as well as underestimate the strength of the motivation related factors that most polarize local opinion on violent extremism. This article attempts to explore some of these factors as well as some potential solutions, cognizant of the difficulty and limitations of any global generalizations made on a topic that can often be highly localized in nature. The insights presented here are based on recent groundwork, data collection and analysis, focused specifically on Afghanistan, Mexico,<sup>30</sup> Pakistan, Yemen and anecdotal evidence from several other countries in the Gulf and MENA regions.

One common thread in all the countries studied is a strong attitudinal binary: violent extremist organizations enjoy a degree of perceived legitimacy due to the presence of an unpopular domestic or local regional government. This ‘Common Enemy’ becomes a frame through which locals interpret their grievances—be they local, national, or ideological in nature. For example, in the Azad, Jammu, and Kashmir (AJK) area of Pakistan, violent extremism has historically generated support due to the perceived threat of India. The same is true within the tribal areas (FATA) where, although considerable antipathy is felt towards Taliban activities, some support exists, in part, due to continued assertions that the Taliban is the ISI’s proxy for countering Indian interests in Afghanistan. Likewise, in Lebanon, Hezbollah derives a very large support base as a result of the continued perception of an Israeli threat. As a result, counter-radicalization narratives that appeal to western audiences—including those featuring the concepts of struggle between western democracy and theocracy, freedom and oppression, and liberalism and traditionalism—are vastly overshadowed in the minds of locals by radicalization narratives that depict a regional power struggle. In the case of Pakistan, the typical reaction to western claims that groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) or even the Taliban are akin to global terrorist organizations such as Al-Qa’ida (AQ) is bewilderment. LeT appeal is rooted in a local historical narrative whereas AQ is not, and so the former is more accessible than the latter.

If organizations such as LeT, or elements within the Taliban, are interpreted by locals as traditionally displaying greater similarity to freedom fighter cells or tribal militia than terrorist groups, then there is legitimacy in debating the degree to which they pose a violent Jihadist threat to our homeland.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> The author has included Mexico primarily to explore a non-Islamic domain in which surprisingly high levels of commonality exist with mainstream victim states of domestic violent extremist operations.

<sup>31</sup> As one shopkeeper in early 2009 from Waziristan observed: “Western armies are basically here for war games. These foreigners do not care about the people in the area and terrorism is just an excuse for them to stay here. No one from the area has actually gone to the U.S. or Europe to commit an act of terror... We are the victims of terror, not them.”

Perhaps a few years ago, this would have been a useful avenue for negotiation—acknowledging the needs of some local groups in return for zero tolerance for those with a global agenda—unfortunately, the time for exploiting that distinction is disappearing. Misinterpretation and mischaracterization of groups under the broad banner of terrorists has compelled them to become just that. There is a saying that you are defined by your enemy, and we have decided to define a great many groups as our enemy. The result is that the West is becoming, in the minds of many communities, an enemy by proxy. Returning to the previous example, western opposition to the Taliban and closure of LeT camps is interpreted, based on conspiracy theories and enemy propaganda, as evidence of an alliance with India or, at the very least, support of a disadvantageous strategic balance with Pakistan. It is a short ideological hop from ‘guilty by association’ to even greater conspiracy and the argument that Islam itself is under attack by the West.<sup>32</sup> Sadly, this is the case across nearly all of the countries researched. Western inability to understand the ramifications of its involvement in the regional game is making global violent Jihadism more appealing to previously inwardly looking potential recruits, through the enforced creation of a West versus Islam binary.

Blurring the lines between opposition groups and establishing ourselves in the minds of the local community as a ‘Common Enemy’ is a serious mistake. Perhaps equally as important is our tendency to oversimplify intra-group constituents with the Taliban as a case in point. It is now widely accepted that al-Qa’ida does not exist as one group—some experts claim it is a brand name while others have settled for sub-branch identities such as AQAP, AQIM etc. The same is true of the Taliban in which a number of groups and individuals exist, each with myriad reasons for subscription. Encouragingly, there are signs that this has also finally percolated into the public consciousness, and the media increasingly distinguishes between, for example, the TTP and the al-Haqqani Network. However, we still fail to see that intra-Taliban divisions have as much to do with behavioral and attitudinal factors as they do with formal group labels. For example, when asked why the Taliban could operate in FATA, respondents highlighted fear, religious ignorance, desire for revenge, boredom, desire to remove a western presence, duty to relatives, opportunity to prey on weaker members of society, peer pressure, and so forth. Notably, the most significant motivator was uncertainty.<sup>33</sup> Faced with an uncertain future, large numbers of respondents are choosing to ‘sit on the fence’ and pay lip service to both sides. The same is true in Mexico—where locals believe that their government is intrinsically linked to drug cartel operations. The resulting uncertainty overrules the perceived negativity of cartel activities and deters people from expressing dissatisfaction more vocally. These observations lead to a recommendation: we should precisely identify the “enemy” in clear and realistic terms. For example, in the case of the Taliban, we might focus strictly on the few hundred Al-Qa’ida members or the already unpopular Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).<sup>34</sup> In the case of Mexico, specific local gangs should be targeted (instead of cartels) and attention drawn to

---

<sup>32</sup> A 24-year-old carpenter in al-Mukalla, Yemen, observed, “Jihadists fight against the enemies of Islam in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan.”

<sup>33</sup> As one particularly pragmatic Pashtun observed, “Why would the public overtly oppose the Taliban (despite not supporting them) if the strongest Armies of the world cannot defeat what totals only a few thousand badly armed enemies?”

<sup>34</sup> One respondent from SWA explained: “Uzbeks are disliked to such a degree that they were expelled from the South Waziristan Ahmad Zai Wazir area.”

the way in which membership in corner gangs leads to later cartel involvement.<sup>35</sup> Effective initiatives to counter violent Jihadist support must lie in acknowledging that support is based on a host of different primary motivators and in tailoring interventions to focus on those motivators that are easiest to exploit.

A third finding, true of all the areas researched, is that locals differentiate between ‘internal violent Jihadism’ and ‘external violent Jihadism,’ where the former term refers to issues within domestic borders that stimulate a violent Jihadist response. For example, in the northern areas of Pakistan, there is a lot of violence stemming from sectarian conflict. It is tempting to discount this form of conflict as irrelevant to the radicalization debate. However, the research says otherwise. Although Sunni or Shia recruits are initially trained to fight one another, respondents concede that it is far easier to move from engaging in ‘internal violent Jihadism’ to engaging in ‘external violent Jihadism’ (an international extremist Islamic agenda) than it is to reintegrate into local society. Many external violent Jihadist groups, including the Taliban, recognize this and couch their objectives in the language of ‘internal violent Jihadism’ as a way to co-opt and recruit new members.<sup>36</sup> A similar phenomenon is evident in other countries studied. In Egypt, claims of a corrupt government have encouraged many to convert from internals to externals. In the Ma’rib region of Yemen, many believe that the state supports terrorism and blames the Ma’ribis as a means of exerting control over the local population. Al-Qa’ida has exploited staunch anti-Hindu agendas to sway Muslim groups with links to militancy such as SIMI in India. This finding emphasizes the importance of understanding the process of conversion from fighting in an internal violent jihad to an external one. Greater focus on the conversion process, coupled with a greater readiness to produce pro-active interventions with reach-back into areas beyond just the overtly global Jihadist issue, will result in greater longer-term success in fighting violent extremism.

The existence and frequency with which groups participate in ‘internal violent Jihadism’ means that local issues are as crucially important as regional. This presents a challenge to us—developing a more granular understanding of the environment is far harder than assuming that Islamic violent Jihadism is the result of a shared grievance across the entire Muslim world. However, the finding also presents an opportunity; that is, the problem of violent Jihadism can be tackled indirectly. Indigenous members of AJK, for example, are far more disgruntled at Pashtuns ‘stealing’ their business or selling drugs to their youth, than supporting campaigns to counter violent Jihadism against the West.<sup>37</sup> In Syria, anxiety over inflated house prices or dowry payments are of far greater significance than the degree to which Hezbollah has established bases in the country. In Yemen, concern in rural areas over the potential breakdown of the tribal structure in areas where urban centers have appeared, occupied much more discussion time than AQAP’s presence. In Hyderabad, Muslims in the Old Town are far more occupied with being recognized by the police as being Indian citizens with rights, than signing up to a Muslim anti-western agenda. Initiatives should seek to

---

<sup>35</sup> Gang membership was found to be the biggest predictor of cartel support and yet parents of gang members have not been sensitized to this relationship and so are relatively ambivalent towards gangs in comparison to the widespread antipathy towards DTOs.

<sup>36</sup> One respondent from Gilgit observed, “Mostly the Sunni sect of the region is in favor of them (Taliban). They provide physical and financial support to the Taliban.”

<sup>37</sup> One respondent in FATA observed, “We are Pashtuns first, then Muslims.”

address these concerns and where necessary make the link between these issues and the problem of violent extremism evident. For example, investment into the local community through grass roots campaigns supported with a well-placed word of mouth campaign on how such initiatives draw away support for violent extremism will result in messages having greater reception and impact than modern television commercials on how Muslims can also be Westerners.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, it is worth shedding some light on a number of myths that have often ‘muddied’ the debate on radicalization. The first is the link between poverty and radicalization. From the research to date, it is clear that greater levels of poverty do not cause radicalization. The same is true for greater levels of unemployment, less schooling, less utilities, and almost anything else on the lowest level of Maslow’s hierarchy. This is because the propensity to support violent Jihadism does not solely stem from needs. Rather, it is triggered by perceptions of changes in relative needs—the perception that there are inequities in opportunities for employment, schooling, or the experience of injustice while trying to live as a good Muslim etc. Future studies into key factors underpinning radicalization would do well to focus on perceived differences within and between communities rather than outright values—an insight that bears great importance on issues such as the MoE (Measures of Effectiveness) of counter-radicalization initiatives.

A second myth involves the role of modern media in radicalizing local communities. The Internet, television, mobile phone, and other forms of modern communication do not, by themselves, radicalize anyone. Rather, they are the channels that enable preconceived attitudes to solidify.<sup>39</sup> The finding has large ramifications for interventions—direct counter-radicalization initiatives across modern media (for example, counter-radicalization commercials or SMS messages) are ineffective by themselves at triggering a change in attitude or behaviour. However, this does not mean that they do not have value. The media should be used to shape the general environment in which the seeds of counter-radicalization can be sown. For example, radio programs in FATA that generate greater community cohesion would help create a social buffer to radicalization (and in doing so reduce the threat of effective violent Jihadist messaging). In other words, the social buffer—and not the direct media communication itself—should be the objective of counter-radicalization efforts. Note that this is not the case for word of mouth communications, which enjoy unprecedented support in the countries researched. This is due to the importance many people place on hearing information and opinions from credible sources. Some behaviour scientists explain this by pointing to the collectivistic nature of these cultures, as opposed to the more individualistic western culture.

Thirdly, no discussion on violent Jihadism would be complete without mention of the role played by religiosity. This article is not intended to debate the strengths and weaknesses of various terms and labels. However, “fundamentalism” and even “radicalism” do not equate to support for violent Jihadism. Rather, depth or intensity of an individual’s religious beliefs serves as a catalyst that, when combined with other factors such as personal loss, lack of awareness, ignorance, isolation, degree

---

<sup>38</sup> Although a note of caution on the employment of NGOs: typically, local NGOs are corrupt while several international ones have contravened local customs. The optimum solution is local males working for international NGOs. This may seem unpalatable to those working for greater gender equality, but as one Pashtun respondent argued: “Don’t educate our women. Educate our men to educate our women.”

<sup>39</sup> In the case of television, this can occur incredibly quickly due to the impact of visual messaging and due to intense competition between channels to win viewership with ever more shocking and negative stories.

and nature of parental involvement, and group pressure can result in a greater propensity to support violent Jihadist groups. For example, research shows that a very small number of religious leaders from Yemen exploit the bond between teacher and student, preying on those most susceptible to influence. The same is true in Pakistan where, for example, one target of blame was the rural Imams in AJK, FATA, and FANA. However, religious figures are just as likely to be positive influences, acting as barriers to radicalization in close-knit communities such as rural tribes. Interestingly, the same duality is found in Mexico; that is, religion is an issue that is co-opted by some cartels,<sup>40</sup> but religious leaders also function as a source of community support against immoral behavior. Unfortunately, potential for religious leaders to play a positive role is fast disappearing. Violent Jihadism is developing broad base appeal amongst groups such as disaffected youth, increasingly resulting in the muting of clergy voices, particularly in more urban areas.<sup>41</sup> The finding highlights the dangers of trying to oversimplify the issue of religiosity and infers that initiatives that promote development in a western (materialistic) sense, such as development reflecting individualistic urban culture, may be counter-productive. The solution, once again, lies in providing development aid as the community desires or requires it, and not as we think it should be provided.

## Conclusions

This article has attempted to highlight those issues related to violent extremism shared across countries in our study based on common themes discovered in the data collected. The issues have been presented in such a way as to reinforce the need for the development of a process in order to tackle the problem of violent extremism. The article first drew attention to the importance of selecting the right objective based on a thorough understanding of the issues, such as the regional powerplay. It then discussed the importance of correct target audience identification through developing an understanding of those attitudes and behaviors that are responsible for membership of violent extremism groups. The article also highlighted the importance of a thorough understanding of the different issues across the psychosocial, cognitive and other domains that underpin that target audience's attitudes and behaviors.

The author believes that oversights in the above areas are unintentionally leading to the growth of the violent extremism threat. In an age where information exposure is so high, it seems counterintuitive to claim that we are less informed. However, perhaps precisely because there is so much information, we are ignoring the obvious need for a rigorous process to understand it. In the context of violent extremism, our unwillingness to break from an oversimplified world-view is leading to the acceleration of a 'them' versus 'us' attitude. Forced into selecting a side, many countries in the Middle East and Asia, and even sections of our domestic populations, are struggling to make the right decision. However, there are solutions. We should be prepared to question and challenge the black-and-white explanations/interpretations and learn to be comfortable with the grey. We should also never forget that the greatest motivating factors are security and food on the table for one's family—western democracies promise a future where this is possible and it is a compelling vision that endures, regardless of our perceived foreign policy errors.

---

<sup>40</sup> For example, the religiosity of La Familia, or the reverence shown to pro-cartel religious figures such as La Santissima Muerte.

<sup>41</sup> For example, the Taliban fighters of today lack the religious knowledge of the former Mujahideen. The leaders, likewise, come from manual labor backgrounds rather than enjoying any real religious credentials.



**COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: SHIFTING THE EMPHASIS TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM (ZIAD ALAHDAD)**

Ziad Alahdad

Former Director of Operations, World Bank

In developed and developing countries alike, strategies to diminish the threat of radical and violent extremism give insufficient emphasis to the development paradigm. This is despite the national level rhetoric supporting a two-pronged approach of military action and capacity building through the development process. In terms of action, the latter takes a back seat. This article attempts to explain why this is so and why it needs to change. It briefly describes what role the international development institutions are playing and why this work needs more visibility when identifying strategies and priorities for countering violent extremism.

**Types of Response**

There are two distinct types of responses to extremist acts such as 9/11. The first is the natural reflexive response to a breach in security, which elicits a tightening of security and possibly military retaliation. If this was the only type of response, the eventual outcome would be an Orwellian world. The second is a reflective approach, which questions where all of us, in developing and developed countries alike, may have gone wrong, to drive our fellow men to commit such heinous acts. This approach brings to light issues such as poverty, lack of education and economic opportunity, injustice, oppression, lack of voice, absence of basic services, and so on. Successful remedial action would herald a Utopian world. The Orwellian is unacceptable and the Utopian is unattainable. In the real world, the course of action is somewhere in between. The balance is critical and the trajectory of the sequence of actions (which, of necessity, changes with each passing security incident) will determine the success or failure of efforts to eliminate violent extremism.

**The Two Groups**

In countering violent extremism, we must develop strategies to deal with two distinct groups. The first is the central, ideologically driven core of extremists such as Al Qaeda. Punitive action against this group could achieve success only in the short-term. In the longer term, such action can have the perverse effect of strengthening the recruiting base of the organization. Perhaps the only way to counter this group is with sound ideological argument in a massive effort, which exposes and drowns out the distorted message contained in their ideologies. One easily implemented and highly effective step would be to give widespread international media coverage to efforts such as the recent impressive 600-page fatwa of Tahir Qadri. This fatwa systematically demolishes the doctrine and *modus operandi* of those who justify violent terrorism on a religious basis as completely contrary to the tenets of the very religion they profess to follow.

Then there is the other group which we need to contend with, referred to here as “the disenfranchised.” This group, deprived of socioeconomic benefits or frustrated by a lack of voice constitutes the recruiting base, the breeding ground for satellite organizations such as the Afghan or

the Pakistan Taliban. Interestingly, the recruitment and expansion of this base is premised on the false promise of socioeconomic development and justice. Exclusion breeds violent conflict, and conflict-ridden countries—as we have seen—become safe havens for terrorists. For this group, socioeconomic advancement is the obvious answer, in which the international financial institutions, NGOs, and other development agencies should play a major role.

### **Time Horizons**

Why does the development paradigm remain largely underemphasized in policies and actions directed against violent extremism? The key issue here is the mismatch between the political horizon, determined by the electoral cycle, and the developmental horizon determined by the gestation period of development efforts. The former calls for rapid action visible to the electorate; it cannot afford the luxury of generational change. On the other hand, the development horizon is, by its very nature, long-term and relies on a series of interventions spanning several electoral cycles, in some cases, even a generation. Under this time constraint, each unfolding extremist action or attempt understandably forces policy makers to focus on immediate and visible measures, security-oriented or retaliatory in nature. The development paradigm therefore, while deemed essential, is given lip service only and goes on the back burner. This is evident from the disconnect between the long-term commitments made towards developing capacity and the actual actions taken. Here, it is important not to draw any distinction between developed donor countries and conflict countries. Both are under similar pressures. Thus, the prevailing incentive system tends to skew the trajectory in favor of short-term security gains at the expense of an uncertain and fragile future with a continuing security threat.

That said, there are several well-established interventions in the development "arsenal" that can yield impressive results in the relatively short term and therefore should be more appealing to the political establishment. For rural development, concrete examples include the Social Development Fund projects, which are targeted towards rapid grass-roots development of small infrastructure in the poorest rural communities. Such efforts, financed among others, by the World Bank, have helped Eastern European countries to dramatically lower the incidence of poverty, thus facilitating these countries to join the European Union. The Agha Khan Rural Support Project, which is somewhat similar, has had a marked effect in catalyzing development and reducing poverty in the much more challenging northern mountainous areas of Pakistan. For urban development, a good example is the Orangi Pilot Project which has uplifted the economic well-being and security of a community of a million people within the Pakistani city of Karachi, which some would consider as a hot-bed of extremism. These and other such efforts have achieved international recognition and acclaim and it would make eminent sense for policy-makers to include similar interventions in their strategies for countering extremism, if they feel they cannot afford the luxury of waiting for generational change. This does not preclude the need, in parallel, for long-term development, which has a deeper and more sustained impact.

### **The Development Deficit**

The goal of development is to eradicate poverty, promote inclusion and social justice, as well as to bring the marginalized into the economic and global mainstream. Building capacity is the essence of development and is a long-term process, distinct from humanitarian assistance, which, while it fulfills a critical need, is a stopgap measure responding to crises and has only a short-term ameliorative effect.

Globally, the deficit of effort and resources allocated for development is immense. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) serve as a useful proxy. These constitute the most comprehensive declaration of intent (21 targets and 60 indicators) by the international community to address the eight most pressing development issues by 2015. The goals address extreme poverty, primary education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, combating disease, environmental sustainability, and building global partnerships for development. To measure performance, yardsticks are specified for each of the indicators. These pertain to developing indebted countries as well as to the developed countries and multilateral institutions that assist in funding and implementation of the programs.

It is difficult to estimate global funding requirements because of inherent overlaps between different goals. The World Bank estimates that between \$40-70 billion per year of incremental funding over and above what is already envisaged will need to be mobilized, implying a shortfall of \$240-420 billion between now and 2015. This amounts to the need to double commitments over current and projected levels. As a result, progress in attaining most of the goals is lagging significantly. In spite of the shortfalls in funding and inherent risks, other goals, such as halving extreme poverty by 2015, are on track.

As an example of how international development organizations are contributing, let us look at last year's activities of the World Bank, the single largest development organization (see Table 1). During fiscal year 2009, the Bank provided \$47 billion in loans that included significant funds for efforts central to addressing issues, which breed violent extremism. For instance, on a thematic basis, over \$6 billion was provided for human development; another \$6 billion for public sector governance; \$5 billion for social protection and risk management; and \$3 billion for rule of law, social development, gender and inclusion. On a sector basis, \$9.5 billion was provided for public administration, law and justice; \$6 billion for health and other social services; and over \$3 billion for education. This assistance, targeted to all developing countries, is germane to the discussion on the grounds that less developed areas are more prone to extremism. However, as follow-up research, it would be useful to investigate how much of this assistance is targeted specifically to countries where violent extremism exists.

World Bank operations involve a combination of funds and technical advice, the latter aimed at building capacity and reforming a specific sector. As the last resort lender and catalyst for foreign capital flows, the World Bank leverages sizable additional resources, in some instances several times the level of its own lending. Despite these impressive figures, as mentioned earlier, the deficit to meet the MDGs is still immense.

In this context, humanitarian assistance deserves further mention. While its effect is only short-term, its enormous impact gives insight as to what a longer-term development effort could do to “win hearts and minds.” As an example, when the US military provided relief helicopters and medical supplies during the devastating earthquake in 2005 in northern Pakistan, the inhabitants of the affected area referred to the helicopters as “angels of mercy,” and the image of the US, which had been in free-fall, was for a time, dramatically reversed throughout the country.

**Table 1. World Bank Lending by Theme and Sector | Fiscal 2009**

MILLIONS OF DOLLARS	
<b>Theme</b>	
Economic management	2,304.7
Environment and natural resources management	5,085.4
Financial and private sector development	9,694.8
Human development	6,378.6
Public sector governance	6,108.4
Rule of law	215.8
Rural development	4,298.6
Social Development, Gender, and Inclusion	813.2
Social protection and risk management	5,295.7
Trade and integration	3,444.1
Urban development	3,466.7
Theme Total	46,906.0
<b>Sector</b>	
Agriculture, fishing, and forestry	3,400.0
Education	3,444.8
Energy and mining	6,267.4
Finance	4,235.6
Health and other social services	6,305.5
Industry and trade	2,806.5
Information and communications	329.2
Law and Justice and Public Administration	9,491.6
Transportation	6,260.6
Water, sanitation, and flood protection	4,364.9
Sector Total	46,906.0
Of which IBRD	32,910.8
Of which IDA	13,995.2

*Source:* The World Bank Annual Report 2009: The Year in Review

## **The Way Forward**

Extremist organizations and their activities continue to grow in many parts of the world, mainly where development indicators are lagging, including conflict zones. This situation is clearly unacceptable. Commitments to the development process need to be increased, as part and parcel of the policies governing the efforts to eradicate violent extremism. An appropriate mechanism, perhaps binding international treaties, needs to be found which ensures continuity between electoral cycles, through successive governments, to give a chance for the development cycle to mature and yield results.

Looking ahead, there are five broad recommendations, most of which are imbedded in the concept and design of the MDGs. The first is to expand humanitarian assistance and implement, where possible, grass-root development programs providing rapid assistance for small projects at the village level in potential conflict areas and those areas which are prone to extremism. In parallel, an intensive effort should be made to restore the confidence of the population and reassure them that the donor agencies/countries are in it for the long haul. This could be in the form of a widespread publicity campaign showcasing the success of ongoing village projects and outlining future long-range development efforts. The second is to strengthen international global partnerships to confront terrorism, international crime, and money laundering, as well as define and monitor critical development actions, thereby promoting stability and helping to prevent crises. The third is to substantially increase foreign assistance, a more difficult task during the prevailing international economic slowdown, but essential for preventing the spread of extremism and addressing the deleterious economic effects resulting from extremist actions. Consideration also needs to be given to transferring funds, where possible, from very expensive military commitments to the development efforts. The fourth is to reduce trade barriers, focusing WTO initiatives on poverty reduction, and targeting protectionism that severely curtails the growth of developing nations. The fifth is to increase the focus of development assistance on results. This involves improving the investment climate, enhancing productivity and jobs, and empowering the poor.

International financial institutions are pursuing these objectives, but the time has come for all nations (including developed nations holding the purse strings), to step up their efforts and recognize that failure could result in one of two equally unacceptable outcomes—increased violent extremism, or a move towards an Orwellian future.

## **Special Solutions**

Special times necessitate special solutions—thinking outside the proverbial box. The modern development paradigm supports international development organizations working closely with all stakeholders in development, particularly NGOs. The time has come to take a fresh approach. To counter extremism, we also need to seek out and partner with those NGOs that, while providing social services such as education and health, also profess and proclaim moderation in religion. For example, in Pakistan, there are the many Sufi-oriented welfare services, where capacity-building efforts can counter the virulent messages espoused by the already well-funded extremist

organizations. This greater selectivity in choosing partners will require a major shift in the policies of international development institutions. But, special circumstances require special policies and the cost of inaction would be prohibitive.

## **Conclusion**

With each security incident, the trajectory of actions tends to shift towards the Orwellian, away from the Utopian. The time has come for corrective action, making the development paradigm an integral part of the policy framework and response to extremism. How the trajectory is positioned will determine the profile of our future.

The following quote from a recent *New York Times* article, sums up the situation: “It costs \$1,500 to sponsor a classroom for a year, and that’s just about the best long-term counter-terrorism investment available.”

**PARTNERING WITH MUSLIM COMMUNITIES TO COUNTER RADICALIZATION (HEDIEH MIRAHMADI & MEHREEN FAROOQ)**

Hedieh Mirahmadi, Ph.D. & Mehreen Farooq  
World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE)

**Introduction**

America has recently faced an unprecedented number of terrorism threats (Bjelopera & Randol, 2010; “The Domestic Terror Threat,” 2009) from individuals and groups that are intent on committing violent *jihad* either in the U.S. or abroad (Silber, 2009). In the past two years, nearly 50 U.S. citizens were charged with major counts of terrorism—each allegedly motivated by radical Islamic beliefs (Wan, 2011). For these individuals, theological arguments based on radical interpretations of a faith legitimize, justify, and encourage acts of terrorism. As a result, radical ideologies are becoming *the* determinant in the global war on terror—more so than militants’ operational capacities (Wan, 2011).

Although mainstream Muslims<sup>42</sup> worldwide wholly condemn radical ideologies, a sect of extremists has been working for almost a century to use religion as a weapon of war. This enemy is not an individual or group, but rather a complex transnational network of organizations that share a common ideology. Their “Islamist” ideology radicalizes individuals’ belief structures, regardless of their race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or education, and converts them into militants who endanger our national security.

Given that the paths to radicalization within the U.S. are not completely understood, this report is intended to be a resource for policymakers to create a new, comprehensive counter-radicalization strategy. In order to counter the dangerous belief structures that breed violent extremism, it is important to explore and understand the history of Islamist ideology and the main tenets that separate it from mainstream Islamic belief.

**The Roots of the Islamist threat in America**

*Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab*

Modern Islamist radicalism traces its roots back to an ideology propounded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), a self-declared scholar from central Arabia, who set out with a puritanical zeal to cleanse Islamic culture and create a pure society based on his dogmatic and literalist

---

<sup>42</sup> The term mainstream or moderate Muslim is used to make a distinction between radical ideologues and the majority of Muslims who support religious freedom, non-violent conflict resolution, and the preservation of the U.S. Constitution as the rule of law. The foundational principles that differentiate these two groups are further outlined below. It should be noted that the term “moderate” should not be conflated with social or political attitudes (*e.g.*, moderate Muslims can be socially liberal or very conservative), nor should it be associated with the degree to which one practices Islam.

reinterpretation of Islam. By decontextualizing Islamic principles and selectively disregarding previous theological discourse, he justified religious intolerance, advocated extreme forms of capital punishment, the application of draconian interpretations of Islamic law, and the use of violence to promote his worldview (al-Rashed, 2007, p. 4).

In 1744, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab forged an alliance with the politically ambitious Muhammad ibn Saud. The Al Saud tribal family afforded ibn Abd al-Wahhab protection and endorsed his dogmatic interpretation of Islam. In return, the Al Saud received political legitimacy and support from ibn Abd al-Wahhab's disciples. Together, they were able to gain influence by waging successful military campaigns and by offering Arabian tribes material assistance. Communities that vowed their allegiance to the Saudi family were provided mosques and scholars to disseminate the Wahhabi doctrine (Cleveland, 2004, p. 231). This religious-political alliance continued after the deaths of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud (A Chronology, n.d.).

With the oil discoveries in the 1930s, the Saud family and Wahhabi ideology grew in worldwide significance. It was not until the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, however, that violent Wahhabism became a global phenomenon. During the war, Wahhabi-centric groups increased their recruitment efforts for the "holy war" in Afghanistan by opening recruiting offices and training camps throughout the world, indoctrinating thousands with their radical ideology. After the war ended, the cadre of Wahhabist militants that had fought in Afghanistan sought new battlegrounds in Bosnia, Somalia, Chechnya, Pakistan, and Yemen.

Although there are many strategies used by radical groups to recruit members (for example by offering employment, free education, or by providing a social network), one of the most successful has been the use of radical preachers who exploit the fact that many youth have a poor understanding of Islam by teaching them that violence, as sanctioned in radical Islamist texts, is the only way to address their grievances. According to Venhaus, this tactic is particularly appealing to the developmental needs of adolescents who are searching for an outlet to vent their frustration over perceived injustices experienced by Muslims worldwide (Venhaus, 2010).

### *Foundational Principles*

Globally, Islamists have tried to dismantle traditional social structures, disregard the rule of law, and establish a new world order based on their rigid interpretation of Islamic law. There are three major principles that shape the intolerant and aggressive nature of Wahhabism. First is the principle of declaring many cultural practices and traditions *bida'a*, or heretical, thereby stripping Islam of many of its cultural traditions and landmarks. Consistent with this belief, Wahhabi clerics have destroyed the burial places of the Prophet Muhammad's family, despite their significance as sacred sites for Muslims worldwide. Elsewhere, they have destroyed saints' shrines and prohibit the visitation of graves, claiming that it promotes idol worship. Today, militant groups influenced by Wahhabi ideology have targeted and killed thousands of Muslims for engaging in *bida'a*.

Second is the principle of takfirism, the radical belief that any Muslim who does not practice Islam—as they define it—is deemed an unbeliever and may be killed. This doctrine has been used by militant groups across the globe to kill innocent Muslims who do not accept their agenda. It is a doctrine that stands in direct contrast to the classical Islamic belief that tolerance, diversity, and pluralism strengthen society.<sup>43</sup> For Wahhabis, the label of “non-believer” also extends to Jews and Christians, who are traditionally respected in Islam as “believers,” or “People of the Book” for having received similar messages by God. These principles that justify and encourage demonizing the “other”—whether it is fellow Muslims or people of other faiths—are what make this ideology so dangerous. This radical ideology has spawned a culture of hatred that often leads to violence and stands in staunch opposition to the universal right of religious freedom and tolerance.

Third is the interpretation of the principle, jihad. Historically, jihad has meant “to struggle in the way of God.” According to traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, jihad traditionally means both an internal struggle to control one’s ego in order to submit to the will of God, as well as the more narrow definition of combative jihad, which can only be implemented in accordance with strict principles of warfare. Nonetheless, militant Wahhabis ignore the principles and rules required to justify waging external jihad and, instead, selectively cite verses of the Quran to justify waging a “holy war” to promote their brand of Islam. Their targets include non-believers, non-practicing Muslims, and people whom they believe are enemies of the ummah, the worldwide Muslim community.

### *Islamist Movements*

Wahhabi doctrine has proliferated outside of Saudi Arabia and has influenced numerous political groups, both violent and those who profess to be non-violent, including the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and their off-shoots across the Middle East, the Jamaat Islami in Pakistan, and the Tablighi Jama`at, a group that claims purely missionary objectives, but whose promulgated belief system has led many of its followers to eventually move on to terrorist groups. Since many of these groups do not identify themselves with Wahhabism, analysts often opt to use the term “Islamism.” These Islamist movements commonly call for a restoration of “God’s sovereignty” through the establishment of a Caliphate, or a Muslim state. Advocating the use of armed or combative jihad,<sup>44</sup> their goal is to “re-Islamize” Muslim communities through violent revolution and the imposition of Wahhabi-inspired Sharia law (Zuhur, 2010). Many moderate Muslims fear that, once these groups are empowered, they will subvert the democratic process, reduce women’s rights, and discriminate against non-Muslims (Brown & Hamzawy, 2008).

From the 1980’s through the 1990’s Islamist ideology spread to American mosques, community centers, and curricula in Islamic schools (Blanchard, 2008) supported by oil revenues from the Gulf

---

<sup>43</sup> According to classical interpretations of the importance of tolerance and pluralism, the Qur’an teaches, “among Allah’s signs are the variations in your languages and your colors,” (*The Holy Quran*, Chapter 30:22).

<sup>44</sup> As discussed above, extremists often cite external *jihad* as a justification for waging a “holy war” against non-believers and Muslims whom they believe have deviated from the “Salafi” or pure practices of the faith.

States (Ottaway, 2004). The strategy for proselytizing in the U.S. was based on three mechanisms intended to foster rapid ideological change across communities. First, numerous foundations were established by foreign financiers to provide Islamist students and preachers with scholarships and stipends to live, study, and proselytize in the U.S. The teachings and material disseminated by these radical students and preachers has been widely criticized for encouraging jihad and promoting religious intolerance towards non-Muslims, and even Shi'a and Sufi Muslims (Strauss, 2008). Second, considerable resources were spent building large mosques throughout the U.S. (Ottaway, 2004). These mosques served as effective facilities where copies of the Quran and books with Islamist interpretations could be disseminated and where Islamist preachers could deliver weekly sermons to large congregations. Third, to facilitate public engagement with policymakers, Islamists created think tanks, Islamic charities, and national organizations to represent Muslim interests in the U.S. (Ottaway, 2004). In comparison, moderate Muslim institutions are uncoordinated and lack the resources to wage an effective campaign to dismantle the Islamists' movement. As a result, the expansive Islamist network has been able to successfully project itself as the de facto voice of Islam in America.

Since September 11, 2001, several Islamist leaning foundations, mosques, research organizations, and national institutions have been scrutinized for their association with extremists and terrorists—despite efforts to moderate their rhetoric (Markon, 2006). While some of these organizations do not currently directly participate in, or support, violent extremism, the foundational principles of their ideology is exactly the same as the violent groups—they mainly differ as to the means by which to accomplish those goals. It is for this reason that even support of, or participation in, the non-violent Islamist organizations can be a “slippery-slope” to greater radicalization or violent militarism (Sherwell & Spillius, 2009).

Despite the growing threat, our U.S. national security strategy still lacks a preemptive approach that focuses on the radical individuals and groups that breed violent extremism online, in community centers, as well as prison and military detention centers.<sup>45</sup> Our recent research with law enforcement agencies, Muslim community leaders, and youth in America confirms this and concludes that the time has come for the U.S. Government and Muslim communities to come together at the local and national levels to develop an effective counter-radicalization strategy.

---

<sup>45</sup> The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) “Countering Violent Extremism Working Group” has taken steps to encourage partnerships with faith-based groups as part of their community policing initiative. The working group recently published recommendations which included studying the processes and ideological components of radicalization further, however at the time of publication, it is unclear to what extent their recommendations will be implemented and whether they will sufficiently address counter-radicalization.

See “Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Working Group, Homeland Security Advisory Council,” *Department of Homeland Security*, Spring 2010, [http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/hsac\\_cve\\_working\\_group\\_recommendations.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/hsac_cve_working_group_recommendations.pdf)

## Developing a Counter-Radicalization Strategy

Several countries have pursued a variety of strategies to counter violent extremism, some of which focus on strengthening moderate Muslim networks as a bulwark against radical groups and radicalization processes, and others that rely more heavily on law enforcement agencies (Mirahmadi & Farooq, 2010). The U.S. government's current domestic counterterrorism approach is largely a law enforcement based approach with some emphasis on community level involvement (Leiter, 2009). Many of the recent U.S. homegrown terrorism suspects have been caught by undercover agents who have spent months building the case against suspects. In most instances, law enforcement agencies apprehended terrorist suspects just before or after they were about to carry out their attack. Unfortunately, by the time the intervention typically takes place, the individual has already become radicalized.

### *Recommendations for a Community-based Approach to Countering Radicalization*

#### 1. Building Partnerships at the Community-Level:

The current approach should be modified by increasing U.S. government involvement at the state and local levels, as well as enlisting more public and private partnerships that will empower moderate Muslims to be active partners in preventing and countering radicalization. Currently, partnerships are primarily developed on an ad-hoc basis with national, rather than community level, Muslim organizations. While national Muslim organizations have greater resources, due to the heterogeneity of U.S. Muslims, they do not represent large segments of the U.S. Muslim population. Focusing on those groups alone risks alienating a considerable percentage of Muslim Americans (Pipes & Chadha, 2006).

Outreach initiatives should be expanded to include local thought leaders, teachers, businessmen, as well as prison and military chaplains. These leaders have a great amount of influence and social capital because they have earned the trust of their community members. As a result, they have the greatest potential to serve as intermediaries for the government. Outreach with these groups should be replicated by coordinating agencies across the government in major cities across the nation. Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies should leverage these relationships to establish a series of community forums to develop trust and to brainstorm community-based solutions to radicalism.

#### 2. Define a Set of Shared Values:

Public-private partnerships specifically created to counter-radicalization should be made with Muslims who agree on a set of shared values. These values should include support for religious freedom, non-violent conflict resolution, and the preservation of the U.S. Constitution as our country's rule of law. Moreover, they should reject three key principles of radical Islamist ideology: religious intolerance, the centrality of militant *jihad* to Islamic practices, and the imposition of Islamist law in the U.S. legal system.

This effort may require time-intensive research to identify effective partners and associated community level cultural, civic, and religious institutions across the U.S., but it will safeguard America in the long-run from empowering “over-night moderates” that openly denounce terrorism, but under the surface encourage militant jihad in hotspots like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

### 3. Strengthening Muslim-led Efforts to Counter Radical Ideology:

Muslim scholars and community leaders that uphold these shared values are best suited to prevent radicalization because they can create counter-radicalization programs grounded in an authentic religious paradigm that is palatable to at-risk and mainstream Muslims. In many Muslim-majority countries, counter-radicalization messages are disseminated through a robust network of schools, cultural associations, community centers, mosques, and the media. However, in the U.S., moderate Muslims lack essential financial and political resources to mount a serious defense against the powerful, well-funded Islamist organizations. In particular, they need help to develop the institutional capacity of their organizations in order to maximize the impact of their counter violent extremism messaging capabilities.

Public and private sectors have unique opportunities to strengthen the capacity of Muslim networks by investing in leadership and good governance training, institutional capacity building, as well as media and communications development. At the same time, both sectors can invest in community-led projects to curb religious extremism such as:

- the publication of pamphlets and booklets that highlight shared values of religious tolerance, pluralism, and social cohesion;
- websites that discredit extremists’ arguments; radical propaganda awareness programs to highlight and discuss the dangers of online indoctrination with young Muslims;
- community centers that foster positive socialization and channel youth energy into positive outlets; and,
- workshops that teach young Muslims peaceful conflict resolution techniques and productive civic engagement opportunities.

### 4. Initiate a Public Awareness Campaign:

Given the increased attention of homegrown terrorism in the media, and the frequent misunderstandings between Muslims and non-Muslims in America, it is important to both educate and engage in a national dialogue to counter the misperception that all Muslims are radical. The recent uproar about the “Ground Zero Mosque” illustrates that the American public is misinformed about Islam and increasingly uncomfortable due to the potential perceived threat of radical Muslims in American society. Being honest about the threat of radical Islamism will help the average American understand the difference between mainstream Islam and its perversion, Islamism. The national dialogue should create an awareness of the tenets that separate this politically motivated doctrine from the spiritual theology of Islam as practiced by the majority of Muslims around the world.

The government should create an educational forum where local leaders, religious scholars, academics, and analysts can brief local and national policymakers about these issues. A separate forum should be created for Muslims to discuss and develop organic, bottom-up deradicalization efforts within their communities. These forums should be televised on major news outlets to ensure broad publicity. The information generated should be disseminated through public channels including the internet, schools, college campuses, online forums, and prisons.

Throughout this process, public policymakers, government, and law enforcement officials at the federal, state, and local level should exert greater efforts to recognize and support the ongoing counter-radicalization work of grassroots Muslim leaders and organizations. For example, federal, state, and local policymakers can promote the work of moderate Muslims on their public websites, publications, and highlight their work in key speeches. In addition, counter-radicalization efforts of local mosque communities should be publically recognized by government officials in their speeches, dinner receptions, and award ceremonies. These efforts can engender cooperation and trust between Muslim groups, government, and local communities.

#### 5. Increase Research in Social Sciences:

In order to create a counter-radicalization strategy that addresses the diversity of the American Muslim population, policymakers require additional research on the practice of Islam in America. There are few cross-national studies on the Muslim American population. Anthropological research has not provided policymakers with a holistic portrait of Muslims in America because previous studies have typically focused on a particular demographic group. Projects such as the Pew Research Center Poll, “Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream,” and Gallup’s “Muslim Americans: A National Portrait” are excellent studies, but they provided data from one point in time and do not cover an exhaustive list of topics relevant to the radicalization process. Some critics contend that due to the limited research available of Islamic ideologies in America, federal agencies have pursued a “bull-in-a-china-shop approach” to addressing homegrown terrorism, asking the wrong people the wrong questions in the wrong mosques (Ahmad, 2010, p. 255). This has also contributed to the rising mutual distrust between Muslim communities and law enforcement agencies.

Public and private foundations should fund research on a number of issues including ideologies that influence violent extremism, processes of radicalization, factors for joining and leaving terrorist organizations, and deradicalization/disengagement strategies led by moderate Muslims. In addition, the government should create a forum where local community leaders, religious scholars, academics, and analysts can discuss how to recognize red flags and how to pair local communities with the resources they need in order to address threats. These forums should also identify best practices in terms of community-led solutions for replication across the country. A good place to start could be hosting these discussions at law enforcement “fusion centers” that are already tasked with the counterterrorism portfolio.

### **Challenges**

The strategy recommendations presented in this paper represent a holistic, long-term approach to a grave national and international security threat. Many of the recommendations are innovative approaches to the problem but are somewhat controversial and politically sensitive. Establishing relations with community leaders, identifying credible partners, and building up the institutional capacity of moderate Muslim networks will also take considerable time and political will. There are other challenges as well.

Given the fundamental tenet of separation of church and state, the U.S. government has a strong legal and ethical trepidation about delving into matters deemed to be religious in nature. As a result, the role of ideology and theology in radicalization has been left in the hands of Muslims, whom policymakers believe are best equipped to deal with the problem but who, to date, have been slow to address it. This presents a critical opportunity for the government to generate the necessarily political capital to mobilize the Muslim American population. In the UK, when the government announced a national agenda to counter radicalization in partnership with the Muslim community, many Muslim organizations signed on to participate because they did not want to be excluded from such a high-profile issue.

Another challenge is that, while moderate Muslims can lead the fight against radicalization, they tend to be underfunded and lack the necessary institutional capacity to effectively compete with Islamists. Previous research confirms that many moderate Muslim groups require leadership and communications training to maximize the impact of their message of peace and social cohesion (Ahmad, 2010, p.233). Public-private partnerships against radicalization will have to strengthen their core capabilities in order to succeed.

The hesitation of Muslim communities to actively speak out against radicalization is another large challenge. Many Muslims are afraid to challenge radical Islamists out of fear of personal safety, or being labeled as anti-Islamic or ignorant of Islamic tenets (Eltahawy, 2009). Others fear they will become ostracized by the community for airing Islam's 'dirty laundry' in the public. This can be resolved if the government were to lead the endeavor and establish a call for partnerships. However, the problem is compounded by the perception that a small percentage of American Muslims who have faced physical violence as a result of speaking out have received little support from the justice system in prosecuting their offenders (Ahmad, 2010, 235). Therefore, law enforcement agencies will have to ensure proper enforcement of hate crime legislation, (including crimes committed by Muslims against Muslims). At the same time, moderate Muslim organizations need to establish a consensus that it is essential to speak out against radicalization in order to preserve the true message of Islam.

Finally, it is likely that this new counter-radicalization strategy will receive a large pushback from radical Islamists. In the UK, Islamists challenged the government's PREVENT strategy by claiming it was an attack on Islam. In their attempt to subvert the new strategy, they propagated the belief that the program would cultivate greater Islamophobia and hatred towards Muslims. Paradoxically,

at the same time they worked diligently to portray their organizations as “moderate” institutions that were credible partners for the government.<sup>46</sup>

In the U.S., prior to September 11, 2001, several national Muslim organizations openly criticized the U.S. government for supporting the Arab-Israeli peace process, funding terrorist groups like Hamas on occasion, and actively worked against a variety of state interests. While their rhetoric may, at times, remain inflammatory and counterproductive, they still seek a relationship with the U.S. government. Similar to the UK, the U.S. should expect Islamist organizations in the U.S. to vehemently object to the new strategy while, at the same time, seek to be a part of it. Therefore, it is important to carefully scrutinize each organization the government wishes to partner with, examining their domestic and international funding sources, and ties to radical groups. The government will have to examine the principles that American Muslim organizations and community leaders espouse with particular attention as to whether there was a genuine shift in actions and behaviors after 9-11. An ideal Muslim partner is one who supports the shared values of religious liberty, non-violence in conflict resolution, and the preservation of our country’s rule of law. At the same time, they should consistently demonstrate a rejection of the three key principles of radical ideologues—religious intolerance, the centrality of militant *jihad* to Islamic practices, and the imposition of Islamist law in the U.S. legal system.

## Conclusion

Religious extremism poses a grave challenge for the U.S., but it can be successfully countered if the government were to announce a national agenda to counter-radicalization in partnership with Muslim communities. The importance of creating lasting partnerships with Muslim communities in this endeavor cannot be overemphasized. Muslims that uphold American ideals of religious liberty, human dignity, and social harmony not only have the unique capacity to solve the problem from within the community, but also they can bridge the trust deficit between Muslim and non-Muslim communities which could otherwise divide America along religious fault lines.

## References

- A Chronology: The House of Saud. (n.d.). *Frontline*. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saud/cron/>
- Ahmad, S. (2010). *Rock and roll jihad: A Muslim rock star's revolution*. New York: Free Press.
- Al- Rashed, M. (2007). *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic views from a new generation*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, MA, pp. 4.
- Bjelopera, J., & Randol, M.A. (2010, September 20). American jihadist terrorism: Combating a complex threat. *Congressional Research Service*.

---

<sup>46</sup> Maajid Nawaz and Ed Husain, “Preventing Terrorism: Where Next for Britain?” *Quilliam Strategic Briefing Paper*, June 14, 2010.

- Blanchard, C. (2008, January 24). The Islamic traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya. *Congressional Research Services*.
- Brown, N., & Hamzawy, A. (2008, January). Draft party platform of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. *Carnegie Papers*. Retrieved from [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp89\\_muslim\\_brothers\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp89_muslim_brothers_final.pdf)
- Cleveland, W. (2004). *A history of the modern Middle East*. Westview Press, pp. 231.
- Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Working Group. (2010, Spring). Homeland Security Advisory Council. *Department of Homeland Security*. Retrieved from [http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/hsac\\_cve\\_working\\_group\\_recommendations.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/hsac_cve_working_group_recommendations.pdf)
- Domestic Terror Threat. (2009, November 19). *Newsweek*. Retrieved from <http://www.newsweek.com/2009/11/19/the-domestic-terror-threat.html>
- Eltahawy, M. (2009, October 27). Torture for beer drinkers. *Washington Post*.
- Gorka, S. (2009, August 10). The surge that could defeat al-Qaeda. *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved from [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/10/the\\_one\\_surge\\_that\\_could\\_defeat\\_al\\_qaeda](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/10/the_one_surge_that_could_defeat_al_qaeda)
- Leiter, M. (2009, September 30). Hearing before the Senate HSGAC “Confronting the Terrorist Threat to the Homeland.”
- Markon, J. (2006, November 14). Witness is silent in terror probe. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/13/AR2006111301205.html>
- Mirahmadi, H., & Farooq, M. (2010, December). A community-based approach to countering radicalism: A partnership for America. *WORDE Report*.
- Nawaz, M., & Husain, E. (2010, June 14). Preventing terrorism: Where next for Britain? *Quilliam Strategic Briefing Paper*.
- Ottaway, D. (2004, August 19). U.S. eyes money trails of Saudi-Backed charities. *The Washington Post*, pp. A01.
- Pipes, D., & Chadha, S. (2006, Spring). CAIR: Islamists fooling the establishment. *The Middle East Quarterly*, 13:2, pp. 3-20.
- Sherwell, P., & Spillius, A. (2009, November 7). Fort Hood shooting: Texas Army killer linked to September 11 terrorists. *Telegraph.co.uk*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/6521758/Fort-Hood-shooting-Texas-army-killer-linked-to-September-11-terrorists.html>
- Silber, M. D. (2009, November 19). Director intelligence analysis for the New York City Police Department. *Committee Testimony for the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee*.

- Strauss, V. (2008, January 10). Critics of Saudi academy say textbooks promote intolerance. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/09/AR2008010903338.html>
- Venhaus, J. (2010, May). Why youth join al-Qaeda. *United States Institute for Peace Special Report*.
- Wan, W. (2011, January 24). Hearings on Muslims trigger panic. *The Washington Post*, pp. A01.
- Zahur, S. (2010, January). Ideological Basis for Islamic Radicalism and Implications for Deradicalisation,” in S. Canna (Ed.) *Topical Strategic Multi-layer Assessment Multi-agency and Air Force Research Laboratory Multi-disciplinary White Papers in Support of Counterterrorism and Counter WMD: Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Threats: Current Multi-disciplinary Perspectives on Root Causes, the Role of Ideology, and Programs for Counter-radicalization and Disengagement*.

THE ROLE OF NON-VIOLENT ISLAMISTS IN RADICALIZATION AND COUNTER-RADICALIZATION: THE EUROPEAN DEBATE (LORENZO VIDINO)

Lorenzo Vidino, Ph.D.

Visiting Fellow, Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich

[lorenzovidino@gmail.com](mailto:lorenzovidino@gmail.com)

As American authorities, compelled by the recent surge in the number of American Muslims involved in terrorist activities, currently debate the need for a comprehensive counter-radicalization strategy, they might draw useful lessons from the experiences of various European countries. In fact, over the last few years, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark, and, to a lesser degree, other European countries, have invested significant human, financial, and political capital in counter-radicalization programs. These initiatives differ significantly from one another in terms of aims, budget, and underlying philosophy. Each experience is deeply shaped by political, cultural, and legal elements that are unique to each country. Moreover, these programs have been implemented for just a few years, and it is therefore very difficult to fully assess their impact.

Despite these issues it is, nevertheless, possible to gain some useful insights from the European experience. Among the many challenges European authorities have had to grapple with, few have been more debated and controversial than the choice of partners. All experts agree that no counter-radicalization effort aimed at militant jihadist networks/organizations can be successful without the involvement of the Muslim community and, thus, establishing strong, trust-based partnerships with individuals and organizations in it is considered of paramount importance. Yet all Muslim communities in Europe, as in the United States, are heterogeneous, deeply divided by ethnicity, national origin, language, sect and political opinions, and no single organization can legitimately claim to represent a segment of the community even close to being a majority.

Given this situation, European authorities have often decided to partner with a multiplicity of organizations, rather than relying on a single gatekeeper to the community. When choosing which of the many, often competing, Muslim organizations to partner with, credibility and legitimacy have understandably become major factors guiding the decision. Which voices are listened to in the community and can deliver the message the government seeks to support? What organizations can be most effective at preventing violent radicalization or de-radicalizing already radicalized individuals?

In this regard, a particularly controversial matter is the role of non-violent Islamists. Before analyzing this role, it is necessary to make a terminological clarification. With a necessary oversimplification, it is possible to divide Islamist groups in Europe (and elsewhere) into violent rejectionists, non-violent rejectionists, and participationists. Violent rejectionists are those individuals and networks, often linked to or inspired by al-Qaeda, that reject the legitimacy of any democratic system and use violence to advance their goals. Non-violent rejectionists are groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, that openly reject the legitimacy of any system of government not based on Islamic law (Sharia) but do not, at least publicly and openly, advocate the use of violence to further their goals.

Participationist Islamists, on the other hand, are those individuals and groups that adhere to a strand of Islamism that advocates interaction with society at large, both at the micro-level through grassroots activism, and at the macro-level through participation in public life and the democratic process. In Europe, as in the rest of the world, these networks inspired by and/or linked to movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood or the South Asian Jamaat-e-Islami, are significantly more powerful in terms of numbers, funds, their appeal to fellow Muslims, and political capabilities than rejectionists. These movements espouse various aspects of Islamist ideology that makes them controversial in the eyes of most Western observers, particularly with regard to issues such as religious freedom and women's rights. Yet, while endorsing acts of violence in places such as Kashmir, Israel, Iraq or other "Muslim lands" they consider being attacked or occupied, these networks do not advocate violence in the West. To the contrary, they have often publicly condemned terrorist acts carried out by al-Qaeda in Europe and North America.

## The Debate

The two questions over which European scholars and policymakers have been debating the last few years are: what is the role of non-violent (whether rejectionist or participationist) Islamists in the radicalization process? Moreover, could these non-violent Islamists (henceforth NVIs) become partners of the government against violent radicalization?

As for the first question, one strand of thinking sees NVIs as conveyor belts for further radicalization. Envisioning an individual's radicalization process as a straight line with complete absence of radical views at the point of origin (point A) and full radicalization at the end (point B), NVIs would, according to this theory, facilitate the movement from A to B. That is the opinion of, f, former British Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, who has stated that NVIs "may not explicitly promote violence, but they can create a climate of fear and distrust where violence becomes more likely" (Travis, 2008). Similarly, according to the Quilliam Foundation, a London-based think tank established by former members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, NVIs "advocate separatist, confrontational ideas that, followed to their logical conclusion, lead to violence. At the very least, the rhetoric of radicals provides the mood music to which suicide bombers dance" (Quilliam Foundation, 2008).

Critics challenge this attitude by arguing that there is "no empirical evidence of a causal link between extremism and violent extremism" (Briggs, 2010). While it might be true that all terrorists are radicals, critics argue that it is also true that the vast majority of radicals never make the leap into violence (Bartlett & Birdwell, 2010).

The image of a "slippery slope from political mobilization to anger and, finally, to violent extremism and terrorism" is, according to some, flawed and not supported by facts (Briggs, Fieschi, & Lownsbrough, 2010). Many of those who hold this view also argue that any government would be foolish to not harness the enormous potential that a partnership with NVIs holds. While some of their views might be offensive, NVIs genuinely oppose violence and are in a unique position to influence those most likely to engage in violence not to do so. In fact, only they possess the legitimacy and street credibility to be listened to by young Muslims already on the path to radicalization. Governments should, therefore, empower the work of these groups, which constitute the ultimate bulwarks against violent radicalization.

One of the most enthusiastic supporters of this view is Robert Lambert, the former head of the Muslim Contact Unit (MCU), the section of London Metropolitan Police devoted to engaging the city's Muslim community. Lambert argues that the "ideal yes-saying" Muslim leaders, those commonly referred to as "moderates," lack legitimacy in their communities and have no knowledge of radicalization (Lambert, 2008). Claiming that only NVIs have the street credibility to challenge the narrative of al-Qaeda and influence young Muslims who might be undergoing the transformation towards the path of violent radicalization, he therefore advocates "police negotiation leading to partnership with Muslim groups conventionally deemed to be subversive to democracy" (Lambert, 2008). Lambert cites as an example of this potential STREET (Strategy to Re-Empower and Educate Teenagers), a counter-radicalization program run by strict Salafists in the Brixton area of London. According to Lambert, STREET, thanks to its combination of "street skills and religious integrity," has been particularly successful in contrasting the recruitment efforts of al-Qaeda-linked preachers in the area (Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010).

Danish security services (PET) share this analysis, arguing that in some cases, "It is precisely these individuals who have the best chance of influencing the attitudes of the young people who are in a process of radicalization, in a non-violent direction" (A Common and Safe Future, 2008). Lambert and the PET embrace the view that, rather than conveyor belts, NVIs act as firewalls. In the hypothetical straight line described above, NVIs do not allow the radicalization process to proceed from point A to point B, stopping it somewhere in between. An individual who embraces their views might be a cognitive radical, even espousing views that are repugnant to the majority, but the firewall represented by NVIs prevents him from becoming a violent radical.

Critics believe that there is little evidence supporting this view. While it might be true that many NVIs do not become violent radicals, it is undisputed that some do. The 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheik Mohammed, New Mexico-born radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, and failed Christmas bomber Umar Faruk Abdulmutallab are just three of the most famous cases of al-Qaeda-linked militants whose radicalization trajectory began with militancy in Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated networks. The NVIs' firewall effect is, according to critics, only occasional, and there is no empirical evidence to support the view that it is a constant.

Moreover, argue some, even assuming NVIs can indeed sway some individuals from becoming violent radicals, the long-term implications on social cohesion and integration of any partnership the government might enter with them would greatly offset the yet-to-be-proven, short-term benefits in the security field. Many security officials in various European countries, in fact, embrace the view that categorizing the enemy as only in violent groups is a self-deceiving act. Alain Grignard, deputy head of Belgian police's anti-terrorism unit and a professor of Islamic studies at Brussels Free University, calls al-Qaeda an "epiphenomenon," the most visible aspect of a much larger threat that is political Islam (Besson, 2005). Alain Chouet, the former head of France's counterintelligence service DGSE, agrees with Grignard and believes that "Al-Qaeda is only a brief episode and an expedient instrument in the century-old existence of the Muslim Brotherhood. The true danger is in the expansion of the Brotherhood, an increase in its audience. The wolf knows how to disguise itself as a sheep (Fourest, 2008)."

Chouet's comparison of the Muslim Brotherhood to a wolf in sheep's clothing is echoed by many security experts who fear that NVIs are attempting to benefit from what, in social movement theory,

is known as positive radical flank effect (McAdam & Snow, 1997). According to the theory, more moderate wings of a political movement improve their bargaining position when a more radical fringe emerges. Applied to NVIs, the positive radical flank effect would explain why the emergence of al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups has led European governments to view NVIs more benignly and even to flirt with the idea of establishing forms of partnership with them. The emergence of a severe and prolonged terrorist threat, argue people like Chouet, has led European governments to lower the bar of what is acceptable and endorse organizations holding highly controversial and anti-democratic views, as long as they oppose violence in the Old Continent.

According to this line of thinking, the social engineering program envisioned by NVIs, entailing the rejection of many core Western values is the real problem. A government might enter into some form of a short-term, tactical partnership with NVIs to achieve immediate security goals, but anything beyond that would provide undue legitimacy and empower groups whose long-term agenda has seemingly destructive repercussions on social cohesion and, potentially, on security itself. This position has been repeatedly championed, among others, by the German security services. In its annual report, the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV) has stated that “‘legalistic’ Islamist groups represent an especial threat to the internal cohesion of our society” (Annual report, 2005). The BfV admits that NVIs “do not carry out recruitment activities for the purpose of the violent ‘Holy War’ (Jihad),” and that, to the contrary, “they might rather claim to immunize young Muslims against Jihadist indoctrination by presenting to them an alternative offer of identification.” However, adds the BfV, “one has to critically ask whether their activities that are strongly directed at preserving an ‘Islamic identity’ intensify disintegration and contribute to the development of Islamist parallel societies” (Annual report, 2005). Moreover, they argue, in embracing the conveyor belt theory, there “is the risk that such milieus could also form the breeding ground for further radicalization (Annual report, 2005).

### **What Does The Evidence Tell Us?**

Any decision on the opportunity to partner with NVIs would ideally be based on an empirical assessment of their role in both the radicalization and counter-radicalization process. Yet, in reality, there is little evidence to conclusively back either the conveyor belt or the firewall argument. There is substantial anecdotal evidence supporting simultaneously both positions but no systematic, comprehensive studies that can definitively prove either. This deficiency is due to a variety of factors, from a just recently reversed lack of interest in the research community to problems in obtaining access to substantial bodies of information, which would provide a comprehensive glimpse into a person’s path to radicalization. Moreover, while it might be relatively easy to determine cases in which NVIs acted as a firewall, assessing their role as conveyor belts is arguably significantly more challenging. While it might be true that they provide the “mood music to which suicide bombers dance” and that they have made mainstream a narrative over which violent groups build their recruiting efforts, empirically proving such intangible role is almost impossible.

Given this lack of empirical evidence, intuitively it can be argued that in some cases NVIs act as firewall, while in others as conveyor belts. Radicalization is a highly individualized and unpredictable journey. Many who join NVI networks will never make the leap to jihadist networks and, to the contrary, will actively challenge their influence. However, many cases have shown that others will make the leap. In substance, the dearth of evidence on the radicalization process and its lack of

linearity make conclusive assessments on the role of NVIs almost impossible. As a consequence, positions and policies on the issue swing almost erratically.

As said, it is unlikely that any study, no matter how comprehensive, could provide definitive answers to end the debate. Yet given the relevance of the matter, more studies would help drive an informed debate and policymaking process. More research would be needed to determine the role of NVI networks in the radicalization process, perhaps focusing on what factors led some people who were involved in them to progress to violent organizations and why others did not. Other studies could analyze their role in countering radicalization, perhaps distinguishing between their potential contribution to de-radicalization or disengagement and radicalization prevention initiatives.

The debate over the role of NVIs in the radicalization process has been significantly more intense in Europe than in the United States, and for good reasons. Not only are NVI networks significantly more active on the “Old Continent,” but the American debate over homegrown terrorism and violent radicalization has only recently begun, some five to ten years after most European countries. It is, nevertheless, useful for American policymakers to pay attention to this debate and examine its implications for radicalization inside the United States. Contrary to the majority belief, terrorism and radicalization patterns witnessed in Europe in the past are now surfacing in the U.S. Notwithstanding significant differences between the characteristics of European and American Muslim communities and Islamist networks, at least an awareness of the various positions concerning the role of NVIs seems to be an important requirement for those involved in devising U.S. counter-radicalization efforts.

## References

- Bartlett, J., & Birdwell, J. (2010). From suspects to citizens: preventing violent extremism in a big society. *Demos*, pp. 8-9.
- Briggs, R., Fieschi, C., & Lownsbrough, H. (2010). Bringing it home: community-based approaches to counter-terrorism. *Demos*, pp. 43.
- Briggs, R. (2010). Community engagement for counterterrorism: lessons from the United Kingdom. *International Affairs*, pp. 971-81.
- Danish Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs. (2008). *A common and safe future: proposal for an action plan to prevent extremist views and radicalization among young people*.
- Lambert, R., & LastGithens-Mazer, J. (2010). Why conventional wisdom on radicalisation fails: the persistence of a failed discourse. *International Affairs*, 86(4), pp. 897.
- Lambert, R. (2008). Empowering salafis and Islamists against al-Qaeda: a London counterterrorism case study. *Political Science & Politics*, 41, pp. 31-35.
- Travis, Alan. (2008, December 11). Time to tackle the non-violent extremists, says Smith. *Guardian*. Quilliam Foundation’s launch publication.

## THE MECHANICS OF DE-LEGITIMIZATION (CHERYL BENARD)

Cheryl Benard, Ph.D.

Too often, “de-legitimization” is just used as a catchword. To make it more concrete and effective, though, we need to think of it as a technique as well as a process. First, we have to be clear about what it means and what goals we associate with it. In general, the goal of de-legitimization is to weaken a hostile movement or ideology by undermining its ability to persuade and inspire people. This, in turn, will hamper its effectiveness in gaining new adherents and supporters, and ideally, will even erode its already existing following and damage the morale of those who still remain. Secondly, we need to distinguish the five component parts of de-legitimization, and develop tools for achieving each subset. Effective de-legitimization strategies address: the leaders, the participants, the arguments and message, the means and methods, and the outcomes, of the hostile ideology, group, or movement.

In simplified terms, you have de-legitimized an adversary when you have convinced their following, their potential base, and the population/environment within which they have to be able to operate, that their leaders are untrustworthy, insincere, wrong or inept; that the followers are naïve, or have bad motives, or commit evil actions, or are pitiful or ill or bad in some way, or regret their decision to join; that the underlying message or ideology is incorrect, rests on a misunderstanding or an error or a malicious deception; that the means being employed by this movement and its followers are evil, unjustified, counter-productive or just ineffective; and that they will not be able to succeed or if they do, that people will not be happy with the kind of world and society that results from their victory.

Of course, the optimal goal is to achieve “all of the above”; however, each little piece helps to chip away at the “legitimacy” of the opponent.

In the following, we will first take a closer look at each of the five component pieces of de-legitimization in the context of countering violent Islamist extremism. After that, we will briefly examine a contemporary situation, the wave of anti-regime uprisings in the Middle East, and see what this can teach us about de-legitimization and how it may impact the counter-jihadist effort.

**The leaders:** the West has not spent much time trying to de-legitimize radical Islam’s leaders; instead, the efforts have been more kinetic, i.e. trying to “capture and kill” them. This is a tactical mistake for two reasons. First, it results in many lost opportunities because the biographies, personal conduct, and affiliations of the jihadist leadership are riddled with vulnerabilities and inconsistencies. And secondly, the emphasis on “capture and kill” can end up inadvertently glamorizing them, by suggesting that they are extremely dangerous and very important and that we take them very seriously. To discover the vulnerabilities of extremist leaders we ask: what is their life style, and does it offer indications of corruption? Are they pocketing wealth from their followers to indulge in luxuries for themselves? Are they maintaining bank accounts and homes that will allow them a soft landing when the movement fails? Do they, while preaching Islamic virtues, in fact drink alcohol, consort with prostitutes, and have sex with male or female minors? Are they racist, looking down on Muslims and even on their own followers who happen to belong to a different ethnic group, or who are black, or European, or non-Pashtun etc.? Are they, while talking big, actually cowards, letting their followers take all the risks while they hide behind cavalcades of guards? Are they hypocrites,

exploiting the ideology to gain power and advantage while not really believing in it themselves? To have evidence of inconsistencies or misdoings – especially visual evidence that can be circulated on the internet – is best. But even poorly substantiated allegations can be effective. It puts the targeted leader on the defensive, obliging him to respond and deny. It raises doubts in the minds of those who are uncertain. Note that this is a familiar tactic used by the extremists against the West. For example, in Afghanistan, when terrorists have been killed in coalition strikes, the Taliban at times misrepresents them as having been innocent civilians. Coalition denials, even if they happen to be true, never fully mitigate the damage caused by these accusations. The accusations resonate with many because coalition air strikes, do, in fact, too often cause civilian casualties. Similarly, allegations against the extremists will be more effective if they amplify something that is, indeed, negative about their actions.

**The followers:** There are multiple ways to cast doubt on the supporters and followers, but we can distinguish between two principal approaches. The criticism can regard the movement's members as victims, and express empathy for them as people whose idealism or youthful credulity or personal problems are being exploited by the extremists. Or, the followers can be exposed as criminals who are only posing as believers in an ideology, or as sadistic, unscrupulous individuals who do not care about the suffering they cause. In truth, extremist groups and movements, regardless of the specific ideology, generally do include these two groups. Neither category is something that a normal individual would like to be identified with. If you can successfully argue that the members of a group or movement are being duped, or that their motives are not what they appear to be, you will have gone a long way in deterring people from joining.

One effective technique is to locate “deserters”—actual persons who have become disillusioned with the movement, or its leaders, and have left. Their stories and claims will have more credibility than an outsider's will. Countless opportunities to disseminate the messages of disenchanted would-be jihadists have been squandered by the West. For example, in the detention facility in Guantanamo, many of the young detainees related their own experience with radicalization as having been a series of disappointments, lies, and abandonments by their recruiters, trainers, and leaders. Often, they had been inspired to join with relatively little reflection and elected to join in response to some personal issue such as a fight with their relatives, a failure in school, an unhappy love affair or the like. Almost before they knew it, they had found themselves whisked away on an “underground railroad” to a remote training site in Afghanistan. There, those among them who were not Arabs were angry to be treated as second class by arrogant superiors. Many began to have serious doubts about their decision, but there was no way to reverse it. When the coalition attacked Afghanistan, they found themselves abandoned by their Al Qaeda trainers, who headed for safety and left their charges to their own devices. Such stories, if told widely, would have been quite illuminating to young men elsewhere who were feeling the urge to join, but they were not made public.

“De-glamorization” is an important task within the de-legitimization effort, because many young recruits join looking for the excitement of belonging to a special, elite, and exciting group that inspires respect in the people it cares about, and fear in the adversary. Therefore, the disconnect between the fantasy of involvement and the reality is the crucial point to go after. For example, a key factor motivating a person who agrees to become a suicide bomber is the belief that his sacrifice will bring pride to his friends and his family, that he is doing this for the community of believers, that as a martyr he will be someone very special. To the contrary, however, research on the dynamics within

terrorist cells indicates that it is often the least respected member who, being deemed “expendable,” is selected for such a mission. Also, and unsurprisingly, ordinary (not radicalized) Muslims do not think very highly of fanatics who would be willing to blow themselves up as they shop in the marketplace or attend Friday prayers. Far more publicity should have been given to those facts long ago.

**The message:** Here is where—disproportionately, in my view—most of the Western de-legitimization effort has been concentrated. Immense resources have been expended on studying jihadist texts; the Quran; the shariat (body of Islamic doctrines); the speeches and writings and sermons of various extremist leaders. They have been collected, translated, parsed, and cross-referenced. Indeed, the effort has been so strongly off-kilter that we have to ask ourselves why this has happened. I believe it is because analysts were thrown off balance by the religious aspect of jihadist extremism. We would all have been better served by truly – and not just in rhetoric - approaching Islamist extremism as simply one more variant of violent extremism. The challenge of understanding Islam led us off track. What insights have resulted from all of this effort? The assumption was that Islamism’s great strength was its affiliation with religion that made it more difficult for us to attack and criticize it, because we risked alienating the broader Muslim community worldwide. In addition, it gave the extremists a huge potential base for recruitment, if they could persuade a significant group of Muslims that their version of the religion was correct. Therefore, the experts focused almost exclusively on theology.

The practical programs that resulted centered around the notion of dispatching “Muslim moderates” to challenge the extremists on doctrinal grounds. The idea was for knowledgeable mainstream Muslim scholars to engage the radicals in a doctrinal debate. Once the radicals realized that their views were out of line with true Islam, they would recant. Yemen and Saudi Arabia, where versions of this approach were attempted by the indigenous governments, were considered to be models. Each of these programs, unfortunately, had deep flaws. In the Yemeni program, many of the “repentant” extremists were found to have been duping their tutors; also, it has been credibly alleged that the Yemeni government, in fact, demanded of its imprisoned radicals only that they promise not to launch any further attacks on Yemeni soil, not that they generally foreswear violence. In U.S. detention facilities in Iraq, a religious reeducation program even led to a prison riot. The idea that the Americans were bringing in clerics to educate them about their religion was not received well by any segment of the detainee population. Secular individuals were infuriated to have foreigners attempt to “give them religion”; the pious were equally upset to be tutored in their own faith; and, as far as the extremists were concerned, their own interpretation was correct and the clerics on the U.S. payroll had nothing to tell them.

**The methods:** This is an area where the extremists are extremely vulnerable, and where opportunities have not been fully exploited. The willingness of violent Islamist extremists to sacrifice innocent civilians, to irreverently attack people in mosques or at funerals, has cost them a great deal of support, but the backlash would probably have begun much earlier if Western experts had developed an effective media and online information campaign to disseminate videos of the attacks and interviews with survivors and with relatives of murdered victims.

What still has not happened is a discussion of suicide bombers. These have included mentally retarded women recruited from hospitals and institutions; emotionally vulnerable widows; women

rejected by their communities and families for various kinds of personal “misconduct” who were persuaded that a suicide bombing was the only way to rehabilitate themselves; young children; and individuals who thought they would only be depositing a bomb but did not realize that it would be detonated while they were still carrying it. Even the propaganda videos of the extremists themselves often contained opportunities to turn their message against them. Upon a closer look, they showed suicide bombers whose wrists had been chained to the steering wheel of their car lest they change their minds, suicide bombers trapped in their own vehicle and cursing and pleading to be let out before their bomb exploded, and suicide bombers who went ahead with their attack even though schoolchildren had just stepped into the street in front of them. This provocative material was virtually begging to be sent around the world via YouTube, but it did not happen.

**The outcomes:** Islamism claims that “Islam is the answer.” It may be a catchy slogan, but consider whether it stands up to scrutiny. First of all, what is Islam the answer to? Presumably, to the problems currently plaguing the Islamic world. But historically, it is neither correct that Muslim society or its rulers were especially pious during the heyday of Islam, nor is it the case that its decline corresponds to the rise of secularism. Some of the most backward, ignorant, stagnating areas of the Middle East have been those under the dominion of traditional Islamic leaders and elites. While Islam does contain elements of a social program, it is still a religion and – in the case of the Islamists – an ideology. Planning, managing and administering a modern society, and thriving in the modern marketplace, requires knowledge and professional skills, not just slogans. In recent times, the three most rigorously Islamic societies are the Islamic Republic of Iran, Afghanistan under the Taliban, and Saudi Arabia. Arguably, none of these is what most mainstream Muslims elsewhere – even those who consider themselves highly observant and pious – would like their own countries to resemble. Far from creating an environment in which Muslims feel safe and fulfilled, these are regimes that can maintain the status quo only by the use of intimidation, surveillance, and repression. Islam is the answer – to spiritual needs, perhaps. Those who claim more than that should produce the burden of proof. What, exactly, is their economic and social program? How do they propose to address the problems of unemployment, illiteracy, racism, poverty, absent infrastructure?

In order to do better at de-legitimization, it is also important to take into consideration the obstacles to such an effort. They include fear and intimidation; people may be going along with things not because they approve of them, but because they have been terrorized into silence and cooperation. In other words, they may already view an ideology as illegitimate, but feel unable to act on that recognition. In such situations, to continue harping on the de-legitimizing message is pointless. Instead, it would be more helpful to inform them of ways in which they can undercut the goals or passively resist the extremists without risk to themselves.

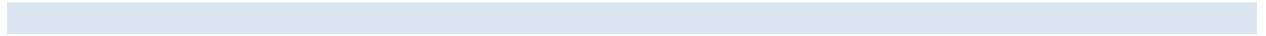
During the final months of 2010, a wave of popular protest began to sweep across the Middle East. Two long-standing regimes fell within a short period of time, as the powerful dictators of Tunisia and Egypt were driven out of office. It is worth briefly examining these events in light of our de-legitimization discussion.

It became possible to overthrow these leaders, and the regimes they headed, because they had lost their legitimacy. They could no longer claim legitimacy on the grounds of ruling rightfully; rather, they were seen to be oppressors, unwanted by the citizens they were ruling, and corrupt. Nor could they claim legitimacy on the grounds that they were effective. Their countries were failing, not

flourishing, under their rule, and they themselves were no longer able to hold onto the instruments of power, the police, and the army. It is possible to be properly elected but doing a bad job; or to be an autocrat but creating enough stability and prosperity to make people willing to tolerate that; or to be an autocrat at the head of a population that is miserable, but who has such a solid grip on power that there is nothing they can do about it. What is not possible is to be an unelected, unpopular autocrat who is doing a poor job and has lost control of the instruments of power. This is the first lesson for our own de-legitimization effort. Our jihadist adversaries, too, do not have much of a leg to stand on. They, and their movements, are self-anointed. They do not have any of the qualities or skills necessary to govern, let alone to govern well. They rule through bluster and intimidation, but they would not be able to stand up to a determined challenge from their own population.

The second lesson relates to the messages of the assertive citizenry. Their motivators for mobilizing were absolutely pragmatic, all related to issues of social justice and good governance, not ideology. They wanted an end to corruption and repression; they wanted freedom; they wanted to benefit from their own wealth and labor instead of having the country's riches flow into the coffers of a thieving elite; and they wanted to connect with the contemporary modern world. The leading voices were secular.

The most effective way to delegitimize Islamist extremism may, in some cases, simply be to ignore it. It is, in fact, not the voice of Middle Eastern/Muslim publics. The most effective way to diminish it may be to amplify its alternatives.



## EXPLOITING AL-QA'IDA'S VULNERABILITIES FOR DELEGITIMIZATION (ERIC LARSON)

Eric Larson, Ph.D.  
RAND Corporation<sup>47</sup>

A key strategy in delegitimizing a violent extremist organization is to exploit systematically its vulnerabilities. This paper describes vulnerabilities al-Qa'ida has revealed since 9/11 that present potential opportunities for delegitimizing the organization and movement.<sup>48</sup> The vulnerabilities identified relate to al-Qa'ida's ideology and framing activities, strategic objectives and decision-making, and resource mobilization efforts based upon evidence of internal contention and external criticism, dilemmas the group has faced, and efforts al-Qa'ida has had to make to adapt its strategy and messaging to overcome the challenges it has encountered.

### Al-Qa'ida's Ideology & Framing Activities

Al-Qa'ida's salafi-jihadi ideology does not, in and of itself, provide a guide to al-Qa'ida's decisions and actions. However, it does serve as a preface to al-Qa'ida's strategic thought, the master frame for its contest over the true nature of Islam and what it means to be a Muslim (Doran, 2002b), a constraint on religiously permissible actions (Wiktorowicz, 2004b), and a source of sacred authority and narrative material for its propaganda efforts (Wiktorowicz, 2004a), and, thus, offers one key to understanding the group and its vulnerabilities.<sup>49</sup>

Salafi-jihadi thought is a militant strand of a puritanical, literalist, and doctrinaire form, or current, of Islam called Salafism.<sup>50</sup> Salafism is a rather small current within Sunni Islam, and salafi-jihadis are a marginal current within Salafism.<sup>51</sup> Most mainstream Muslim currents tend to define Muslims in an inclusive way, simply as those who make the profession of faith (*shahada*) and subscribe to the other Pillars of Islam. In contrast, the Salafi creed takes a narrower view of who is a Muslim, holding that the only true Muslims are those who practice Islam in the Salafi way, ostensibly as it was practiced

---

<sup>47</sup> This paper presents the author's own personal views, not those of the RAND Corporation or any of its sponsors, and has not been peer-reviewed. Any errors of commission or omission are the author's alone.

<sup>48</sup> For excellent reviews of social movement theory in application to radical Islam, see Wiktorowicz (2004b), Snow (2007), Dalgaard-Nielsen (2008a, 2008b), and Olesen (2009). For an excellent overview of the key elements of the social movement theory lens, see Klandermans (2004).

<sup>49</sup> As Michael Doran has observed (Doran, 2002a, p. 178).

When it comes to matters related to politics and war, al-Qaeda maneuvers around its dogmas with alacrity...In general terms, however, the needs of the revolution require al-Qaeda to preserve itself to fight another day. The gravity of the situation requires al-Qaeda to pursue its interests by any means available; conventional morality impinges on its political thought only with regard to its utility in manipulating others. Al-Qaeda's long-term goals are set by its fervent devotion to a radical religious ideology, but in its short-term behavior, it is a rational political actor operating according to the dictates of *realpolitik*.

<sup>50</sup> For overviews of various trends that comprise Salafism, see Wiktorowicz (2005, 2006), Blanchard (2006), and Abdelhaleem (2004).

<sup>51</sup> Accurate numbers are impossible to come by, but to the nearest order of magnitude, Salafis probably number in the tens of millions and are concentrated in Saudi Arabia, while salafi-jihadis probably number in the tens of thousands. Most salafis have a quietist orientation, while the next largest group engages in peaceful political activity but eschews violence; salafi-jihadis are generally believed to be a distinct minority of Salafis.

by Muhammad and his followers in Medina, which they view as a model and template for religious governance in a future Islamic Caliphate that restores Islam to its past glory.

Salafi-Jihadi thought relies on theological and jurisprudential doctrines that enjoin the separation of—and encourage conflict between—Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>52</sup> This highly exclusionary view of Islam is coupled with the ready availability of doctrines that can be used to declare other Muslims to be apostates or unbelievers, and to justify violence against them as well.<sup>53</sup> Finally, salafi-jihadis/jihadi-salafists embrace the view that violent jihad is a pillar of faith in its own right and one that is second in importance only to belief (*iman*).<sup>54</sup> Taken together, this combustible mix of doctrinal predispositions toward violence creates a high potential for both sectarian and intra-sect conflict.

Finally, its ideological and doctrinal underpinnings set al-Qa'ida's transnational salafi-jihadi movement apart from other radical Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah* (HAMAS) and Lebanese Shi'a Hezbollah—and nationalist salafi-jihadi groups such as the Islamic Army of Iraq as well—which need to be approached on their own distinct ideological, organizational, and political terms.

To summarize, then, al-Qa'ida's salafi-jihadi ideology is an exclusionary one that advocates perpetual violence against an ever-growing list of the movement's enemies while offering little in the way of a positive vision of the future or a program for governance that can appeal to the majority of Muslims.<sup>55</sup>

Al-Qa'ida's ideology has primarily manifested itself in a program of direct violence against fellow Muslims and other innocents (Helfstein et al., 2009), and its actions have precipitated a backlash, the consequences of which have largely been borne by ordinary Muslims in terms of military operations in Muslim lands or increased pressure from state security services in Muslim-majority and western nations.

---

<sup>52</sup> Salafi-jihadis tend toward a particular literal reading of the Qur'an and the traditions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (the *sunna* and *hadith*) and the opportunistic employment of the theological and jurisprudential reasoning of hard-line Salafi scholars such as that found in Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's writings on the "nullifiers of Islam." Hard-line salafis frequently promote the doctrine known as *al-wala' wa al-bara'* ("loyalty and disavowal") to promote an insular community of believers and to justify violence against non-Muslims.

<sup>53</sup> For example, salafi-jihadis sometimes use the doctrine called *takfir*, i.e., a declaration that another Muslim is an apostate.

<sup>54</sup> Non-salafi-jihadi doctrines frequently promote a focus on a "greater jihad" that involves the struggle within the individual toward piety and correct action over a "lesser jihad" of individual struggle to promote Islam in the larger world. Moreover, in non-salafi-jihadi traditions, "jihad" can take many more forms, ranging from "jihad of the pen" or "jihad of the tongue" to violent armed conflict. In this chapter, we generally focus on the salafi-jihadi focus on jihad as violent armed conflict.

<sup>55</sup> In its execution, al-Qa'ida and its affiliates' actions have come to resemble the Hobbesian program described in Abu Bakr Naji's *The Management of Savagery*. See McCants (2006).

Not surprisingly, Al-Qa'ida has faced counter-ideological and counter-framing efforts in the form of clerical and other attacks on its theological, jurisprudential, and strategic reasoning.<sup>56</sup> Its interpretation of the doctrine of jihad has been rejected by the mainstream leadership of salafi-jihadi groups such as Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG),<sup>57</sup> and, most recently, former senior al-Qa'ida members, who have offered thinly veiled critiques of Bin Ladin and al-Zawahiri.<sup>58</sup> These attacks have placed al-Qa'ida's leaders on the ideological defensive,<sup>59</sup> and have raised doubts about al-Qa'ida leaders' theological and jurisprudential bona fides and legitimacy as well as their ability to inspire and lead a truly global movement.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> On the clerical front, in September 2007, Saudi former Sahwa cleric Salman al-Awda published an open letter to Bin Ladin calling upon him to repent for his actions. See al-Awda (2007). For his part, in July 2009, Yusuf al-Qaradawi published a book called *Fiqh al-Jihad* ("The Jurisprudence of Jihad") that directly repudiated al-Qa'ida's salafi-jihadi interpretation of scripture and jurisprudence. The book was serialized in a seven-part series in the Egyptian newspaper *al-Masry al-Yaum* in July 2009. George Washington University professor Marc Lynch described Qaradawi as "probably the single most influential living Sunni Islamist figure." See Lynch (2009).

On the strategic front, former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group leadership figure Nu'man Bin 'Uthman was among the salafi-jihadi leaders attending a conference in Kandahar in the summer of 2000 who reportedly opposed Bin Ladin's program of attacking the U.S. due to the likelihood that the movement would thereafter be destroyed. In recent years, Bin 'Uthman has been a vocal critic of Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida as a result of the calamities that have befallen the Muslim world since 9/11. Bin 'Uthman's critique has generally been more strategic in nature than religious. See for example, "Former Libyan Fighting Group Leader Responds to the Announcement that his Group Has Joined Al-Qa'ida," "Bin-Uthman to Al-Zawahiri: Dissolve 'the Islamic State of Iraq'" and "Halt your Operations in Both Arab and Western Countries," *al-Hayah* (London), November 7, 2007, and Bin 'Uthman (2010).

<sup>57</sup> Sayyid Imam, (also known as Abd Al-Qader Bin 'Abd Al-'Aziz, or Dr. Fadl) was the Egyptian Islamic Jihad's leading ideologue and the author of a classic jihadi text called "The Essentials of Making Ready [for Jihad]" that was used by al-Qa'ida in its training program. In late 2007, Sayyid Imam released an extended recantation of his earlier doctrinal analysis of jihad titled "Rationalizing Jihad in Egypt and the World" that greatly circumscribed the conditions under which jihad was permissible. Sayyid Imam's *votre face* on the permissibility of jihad sent shockwaves through the salafi-jihadi community, and led to a public dispute with al-Zawahiri. For a summary, see Wright (2008).

In another major ideological blow to al-Qa'ida, in September 2009, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group released a new "code" for jihad, a 417-page religious document entitled "Corrective Studies" that was an extended critique and recantation of al-Qa'ida's reading of the jurisprudence of jihad.

<sup>58</sup> Former al-Qa'ida spokesman Suleman Abu Ghaith is the author of a recent book titled "Twenty Guidelines on the Path of Jihad," which was released on November 15, 2010. Echoing Bin 'Uthman, Abu Ghaith's principal line of attack on al-Qa'ida is the charge that after pledging allegiance (*baya*) to Mullah 'Umar, Bin Ladin violated Islamic law by failing to abide by Mullah 'Umar's instructions not to attack the U.S., and that Bin Ladin therefore deserves punishment. Giving it even greater weight, Abu Ghaith's book includes a preface written by the former head of al-Qa'ida's shariah committee, Abu Hafs al Muritani. Both Abu Ghaith and Abu Hafs are believed to have opposed the 9/11 attacks because it constituted a breach of shariah obligations, as just described.

In addition, in late 2010, al-Qa'ida's military planner Sayf al-Adl reportedly called upon al-Qa'ida's leaders to conduct a comprehensive review of the operations al-Qa'ida has carried out, including the 9/11 attacks, for the purpose of "assessing the past stage, learning the lessons, and drawing up a strategy for the future." See Isma'il (2011) and Said (2010). In an early November 2010 letter to the Cairo newspaper *Al-Yawm Al-Sabi*, al-Adl denied any remaining ties to al-Qa'ida, but conflicting reports suggest that al-Adl may now be in North Waziristan and in command of al-Qa'ida's international operations. See al-Mamluk (2010) and Shahzad (2010a, 2010b).

<sup>59</sup> See for example, al-Zawahiri's evasive responses to questions posed in the "open interview" conducted on al-Qa'ida-affiliated websites between December 2007 and January 2008. See al-Sahab Media Production Institute (2008a, 2008b).

<sup>60</sup> For a welcome recent contribution in this area, see West Point Combating Terrorism Center (2010).

Al-Qa'ida's ideological and framing vulnerabilities have been effectively exploited by its critics and competitors within the Muslim world as part of the framing contest over the question of what it means to be a Muslim (Doran, 2002b). Popular mainstream Muslim clerics and other public intellectuals who are "credible voices" have arguably carried more weight in influencing popular attitudes toward al-Qa'ida than governments or establishment clerics, who are frequently viewed as the "Sultan's shaykhs" who provide religious apologetics for the regime (see, for example, Wiktorowicz, 2004a). Islamist groups that eschew violence and embrace political participation have offered strong competition against al-Qa'ida's nihilism.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, attacks on al-Qa'ida's movement from jihadi salafist insiders, especially those who can detail the flaws in al-Qa'ida's theological, jurisprudential, and strategic reasoning, have increased doubts about the legitimacy of al-Qa'ida leaders among the group's rank-and-file.<sup>62</sup>

As a result of the sorts of factors just discussed, the resonance of al-Qa'ida's framing efforts appears to have declined, reducing al-Qa'ida's ideological appeal,<sup>63</sup> marginalizing the movement in much of the Muslim world (Pew Global Attitude Project, 2011), and limiting its recruitment of new members.<sup>64</sup>

Al-Qa'ida's efforts to boost its ideological bench depth and propaganda efforts, and to more directly address criticism on issues such as Muslim civilian deaths, seem to have been ineffective at persuading the Muslim masses and have failed to reverse al-Qa'ida's declining stock in the Muslim world. Moreover, the catastrophes that have befallen the Muslim world since 9/11 and the announced U.S. timetables for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan seem likely to diminish al-Qa'ida's future prospects for mobilizing support from the Muslim masses.

### **Strategic Objectives & Decision Making**

A number of additional vulnerabilities can be found in al-Qa'ida's strategic objectives and decision-making, which provide additional avenues for delegitimizing the group and its leaders.

The first is found in the rather quixotic nature of al-Qa'ida's principal strategic objectives: establishment of an Islamic Caliphate and mobilization of the Muslim world into armed struggle against the U.S. Al-Qa'ida Central's strategic assumption that the U.S. could be lured into intervening in Muslim lands if the scale of an attack on the U.S. was of sufficient magnitude seemingly proved to be correct.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, this was a highly contentious decision that split al-

---

<sup>61</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, appears to be much more popular than salafi-jihadi al-Qa'ida.

<sup>62</sup> For example, the emerging salafi-jihadi argument that Bin Ladin violated his obligation to obey Mullah 'Umar's orders not to conduct attacks on the U.S., and that Bin Ladin is therefore an unfit leader, is an extremely serious charge.

<sup>63</sup> Since 9/11, for example, it has become common for critics of al-Qa'ida to disparage the group by comparing them to the Khawarij, the first sect in Islam, which undertook a bloody campaign on the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century. In a similar vein, al-Qa'ida members are frequently disparaged as *takfiris*, i.e., those who declare other Muslims to be apostates.

<sup>64</sup> Sageman (2009, pp. 18-19) suggests that since 9/11, al-Qa'ida's leaders have generally not incorporated new recruits into its ranks, which, Sageman argues, has diminished al-Qa'ida's inability to grow.

<sup>65</sup> This line of thinking is more closely associated with al-Zawahiri than with Bin Ladin; the latter reportedly believed that the U.S. would balk at intervening in Afghanistan with ground forces.

Qa'ida's movement: al-Qa'ida's mujahidin shura council generally opposed an attack on the U.S. on the grounds that it would be a violation of Bin Ladin's obligation to obey Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad 'Umar's order not to attack the U.S.<sup>66</sup> In addition, the decision was opposed by many others who were concerned that it would lead to the elimination of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and the sanctuary it provided to the jihadi-salafists. Moreover, al-Qa'ida's appraisal of the broader strategic environment proved to be quite flawed in both its expectations that the Muslim world could be mobilized into jihad against the U.S. "far enemy" following a U.S. intervention and in the belief that the U.S. lacked the will to continue these operations in the face of losses in "blood and treasure." The result, in fact, was a host of calamities, including the near elimination of al-Qa'ida, the toppling of the Taliban from power, and the loss of training camps and other infrastructure in Afghanistan.

Al-Qa'ida sought to recover from this catastrophe by creating loosely linked regional branded affiliates that could extend the group's strategic reach. Al-Qa'ida's first branded affiliate, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, was essentially eliminated by 2004-5, and strategic decisions to re-brand an extremist splinter of the Egyptian Islamic Group (EIG) as al-Qa'ida in the Land of Kinanah (Egypt) and to merge with the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) were, in the main, little more than publicity stunts.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, in the case of al-Qa'ida in Iraq and its front organization the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), al-Qa'ida Central's efforts to promote Iraq as the nucleus of a future Islamic Caliphate have not come to fruition, and the Islamic Caliphate appears a distant reality more than ever. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq's slaughter of Iraqi Shi'a, which aimed to generate a backlash against the Sunnis that would drive Sunnis into the arms of al-Qa'ida, led to a stream of internal criticism from al-Qa'ida Central<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> It is standard practice for jihadi-salafists to pledge allegiance (*baya'*) to an emir. In return for sanctuary and protection, Bin Ladin had earlier pledged *baya'* to Mullah 'Umar, the emir *al-mu'minin* (Prince of the Believers) of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. According to *salafi-jihadi* doctrine, this obligated Bin Ladin to obey Mullah 'Umar's instructions not to attack the U.S. The fact that Bin Ladin did not obey Mullah 'Umar continues to be the basis of theological and jurisprudential attacks on Bin Ladin's legitimacy and qualifications as a leader.

<sup>67</sup> The rebranding of the EIG occurred in August 2006, while the LIFG merger announcement occurred in November 2007. In the case of the EIG, the mainstream leadership had renounced violence years earlier, and the emir of the splinter group, Muhammad Khalil al-Hukaymah, was not even in Egypt and had no Egyptian organization of which to speak. For its part, the LIFG merger announcement appears to have involved Libyan cadres already in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and seemed primarily aimed at muting the impact of an anticipated rejection of al-Qa'ida's *salafi-jihadi* doctrine by the mainstream LIFG leadership.

<sup>68</sup> In his letter to al-Qa'ida in Iraq emir Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, al-Qa'ida Central second man Ayman Al-Zawahiri urged that al-Zarqawi, within the range of what the *salafi-jihadi* interpretation of Islamic sharia law considered permissible, avoid actions that would erode support:

If we look at the two short-term goals, which are removing the Americans and establishing an Islamic emirate in Iraq, or a caliphate if possible, then, we will see that the strongest weapon, which the mujahedeen enjoy—after the help and granting of success by God—is popular support from the Muslim masses in Iraq, and the surrounding Muslim countries. So, we must maintain this support as best we can, and we should strive to increase it, on the condition that striving for that support does not lead to any concession in the laws of the Sharia.

Therefore, the mujahid movement must avoid any action that the masses do not understand or approve, if there is no contravention of Sharia in such avoidance, and as long as there are other options to resort to, meaning we must not throw the masses—scant in knowledge --into the sea before we teach them to swim, relying for

and the marginalization of the movement by fellow Muslims. The announcement of the establishment of the ISI in October 2006 was met with criticism from some prominent salafi-jihadi clerics such as Hamid al-Ali, who essentially argued that the conditions and timing did not justify such an announcement. The ISI unwisely chose to target fellow Sunnis, including other salafi-jihadi insurgent groups and Sunni tribal leaders, creating an opening for the emergence of the anti-al-Qa'ida Sunni Awakening. With the resulting decline of the Islamic State of Iraq, and its caliphate vision in jeopardy, Al-Qa'ida has sought to shift attention from Iraq to Pakistan, without acknowledging that it has abandoned its vision of Iraq as the nucleus of a future caliphate centered in the Arab region.<sup>69</sup>

The creation of loosely linked regional branded affiliates (e.g., al-Qa'ida in Iraq, a new al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, and al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb), has likely extended the al-Qa'ida network's strategic reach, and reduced its vulnerability relative to the hierarchical structure that existed before 9/11. However, with the possible exception of al-Qa'ida in Yemen, the emirs of these regional affiliates generally have focused their attacks on fellow Muslims and other "near enemies" rather than the U.S. (a "far enemy"), contributing to further erosion of the al-Qa'ida brand within the Muslim world. Al-Qa'ida Central also has attempted, with some success, to build cooperative relations with a wide range of militant groups in Pakistan and South Asia and promote its ideology with these groups, in the apparent hope that al-Qa'ida can lead a larger network of militant groups. Finally, al-Qa'ida Central has encouraged the emergence of "home grown" terrorism in the west, again, with some success. These latter two trends are perhaps the ones of greatest concern, at present. Nonetheless, there are some opportunities for exploiting vulnerabilities.

### Resource Mobilization Efforts

To ensure the continued health and growth of the movement, al-Qa'ida has sought to mobilize and increase its organizational resources, primarily in the service of mass-casualty terrorist attacks, but also for specific functions such as propaganda, fundraising, recruitment, indoctrination, planning, training, and conduct of terrorist and military operations.<sup>70</sup> However, Al-Qa'ida's attempts to reestablish funding, recruitment, and other networks that constitute its principal organizational resources have been met with what appears to be only limited success.

---

guidance in that on the saying of the Prophet to Umar bin al-Khattab: lest the people should say that Muhammad used to kill his Companions.

See ODNI (2005). In an interesting example of pragmatism over doctrinal purity, Al-Zawahiri asked al-Zarqawi: "[D]o the brothers forget that we have more than one hundred prisoners—many of whom are from the leadership who are wanted in their countries—in the custody of the Iranians?" Ibid.

The al-Qa'ida figure named "Atiyah," likely Atiyah Abd al-Rahman al-Libi AKA Shaykh Atiyatallah, also wrote a December 2005 letter to al-Zarqawi that was considerably more critical of al-Zarqawi's failure to understand al-Qa'ida's broader strategic objective of attracting mass support among the wider Sunni community. See West Point Combating Terrorism Center (2006).

<sup>69</sup> Indeed, al-Qa'ida used the announcement of a U.S. withdrawal timetable for Iraq as a pretext for declaring victory, and for shifting its strategic focus to the Afghan-Pakistani theater.

<sup>70</sup> As of summer 2010, official estimates suggest that perhaps 50-100 al-Qa'ida personnel are deployed alongside Afghan Taliban forces in Afghanistan, while 300-500 personnel are in the Pakistani tribal regions. Other al-Qa'ida cadres are in Iraq and Yemen as part of the branded al-Qa'ida affiliates there, and al-Qa'ida cadres are reported to be in Somalia advising and assisting the *salafi-jihadi* al-Shabaab, the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM).

*Leadership Networks.* In response to the death and capture of senior al-Qa'ida personnel since 9/11, and the toll of drone attacks that have thinned al-Qa'ida's leadership ranks, Bin Ladin and al-Zawahiri have sought to cultivate al-Qa'ida's leadership cadres to enhance the continuity and robustness of the movement beyond the top leadership, and to establish a new set of leaders who can inspire and lead would be supporters, in part by assisting in al-Qa'ida's propaganda efforts.<sup>71</sup> These leadership cadres have included operational commanders such as Abu Layth al-Libi, Abdullah Sa'id, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, and Ilyas Kashmiri; strategists such as Sayf al-Adl, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, and Muhammad Khalil al-Hukaymah;<sup>72</sup> and ideologues, public intellectuals, and propagandists such as 'Azzam al-Amriki (the American Adam Gadahn), Abu Yahya al-Libi, Shaykh Atiyatallah, and Mansur al-Shami.<sup>73</sup>

*Operational Networks.* Beyond efforts to extend its operational reach through its branded regional affiliates in the post-9/11 period, al-Qa'ida increasingly has sought to forge cooperative links with other ideologically compatible jihadi groups<sup>74</sup> and to inspire "leaderless jihad" and "home-grown" terrorism in the west (see Sageman, 2008). In the Afghan-Pakistani theater, for example, beyond the Afghan Taliban, al-Qa'ida's web of relations reportedly includes close links to the Tehrik-e-Taliban—Pakistan (TTP), the Uzbek Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), as well as the Uyghur Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), the Haqqani Network, Kashmiri groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), and other regional jihadi organizations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Lashkar-e-Jangvi (LeJ). These networks provide al-Qa'ida with additional mechanisms for various types of cooperation and for enlarging the circle of al-Qa'ida sympathizers. Also worrisome is that al-Qa'ida has trained westerners who can conduct terrorist actions and has tried to inspire individuals and small cells to conduct "leaderless jihad" in the west.

*Fundraising Networks.* Following 9/11, a number of al-Qa'ida funding networks were effectively cut off, forcing the organization to develop new mechanisms for funding al-Qa'ida's activities.<sup>75</sup> The

---

<sup>71</sup> According to the former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group leadership figure Nu'man Bin 'Uthman, as of late 2007, al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad faction dominated al-Qa'ida's decision making. In recent years, in light of the death and capture of many senior Egyptian cadres, al-Qa'ida has made notable efforts to promote so-called "Libyan Afghans" such as Abu Layth al-Libi, Abu Yahya al-Libi, Abdullah Sa'id al-Libi, and 'Atiyah Abd al-Rahman al-Libi (AKA "Shaykh Atiyatallah") into important operational and propaganda positions. See Hamitouche (2007). In addition, Kashmiris such as Ilias Kashmiri have assumed important operational roles in the al-Qa'ida organization: Kashmiri reportedly is commander of al-Qa'ida's elite "Brigade 313."

<sup>72</sup> Recent reporting suggests that Sayf al-Adl was released from Iranian custody and may have rejoined al-Qa'ida cadres in North Waziristan to resume command of al-Qa'ida's operations. See Mahmud al-Mamluk, "We Publish Exclusively a Letter Received from the Principal Suspect in the 'Bomb Parcels' Case," *Al-Yawm al-Sabi* (Cairo), November 9, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> In addition, al-Qa'ida has established networks with the leaderships of its regional affiliates, and reportedly maintains contacts with former al-Qa'ida jihadis in various countries.

<sup>74</sup> Al-Qa'ida reportedly has been quite active in promoting its salafi-jihadi ideology among these groups, clearing the doctrinal path for closer cooperation.

<sup>75</sup> President Bush signed Executive Order 13224 on September 23, 2001, targeting individuals and institutions that provided support to al-Qa'ida. As described by the State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism: "In general terms, the Order provides a means by which to disrupt the financial support network for terrorists and terrorist organizations by authorizing the U.S. government to designate and block the assets of foreign individuals and entities that commit, or pose a significant risk of committing, acts of terrorism." The E.O. has

topic of finances also has been a recurring one in al-Qa'ida Central's internal correspondence,<sup>76</sup> and in recent years al-Qa'ida's appeals for "money jihad" appear to have become increasingly shrill over time as a result of al-Qa'ida Central's apparently deteriorating financial condition.<sup>77</sup> The current sources of the al-Qa'ida network's funding appear to be quite varied and include donations (including both *zakat*, obligatory donations collected by sympathetic imams in mosques, and voluntary contributions), money gained via the informal *hawala* banking system, funds that are diverted from charitable organizations, profits from businesses run by members, and funds from criminal activities such as kidnapping and drugs trafficking.<sup>78</sup>

*Recruitment Networks.* Although the heightened threat environment for the organization appears to have raised concerns about penetration by security services, and may have dampened the organization's appetite for recruits in the Pakistani tribal areas,<sup>79</sup> Al-Qa'ida Central has long recognized the importance of recruitment to ensuring the survival and growth of its movement.<sup>80</sup> As

---

resulted in the designation of 82 entities and individuals. See U.S. Department of State (2001, 2010). An estimated \$100 million in assets was initially frozen. See Meyer and Williams (2001).

Among the more prominent sources of funding that were frozen after 9/11 were Bin Ladin's own personal assets, and those of the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, which was designated a terrorist organization under Executive Order 13224. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia subsequently dissolved the al-Haramain foundation as part of an effort to consolidate Islamic charitable activities under the government. See Jehl (2004).

<sup>76</sup> In his July 2005 letter to al-Zarqawi, for example, al-Zawahiri stated:

The brothers informed me that you suggested to them sending some assistance. Our situation since Abu al-Faraj is good by the grace of God, but many of the lines have been cut off. Because of this, we need a payment while new lines are being opened. So, if you're capable of sending a payment of approximately one hundred thousand, we'll be very grateful to you.

See ODNI (2005).

<sup>77</sup> For example, in a statement released June 10, 2009, al-Qa'ida leadership figure Mustafa Abu al-Yazid stated:

In many of the Koranic verses (all except one), God the Great and Almighty ordained that the jihad of wealth comes before the jihad of self because of the importance of the jihad of wealth. The jihad of wealth is the foundation of the jihad of self. If money (which enables a mujahid to buy arms, food, beverages, and equipment for jihad) is not available, how would he perform jihad?...We in the Afghan arena lack a lot of money. The weakness of the operations is due to the lack of money. Many of the mujahidin are not carrying out jihad due to lack of money, or because there is no money at all. Even many of the martyrdom-seeking brothers, who want to sacrifice themselves for the sake of God...we cannot prepare them due to lack of money.

Al-Yazid (2009).

According to David S. Cohen, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorist Financing: "We assess that al Qaida is in its weakest financial condition in several years, and that, as a result, its influence is waning." See Cohen (2009).

<sup>78</sup> Al-Qa'ida's regional affiliates are believed to be responsible for their own fundraising and other financial activities. Gomez (2010).

<sup>79</sup> In July 2009, for example, al-Qa'ida released a book by Abu Yahya al-Libi titled "Guidance on the Ruling of the Muslim Spy," which observed that western spies were multiplying "like locusts," and provided the theological and jurisprudential justification for punishing these spies. See al-Libi (2009).

<sup>80</sup> For example, a captured document on al-Qa'ida's structure and by-laws reads in part, "We shall care about the role of Muslim people in the Jihad and we shall attempt to recruit them for Jihad as they are the main fuel for combat." Al-Qa'ida has assigned to its Military Committee the responsibility for recruiting new members. See "Al-Qa'ida's

described in the accumulating scholarly literature, al-Qa'ida's approach to recruitment appears to rely upon a variety of processes to screen and connect would-be jihadis to the movement<sup>81</sup> from recruiting by preaching (*da'wa*, literally a "call") and by al-Qa'ida sympathizers to self-radicalization. Most recently, al-Qa'ida appears to have focused its recruitment appeals on Europeans and Americans with some apparent success.<sup>82</sup> Somewhat random personal networks and small-group processes appear to be central to the process of transforming individuals, who have been primed through exposure to al-Qa'ida's thought, into indoctrinated and trained group members. The small numbers of individuals involved in the recruitment process or who become radicalized make this a very challenging detection and mitigation problem.

*Propaganda Networks.* Due to being generally denied access to mainstream mass media, and encountering difficulties in ensuring that mass media organizations carry its releases in unedited form,<sup>83</sup> al-Qa'ida Central established a media production organization (al-Sahab Media Production Institute) and a media distribution organization (al-Fajr Media Center) for audio, video, and written propaganda releases, as well as an Internet-based publication system that relies on al-Qa'ida-sympathetic salafi-jihadi websites and forums as the primary vehicle for reaching its audience.<sup>84</sup> In

---

Structure and By-Laws," Harmony Document AFGP-2002-600178, available at <[http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony\\_docs.asp](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp)>, accessed January 2011.

Nonetheless, Sageman suggests that since 9/11, al-Qa'ida's leaders have generally not incorporated new recruits into its ranks, which, Sageman argues, has diminished al-Qa'ida's inability to grow. See Sageman (2009, pp. 18-19).

<sup>81</sup> For an appreciation of the many social processes involved in radicalization and recruitment into terrorism, see for example, AIVD (2002); Sageman (2004, 2008, 2009); Bakker (2006); Hegghammer (2006); Horgan (2007); West Point Combating Terrorism Center (2007); Dalgaard-Nielsen (2008a, 2008b); European Commission Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation (2008); and Ranstorp (2010).

<sup>82</sup> According to a recent press report about al-Qa'ida's recruitment activities in Europe:

Today, however, al-Qaeda and its affiliates have developed extensive recruiting networks with agents on the ground in Europe, counterterrorism officials said. The agents provide guidance, money, travel routes and even letters of recommendation so the recruits can join up more easily... German officials said they have discovered multiple recruitment networks that work for al-Qaeda, the Taliban and other groups, such as the Islamic Jihad Union, which has been issuing many of the online threats against the German government. But they said the recruiting networks often operate independently, making it difficult for the security services to detect or disrupt them. "In Germany, we don't have a uniform structure that recruits people," another senior German counterterrorism official said in an interview. "We have a wide variety of structures."

See Whitlock (2009).

A 51-page handbook titled "A Course in the Art of Recruitment" authored by "Abu-Amr al-Qa'idi" was released on al-Qa'ida-affiliated jihadi web forums in September 2008. The handbook appears to have been a guide for one-on-one recruitment of new members for operations in their home countries. While clearly inspired by al-Qa'ida, it is not clear that the manual had any formal standing within the organization. For a description of the five-step recruiting strategy advocated in the manual, see Fishman and Warius (2009).

Finally, it is worth noting that Anwar al-Awlaki, a *salafi-jihadi* cleric who holds U.S. and Yemeni citizenship, has recently been active in inspirational efforts to mobilize young American Muslims into jihad, including postings on his Facebook page and YouTube videos of his sermons.

<sup>83</sup> For example, in October 2007, al-Qa'ida complained about Al-Jazeera television's failure to broadcast Bin Ladin's October 2007 "A Message to Our People in Iraq" in its original, unexpurgated form.

<sup>84</sup> For excellent descriptions of al-Qa'ida's propaganda apparatus, see Kimmage and Ridolfo (2007) and Kimmage (2008). Most recently, al-Qa'ida and its sympathizers are said to have made use of new media such as the YouTube video-sharing site, and social networking sites such as Facebook. See for example, al-Shishani (2010).

addition, many of al-Qa'ida's various regional branches produce their own magazines and other propaganda, and there exist a number of jihadi media groups such as the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) and Mujahiddin Electronic Network that, while not formally a part of the al-Qa'ida organization, help to promote al-Qa'ida's message and program. Al-Qa'ida's Internet-based distribution system appears to be highly vulnerable to disruption;<sup>85</sup> for example, al-Qa'ida's accredited web forums have been shut down.

### **A Strategic Framework for Delegitimizing Al-Qa'ida**

The delegitimization of al-Qa'ida is probably best viewed as part of a larger strategy for defeating the movement that consists of three mutually reinforcing lines of operation, including:

- *Capturing/Killing al-Qa'ida Leaders.* Continued efforts to thin al-Qa'ida's top leadership ranks will create turbulence in al-Qa'ida's operations and in its efforts to ensure continuity by establishing a robust cadre of ideologues and other figures who can promote al-Qa'ida's ideology and program after Bin Ladin and al-Zawahiri pass from the scene.
- *Exploiting/Disrupting Operational Networks.* Exploiting and disrupting the networks that are the backbone for communications, recruitment, fundraising, logistics, and operations will help to starve al-Qa'ida of the resources it needs to conduct terrorist attacks and to produce and distribute propaganda.
- *Countering Ideological Support for al-Qa'ida* involves a set of activities to delegitimize al-Qa'ida, many of which are more likely to be successful if they are undertaken by governments, institutions, and individuals from within the Muslim world who oppose al-Qa'ida's ideology and program and believe in a more merciful and compassionate form of Islam. In general terms, these activities include:
  - *Weakening the Resonance of the Extremist Narrative* by targeting the messengers, the dissemination channels, and the messages that promote al-Qa'ida's ideology and program;
  - *Exploiting/Disrupting Propaganda Networks* by monitoring and penetrating these networks and, when the value of doing so exceeds the value of additional intelligence that might be gained, disrupting them;
  - *Exploiting/Creating Divisions* by monitoring al-Qa'ida's discourse, identifying emerging dilemmas, contention, wedge issues, and fault lines, and exploiting them while they are still salient topics in the discourse;
  - *Strengthening the Resonance of Counter-Narratives* by providing material and other support for anti-al-Qa'ida messengers, dissemination channels, and messages; and

---

<sup>85</sup> For example, the al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula website Alneda.com was shut down in 2002, and four of the five main al-Qa'ida-affiliated websites were taken down in September 2008. See Knickmeyer (2008).

- *Taking Other Actions* that call into question the legitimacy of al-Qa'ida's narratives and reinforce counter-narratives.

Importantly, such efforts should be informed by integrated efforts to provide: (1) ongoing monitoring and analysis of al-Qa'ida's discourse for signs of dilemmas, contention, wedge issues, and fault lines, and external commentary on the movement and its leaders; (2) a detailed understanding of the leading voices within al-Qa'ida's movement as well as supporters and critics outside the movement; (3) understanding of al-Qa'ida's evolving propaganda distribution system, and the various products of its propaganda apparatus; (4) better tracking of Muslim attitudes related to al-Qa'ida, its ideology, messaging, and actions than presently exists; and (5) efforts to anticipate how al-Qa'ida political entrepreneurs might adapt their strategies, tactics, and messaging in response to emerging opportunities and constraints.

## Conclusions

This brief analysis has attempted to identify al-Qa'ida's vulnerabilities to delegitimization efforts. The analysis suggests that in most important respects, it is al-Qa'ida's own actions that have contributed most to its declining legitimacy and support within the Muslim world. While the 9/11 attacks led to a catastrophe for al-Qa'ida and its allies, the extreme violence of its associates, primarily against fellow Muslims, has led both to contention within the movement, as well as external criticism and pressure. This in turn is resulting in the group's marginalization and delegitimization. The requirements of the generic strategy proposed for the further delegitimization of al-Qa'ida include significant analytic effort, creative thinking, and agility in responding to fleeting opportunities to influence al-Qa'ida's discourse and decision-making, and to exploit its vulnerabilities. In addition, most of the heavy lifting will need to be done by Muslims themselves, as they are the only ones who can effectively counter al-Qa'ida's claims to the authority to interpret Islam's holiest texts and who can speak on behalf of Muslims. Finally, the U.S. must remain careful not to undertake actions that impede al-Qa'ida's further progress down its current, self-destructive path.

## References

- Abdelhaleem, T. (2004, November). *The counterfeit salafis: Deviation of the counterfeit salafis from the methodology of Ablul Sunnah Wal-Jama'a*. Scarborough, Canada: Al-Attique Publishers.
- Abu Ghath, S. (2010, November 15). *Twenty guidelines on the path of jihad*.
- Al-Awda, S. (2007, September 14). *Letter to Osama bin Laden*. Retrieved from [www.islamtoday.net](http://www.islamtoday.net)
- Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst (AIVD). (2002, December). *Recruitment for the jihad in the Netherlands: From incident to trend*. The Netherlands.
- Al-Libi, A. Y. (2009, July). *Guidance on the ruling of the Muslim spy*. al-Fajr Media Center.
- Al-Mamluk, M. (2010, November 9). We publish exclusively a letter received from the principal suspect in the 'bomb parcels' case. *Al-Yanm Al-Sabi*, pp. 6.
- Al-Qa'ida's structure and by-laws. (n.d.). Harmony Document AFGP-2002-600178. Retrieved from [http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony\\_docs.asp](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp).
- Al-Qaradawi, Y. (2009, July). *Fiqh al-Jihad (The Jurisprudence of Jihad)*. al-Masry al-Youm (Cairo).

- Al-Sahab Media Production Institute (2008b, April 23). Jihadist website releases 'second round' of open interview with Al-Zawahiri. Retrieved from <http://triceratops.brynmawr.edu/dspace/handle/10066/4677>
- Al-Sahab Media Production Institute. (2008a, April 3). Al-Zawahiri answers questions by Al-Qa'ida critics, criticizes Al-Qaradawi, HAMAS. *al-Sahab Media Production Institute*. Retrieved from <http://triceratops.brynmawr.edu/dspace/handle/10066/4675>
- Al-Shishani, M. B. (2010, February 4). Taking al-Qaeda's jihad to Facebook. *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 8, Issue 5. Retrieved from [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=36002&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=3ade289d4e](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36002&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=3ade289d4e)
- al-Yazid, M. A. (2009, June 10). Advice to the Turkish people. al-Fajr Media Center release.
- Bin 'Uthman, N. (2010, September). Al-Qaeda: Your armed struggle is over. Open letter to Usama Bin Ladin. Retrieved from <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/index.php/component/content/article/690>>, accessed January 2011
- Blanchard, C. M. (2006, January 25). *The Islamic traditions of Wahhabism and Salafyya*. Congressional Research Service, RS21695.
- Cohen, D. S. (2009, October 12). Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing David S. Cohen remarks to the ABA/ABA Money Laundering Enforcement Conference. Washington, D.C., TG-317. Retrieved from <https://ustreas.gov/press/releases/tg317.htm>.
- Cracks In the foundation: Leadership schisms in Al-Qa'ida 1989-2006. (2007, September). West Point Combating Terrorism Center.
- Dalgaard-Nielsen A. (2008b). *Studying violent radicalization in Europe II: The potential contribution of socio-psychological and psychological approaches*. DIIS Working Paper no. 2008/3.
- Dalgaard-Nielsen, A. (2008a). *Studying violent radicalization in Europe I: The potential contribution of social movement theory*. DIIS Working Paper No. 2008.
- Doran, M. (2002a). The pragmatic fanaticism of al Qaeda: an anatomy of extremism in Middle Eastern politics. *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 117, No. 2, 2002, pp. 177-190.
- Doran, M. (2002b). Somebody else's civil war. *Foreign Affairs*. January/February 2002, pp. 22-42.
- European Commission Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation. (2008, May 15). *Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism*.
- Executive Order 13224. (2001, September 23). *U.S. Department of State*. Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/des/122570.htm>.
- Fishman, B., & Warius, A. (2009, February). A Jihadist's Course in the Art of Recruitment. *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp. 10-12.
- Former Libyan fighting group leader responds to the announcement that his group has joined Al-Qa'ida. Bin-Uthman to Al-Zawahiri: Dissolve 'the Islamic State of Iraq' and halt your operations in both Arab and Western countries. (2007, November 7). *al-Hayah*, London.

- Gomez, J. M. de C. (2010, October). A financial profile of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 4, Issue 4.
- Hamitouche, S. (2007, November 17). Interview with Nu'man Bin 'Uthman. *Djazair News*.
- Hegghammer, T. (2008, April 4). Jihadi studies: The obstacles to understanding radical Islam and the opportunities to know it better. *The Times Literary Supplement*. Retrieved from [http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/the\\_tls/article3667505.ece](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/the_tls/article3667505.ece)
- Helfstein, S., Abdullah, N., & al-Obaidi, M. (2009, December). *Deadly vanguards: A study of al-Qa'ida's violence against Muslims*. West Point Combating Terrorism Center. Retrieved from [www.ctc.usma.edu/deadly%20vanguards\\_complete\\_1.pdf](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/deadly%20vanguards_complete_1.pdf).
- Horgan, J. (2007, May). From profiles to pathways: The road to recruitment. *Foreign Policy Agenda*, Vol. 12, No. 5, pp. 24-27. Retrieved from <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2007/May/20080522173120SrenoD0.3425867.html>.
- Individuals and entities designated by the State Department under E.O. 13224. (2010, December 7). U.S. Department of State. Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/des/143210.htm>.
- Isma'il, J. (2011, January 11). 'Signs of split' in 'Al-Qa'ida' organization: 'Sayf-al-Adl' launches revisions against violence. *Al-Hayab*: London.
- Jehl, D. (2004, June 3). Saudis are shutting down a charity tied to terrorists. *New York Times*.
- Kimmage, D. (2008, March). *The al-Qaeda media nexus: The virtual network behind the global message*. Radio Free Liberty/Radio Europe. Retrieved from <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1079736.html>.
- Kimmage, D., & Ridolfo, K. (2007, June). *Iraqi insurgent media: The war of images and ideas*. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Retrieved from <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1077316.html>.
- Klandermans, B. (2004). The demand and supply of participation: Social psychological correlates of participation in social movements. in David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, & Hanspeter Kriesi (Eds.). *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 360-379.
- Knickmeyer, E. (2008, October 18). Al-Qaeda web forums abruptly taken offline; Separately, Sunnis and Shiites wage online war. *Washington Post*.
- Letter exposes new leader in Al-Qa'ida high command. (2006, September 2005). West Point Combating Terrorism Center. Retrieved from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/report/2006/crc-atyah-letter.htm>
- Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi. (2005, October). *Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI)*. Retrieved from [www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/letter\\_in\\_english.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/letter_in_english.pdf).
- Lynch, M. (2011, January). *Qaradawi's revisions*. Retrieved from [http://lynch.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/07/09/qaradawis\\_revisions](http://lynch.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/07/09/qaradawis_revisions)
- McCants, W. (2011, January). translation of Abu Bakr Naji's *The management of savagery*. Retrieved from <http://ctc.usma.edu/publications/naji.asp>
- Meyer, J., & Williams, C. J. (2001, October 3). \$100 million in suspect assets frozen. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/oct/03/news/mn-52887>.

- Olesen, T. (2009, May). *Social movement theory and radical Islamic activism*. Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation, Aarhus University, Denmark.
- Pew Global Attitudes Key Indicators Database. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://pewglobal.org/database>
- Ranstorp, M. (2010). *Understanding violent radicalisation: Terrorist and jihadist movements in Europe*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Sageman, M. (2004). *Understanding terror networks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Sageman, M. (2008). *Leaderless jihad: Terror networks in the twenty-first century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Sageman, M. (2009, October 7). *Confronting al-Qaeda: Understanding the threat in Afghanistan and beyond*. Testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.
- Said, R. (2010, December 16). Former al-Qaeda spokesman criticises 'culture of killing' and 'monopoly of jihad'. Al-Shorfa. Retrieved from [http://www.al-shorfa.com/cocoon/meii/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/meii/features/main/2010/12/16/feature-01](http://www.al-shorfa.com/cocoon/meii/xhtml/en_GB/features/meii/features/main/2010/12/16/feature-01)
- Self-inflicted wounds: Debates and divisions within al-Qa'ida and its periphery. (2010, December 16). West Point Combating Terrorism Center.
- Shahzad, S. S. (2010a, November 3). Parcel bombs point to new al-Qaeda plans. *Asia Times*.
- Shahzad, S. S. (2010b, December 10). Broadside fired at al-Qaeda leaders. *Asia Times*.
- Snow, D. A., & Scott C. B. (2007, June). Ideology, framing processes, and Islamic terrorist movements. *Mobilization*, Vol. 12, Issue 2, pp. 119-136.
- Whitlock, C. (2009, October 19). Flow of terrorist recruits increasing. *Washington Post*.
- Wiktorowicz, Q. (2004a). Framing jihad: Intramovement framing contests and al-Qaeda's struggle for sacred authority. *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 49, pp. 159-177.
- Wiktorowicz, Q. (2004b). A new approach to the study of Islamic activities. *ILAS Newsletter*, Vol. 33. Retrieved from [http://www.iias.nl/iiasn/33/RR\\_IA.pdf](http://www.iias.nl/iiasn/33/RR_IA.pdf)
- Wiktorowicz, Q. (2005). A genealogy of radical Islam. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 28, pp. 75-97.
- Wiktorowicz, Q. (2006). Anatomy of the Salafi movement. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 29, pp. 207-239.

#### ARAB SATELLITE TELEVISION AND POPULAR CULTURE (EVELYN A. EARLY)

Evelyn A. Early, Ph.D.  
Senior State Department Advisor  
Air University, Maxwell AFB  
[earlyea@gmail.com](mailto:earlyea@gmail.com)

#### Introduction

Arab popular culture is a mainstream nationalist, commercialized culture that generally supports a moderate discourse. Influenced by both Arab and western media, Arab popular culture is a “glocalized” mix of the global with the local. The global part of the mix is heavily western, whether pop music, video games, locally franchised television shows like *Man Sa Yerbab Million (Who Wants to Win a Million)*, or Arabic subtitled programs like *Oprab*. Arab satellite channels mix this western fare with local productions, which include television drama serials and talk shows debating socio-cultural, political, and religious issues. Arab satellite television generally supports a moderate pro-civil society discourse whose religious and national tilt depends on which of the myriad channels one watches.

While Internet public discussion websites have some participants who articulate a defence of violent extremism, it is only on extremist web sites that there are sustained arguments in favour of violent extremism. Such views are not found on television except for channels sponsored by terrorist groups. At the same time, however, one can find those who espouse intolerant interpretations on certain religious channels. That said, Gulf financiers of many of the Arab television channels have a vested interest in moderation and national channels actively support a discourse of tolerance.

My article<sup>86</sup> recommends policy makers be familiar with the ways Arab popular culture influences public opinion. Arab opinion of American culture is positive regarding areas such as education, science, and technology. Views of American popular entertainment are more diverse, although this has not stopped American culture from being splashed across Arab television and from being a regular part of Arab youth’s cultural menu. Over half of all Arab youth watch western films or programs daily, in addition to playing video games and visiting web sites. At the same time, Arab public opinion opposes most United States government (USG) Middle East policies. Those seeking to improve America’s image amongst Arab populations should recognize America’s cultural advantage while they recognize America’s policy disadvantage.

Arab narratives see western imperial occupation, begun under the British and French, as continuing under America, albeit in a more subtle form. A negative image of America is largely due to disapproval of American policy and to the perception of American actions as a continuation of outside occupation. As Admiral Mullen remarked: “Our biggest problem isn’t caves. It’s credibility. Our messages lack credibility because we haven’t invested enough in building trust and relationships, and we haven’t always delivered on our promises” (Mullen, 2009, p. 3).

Local popular culture’s impact on opinion is more profound than any scripted influence initiative. A colleague working in (non-Arab) Afghanistan remarked to me recently that the Afghani television series *Afghan Star*, in which fans voted on the popularity of singers by mobile phone, was more influential than any information ops could be (Laity, 2010). This paper suggests lessons learned from

---

<sup>86</sup> This article expresses my views only, and does not represent official U.S. government policy. I wish to acknowledge Jane Gaffney for her extensive contributions, Chris Hemmer and David Sorenson for their suggestions, and the Air War College for funding of my September 2010 research in London and Egypt. My comments are based on this research; anthropological work in Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria; and public diplomacy experience with USIA and the State Department.

Arab popular culture for American diplomacy such as appreciating the power of our allies' and partners' efforts to encourage a moderate discourse in media and official speeches. While this article was written before the Arab Spring, I added some comments as it goes to press. To wit, the youth of Egypt's Uprising have already made it clear that they consider America's involvement in democracy building in that country as, at best, irrelevant and, at worst, an obstacle. This is their viewpoint—buttressed by their perception of a gap between our policy statements and our actions that they see, rightly or wrongly, as hypocritical. Their negativity is further strengthened by what they see as a double standard in the American support of Israel, which appears to ignore the rights of the Palestinians.

In this paper, I consider two types of programs from Arab satellite television, drama serials, and talk shows, as a suggested way forward in understanding Arab culture's role in shaping Arab perceptions of extremism and of American foreign policy.

#### *Arab satellite television drama serials*

These teledramas<sup>87</sup> are typically comprised of thirty daily episodes that roll out over a month and which present subjects ranging from historical epics to contemporary social issues. Many debut during Ramadan when they are shown in the evening hours after *iftar*, the sunset meal breaking the fast. They appear/reappear at various times during the year. Reruns allow one to catch serials missed during Ramadan. My examples are primarily from the two leading producers of television programs, Egypt and Syria, but almost every Arab country produces teledramas relevant to local history and issues. “While a drama may be situated in a locale and point of history, it is usually crafted to attract a broad Arab audience” (Gaffney, 2010, p. 12).

#### *Arab satellite television talk shows*

Talk shows feature diverse political, social, and religious views, which both clash and complement. Discussants of religious topics range from secularists to moderates to fundamentalists. Pre-Uprising religious discourse included Egyptian Salafist (fundamentalist) channels broadcast via the Government of Egypt's (GOE) NILESAT. Media watchers told me in September 2010 that a Salafist-GOE pact allowed Salafists freedom to broadcast conservative religious views in exchange for Salafist guarantees not to oppose the GOE.

This article addresses one slice of Arab popular culture. Other important slices are franchised western quiz and reality shows, cartoons and video games, print and internet media, social media, popular music and video music clips, Quranic/sermon cassettes, festivals, fairs, arts, and sports events. Many worthy issues remain to be considered in another paper: for instance, the role of French TV channels in North Africa and the place of Bedouin poetry in Arab cultural heritage. To better interpret drama and talk shows, I will first consider the cultural context.

---

<sup>87</sup> For simplicity, I also use the term teledrama, coined in South Asian television serials literature, for television drama serial.

## Popular Culture: Love American Culture, Hate American Policy

Arab media generally supports a moderate, pro-civil society discourse. Anti-Americanism in the Arab world springs from opposition to USG foreign policy; winning hearts and minds has much to do with that and far less to do with terrorism or with views of American people or culture. Virtually no Arab popular media sympathizes with terrorism. In the nineties, after the extremist attacks in Egypt/elsewhere and again after 9/11, films and teledramas that were explicitly anti-terrorist appeared in Arab media. A majority of Arabs appreciate American culture.

Arab popular culture is simultaneously anti-terrorist, anti-USG policy, pro-western, and pro-democracy.<sup>88</sup> Terrorists who exploit religious themes and symbols in their ideology have no palpable following in the Arab world. Muslim religious thinkers on or off television (except the terrorists themselves, who are *not* considered Muslims by mainstream Muslims), almost never support terrorism. Theologians and secularists alike, if asked, lambast Al-Qaeda pronouncements as ideology, not religion. As for USG policy, Arab media criticizes western imperial<sup>89</sup> designs on the Arab world and tends to situate Arab sociopolitical woes within an “anti Western imperial paradigm” (Gaffney, personal communication, 2011) that sees western occupations, support of Arab autocrats, and favoritism toward Israel at the expense of the Palestinians as the major cause of Arab miseries.

While there was a bounce with the election of Obama, and higher Arab approval ratings of the U.S. president, that has since dissipated in part because of the lack of movement on the Palestinian–Israeli issue. A tiny percentage of any Arab population supports USG foreign policy:

Negative views of the United States are due in part to the belief that Washington interferes in the affairs of other countries and that U.S. regional policies represent a threat to security in the Middle East...Large majorities continue to believe Washington does not seek the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian state. (“Arab World,” 2010, p. 2).

The good news, already noted, is that opinions of American culture and society are more positive than those of American policy. “Arab publics are largely favorable toward American science (as high as 81% in Lebanon and 62% in Egypt) and technology and American education” (“Arab World,” 2010, pp. 2, 6). This support of American education/technology, and of democratic values, is why the squishy area of “attitudes towards Americans, American culture, and American policy” is worthy

---

<sup>88</sup> An area of popular culture where extremists have a presence is the internet with its jihadist web sites, YouTube placements, electronic journals, chat rooms and other initiatives. These are well studied in the literature. The vote is still out on whether the main visitors to these sites are already pre-disposed to pick them. My article focuses on overall Arab popular culture, where national official moderate discourse and western popular culture play significant roles.

<sup>89</sup> My article is not an analysis of terrorist ideology. Readers interested in understanding why the vast majority of Muslims consider that those engaged in terrorist activities in the name of Islam are NOT Muslims, but rather political hack ideologues, might wish to consult a study like Khaled Abou Fadl’s *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (2005) for an excellent analysis of what “main stream” Muslims believe versus what non-Muslim extremists who have stolen Islam believe.

of attention. This area is full of seeming contradictions such as an Arab parent sending a child to college in the U.S., although the parent opposes USG foreign policy.

Today's cornucopia of media means Arabs pick from a menu reflecting local, pan Arab, and global cultures. American and western popular cultures loom large in Arab media consumption. Fifty-one percent of youth under the age of 36 watch American/European films or television programs *daily* (Tellhami, 2010). Western television contests, quiz shows, and reality shows are widely franchised in Arab media. This has sparked debates, for example, on the propriety of a reality show filming domestic scenes, particularly ones with youth that are not related. Global culture is localized and Arabized just as global culture has a strong imprimatur from countries like India or China. In a recent *American Idol* style event in Beirut, contestants vied not as individuals but as representatives of each one's country. Governments reportedly paid citizens to flood the mobile phone traffic with votes for fellow citizens. In the finals, the father of the Syrian contestant, unable to contain himself, rushed the stage to drape the Syrian flag around his daughter.

In the past, Americans abroad often explained that their family was not like JR's of *Dallas*. As *Dallas* and *Falcon Crest* gave way to such shows as *Desperate Housewives*, *Dr. Phil*, and *Oprah*, Americans switched to contrasting their hometown with Wisteria Lane of *Desperate Housewives*. While American television exports include spaghetti westerns and crime dramas, mercifully, *Little House on the Prairie* and other feel-good programs also impact the American image abroad. *Sesame Street* has had multiple incarnations on Arab satellite television and now family friendly Nickelodeon is storming this arena.

On 28 November 2010, Viacom's MTV Networks and MBC Group, the largest pan-Arab broadcaster, signed an agreement to distribute MTV's Nickelodeon content through MBC's regional network. As part of the agreement, the network will translate the content of shows such as *SpongeBob Square Pants*, *Dora the Explorer*, and *My Life as a Teenage Robot* into the Arabic language. MBC will also gain the rights to develop local consumer products and programs based on some Nickelodeon shows.

'The Middle East is a dynamic, thriving market with vast growth opportunities and this multi-platform deal will allow us to really advance our wider, ongoing strategy to build an integrated offering, both on and off-air, which we hope will establish Nickelodeon as the premier destination for kids across the region,' commented MTV Emerging Markets Chief Bhayneet Singh. ("Addicted to TV," 2010, paras. 8-10)

The proliferation of some 400 Arab satellite channels, specializing in everything from religion to children to sports to shopping to history documentaries, means there is something for everyone. Religious channels have also multiplied. The premiere religious channel is Saudi Arabia's *Iqra'a'*, which, although it is private, is seen as presenting "Saudi Islam." Competition by other religious channels, such as Morocco's *Mohammad VI* channel founded expressly by the Government of Morocco (GOM) to attract Moroccans away from *Iqra'a'*, has intensified with the advent of satellite and internet television. Some Middle East religious sects, such as Assyrians and Chaldeans, have their own channels, watched by immigrant communities in the West. There are several Coptic

Christian channels, including some via internet. In addition, Western Christian channels broadcast to the Middle East in Arabic and Berber.

Arab youth, picking from diverse media choices, may not learn about religion from a channel like *Iqra'a'* or *Mohammed VI*, but rather from televangelists or from moderate theologians on talk shows. Conservative televangelists on Salafi (fundamentalist) channels may promote the idea that everything imported, except pure necessities, is forbidden (*haram*) in Islam. New style Muslim televangelists, whose appeal is that they are normal Muslims living out their life like most of their audience, believe that one can be modern, savvy, and entrepreneurial without giving up religion. Youth may listen to Muslim rock stars who sing about how to be a devout Muslim in the modern world using a pop music format. Moderate theologians in Egypt are trained in Al-Azhar. This may seem strange until one remembers Al-Azhar has changed little over the years so that what was conservative several decades ago, now in the face of Salafism, seems moderate. As a sign of its progressive stance, Al-Azhar recently banned the *niqab* (the total face cover) on the Al-Azhar campus.

A huge chunk of the media arena is western culture or localized global culture. In the coming months as Arab countries open up, Arab youth who are already linked to global culture and global discourse will become increasingly vocal, and evermore important, in the political arena. The majority of Arab youth embrace some aspect of western popular culture—even though they may be ambivalent about its perceived commercialism and its anti-religious values. A totally veiled young woman may watch Salafi televangelists but also be a fan of *Oprah*, American serials, and Arab talk shows. Another modern, unveiled young woman may consider all televangelists hypocrites, watch only English and French channels, and volunteer at a Muslim Brotherhood clinic. A bearded Salafi young man might pray five times a day, refuse to shake a woman's hand, but listen to western heavy metal music. A modern young man who is on Facebook and Internet for hours a day might also be a devotee of televangelist programs.

We turn now to two important television formats: dramatic serials and talk shows.

### **Arab Satellite Television Dramatic Serials**

Arabic-speaking viewers surf a rich assortment of some four hundred satellites, plus national terrestrial, television channels. Last Ramadan more than 200 new Arab television dramas appeared. A single viewer clicking from channel to channel the entire night would still catch only a fraction of the offerings. Arab teledrama producers see their mission as educating, informing, and entertaining. Government financed serials in the nineties had nationalistic agendas. Abu-Lughod (2001) suggests that the famed several-year-running Egyptian teledrama *Layali Hilmiyya* (*Hilmiyya Nights*) aimed to discredit terrorists and to model Coptic-Muslim unity, although an unanticipated spin off reinforced traditional, rural cultural values. Gaffney (2010) notes how teledrama messages are part of a national narrative:

All Arab states used television to promote national integration, patriotism through a national narrative, proper religious views, and what could best be described as each nation's perception of what constituted the correct way of being modern. What they also share today is a view of 'Arab

identity,' of sharing a common cultural heritage, which is far different from the ideological pan-Arabism of earlier periods. (p. 4).

This identity, like that of *baladi* Egyptians I have researched (Early, 1993), is based on a local/insider versus foreign/outsider opposition.

*Baladi* is a rich cultural concept based on a series of traditional/modern (*baladi:afraqi*) oppositions, which contrast *baladi* people (who are resourceful, authentic, religious, and honorable) with *afraqi* people (who are gullible, superficial, nonreligious, and pampered)...Historically, *baladi* indicated the locals, the Egyptians, versus the Turks, the Mamlukes, the French, or the British. To be *ibna' al-balad*, sons of the country, was to defend Egypt against French and British occupiers. (p. 51).

Some teledramas recount this indigenous, national resistance (by the equivalent of *ibna' al-balad*) against outside occupation (by the equivalent of *afraqi*, who are non-authentic). These dramas valorize local values such as honor and family loyalty, the values that make one "authentic" and local. The heroes and heroines are locals fighting to maintain their identity/authenticity against outsiders, be they the Ottomans, the British, the French, the Americans, or even "outsiders" such as swindlers from the city who cheat naïve villagers.

The Syrian serial *Khan al Harir (The Silk Market)* broadcast in the 1990s chronicled the life of an Aleppo merchant family during the rise of Arab nationalism in the early twentieth century. It included poignant courting scenes between super stars Suzanne Nejm ad-Din and Jamal Suleiman. (Jamal Suleiman went on to co-produce Ramadan teledramas with Syrians and Moroccans as the genre became a powerful cultural form at the turn of the century.) A more recent Syrian teledrama watched throughout the Arab world, *Bab al-Hara (Door to the Lane)*, featured resistance to occupation during the French mandate. The lane fought back with a spirit of sacrifice. The teledrama symbolized Syria opposing the West and was also seen as a statement of Syrian pride. Set in an "imagined and nostalgic Damascus in a day when honor, reputation and manhood were supreme (the teledrama) . . . aimed to invoke a sort of historical pride" (Semerjian, 2008, p. 6). People thought that *Bab al Hara* was "an authentic representation of Damascus and its traditions" (Semerjian, 2008, p. 14).

No overall survey rates television serial dramas' popularity, although channels host blogs and chat rooms, which suggest trends. When I asked Egyptians in September 2010 about their favorites, they consistently picked four drama types:

- a) contemporary socio-political drama
- b) epic historical drama
- c) detective, mystery thrillers
- d) non-Arab dramas

While not watertight, this viewer typology is helpful to organize my comments.

*Contemporary socio-political drama*

This includes fictional sagas such as *Khan al Harir* and *Bab al-Hara*, as well as social dramas. The first provides fertile ground for implicit critique of authoritarian governments. At a Syrian dinner party I hosted for film personalities just after the Ramadan season where *Khan al-Harir* premiered, one group contended that this teledrama was a superficial, manipulated, shallow version of history fashioned to serve contemporary political agendas. They complained that scenes challenging tyrannical authorities had been censored. The second group countered that such dramas present history through the eyes of everyday historical figures, such as the merchant's family. The evening's subtext was: Could discussion of the power relation in this historic drama be a metaphor for (forbidden) debate of contemporary power relations? Such a subject would never be openly discussed in such a public space as a restaurant (Early, 2002).

Debates in the media on the meaning of historical teledrama sagas were so popular in the 1990s that the Syrian Writer's Union sponsored seminar discussions. One session discussed *Khan al-Harir* and another Syrian epic history teledrama *Al-Thurayya*. *Al-Thurayya* portrayed tenant farmer-Turkish landlord relations in northern Syria. Thurayya, daughter of the local governor, rebels against her family and marries Akash, a Robin Hood figure. Youthful idealism falters when Thurayya becomes a landlord herself, recreating her aristocratic heritage, and when Akash ditches his Robin Hood role, refusing to help fight the French occupying Aleppo (Early, 2002). The first drama was praised for historical lessons but criticized for censorship of sensitive scenes. The second was praised for its Robin Hood theme but faulted for flamboyant, costly battle scenes.

After 9/11, Arabic teledramas such as *Al-Hour al-'Ain* (*The Maidens of Paradise*, named after the supposed prize which awaits martyrs in heaven) sent clear messages about the damage done by terrorism to Arab countries and the hypocrisy of extremists. This serial, by Syrian producer Najdat Anzour, highlighted the fact that terrorist attacks were by Arabs against Arabs in order to send an unequivocal message that Muslim terrorists are enemies. The teledrama is about a young Saudi male who is torn between two shaykhs who have competing views of Islam. One is militant and the other is moderate. Anzour was "the first Arab producer after 9/11 to use television drama to heighten awareness in the Arab world about the recruitment of young Arabs into jihadi groups and their willingness to kill innocent civilians, including in their own countries" (Gaffney, 2010, p. 15). More recently, Anzour produced *Ma Malakat Aymanokum* (*What Your Right Hand Holds*), in which idle young men, ignorant of Islam, are radicalized by Sheikh Yassin who is a "charismatic psychopathic jihadi leader" (Gaffney, 2010, p. 15). Sheikh Yassin is eventually discredited as a hypocrite with loose morals.

The teledrama menu also includes social drama and comedy. One series popular with my interlocutors was *Al-'Aar* (*The Shame*) which is the story of a family's quandary when they discover the source of their inheritance is drug money. The family becomes obsessed with arguments about how to spend their ill-gotten gain. Another social drama, *Al Jama'a* (*The University*), was filmed mostly on the campus of the American University in Cairo with "generous servings of sex (not on screen, of course), drugs and rock and roll" (Gaffney, 2010, p. 19). The series tackles the "trials and tribulations of being an upper-middle class youth in the Arab world today, and explores the variety

of worldviews among students from differing countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, and Lebanon” (Gaffney, 2010, p. 19).

Marriage is a “hot button” social issue closely linked to unemployment and housing shortages. Many Egyptian women I met in 2010 raved about the new comedy *Ayza Atganiz* (*I Want to Get Married*). Based on a blog by a young pharmacist from a provincial town, the comedy recounts the suitors who proposed to the pharmacist and how each was found wanting. The series presents “the exaggerated sense of self-worth and entitlement” by suitors as well as the suitors’ unrealistic expectations regarding what a modern wife will do (Gaffney, 2010, p. 13). A similar motif permeates the new Egyptian film, *Bintayn min Misr* (*Two Girls from Cairo*), which presents two young women desperate to marry. It includes cyber scenes of one chatting via the internet with an Egyptian man about her unhappiness being single. The two women agree to be party to such humiliations as an airport interview by a man reported to be transiting Egypt, eager to interview potential wives but too busy to come to town to meet them. The potential suitor snubs the women; the film ends as they sit in the terminal looking bleakly at a departing plane.

#### *Epic historical drama*

Every Ramadan offers documentary teledramas from the early days of Islam, from Bedouin tribal stories, and from life histories of such contemporaries as King Farouk or famed singer ‘Abdel Halim Hafiz. A hotly debated Egyptian serial broadcast during Ramadan 2010, *Al-Gamaa’a* (*The Brotherhood*), chronicled the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt. In the serial, an Egyptian prosecutor too young to know much about the MB is researching for an MB court case. His questions about the MB prompt flashbacks, interspersed with the current investigation, to the 1920s when Hassan al Banna, opposed to British occupation, founded the MB. Some scenes portray the MB as corrupt and isolated from its followers and others show the MB in a good light. Reactions of Egyptians I met just after Ramadan ran the gamut from “*Al-Gamaa’a* discredited the MB by showing how corrupt their leaders were” to “*Al-Gamaa’a* was a publicity plus for the MB because Egyptians who knew little about the MB now want to learn more.” (Up until the 2011 Uprising, the MB party was officially banned, but members known to be part of MB ran on other party slates.) Rumor had it that the series was commissioned by the GOE to discredit the MB. On the other hand, a poll on the MB’s website indicated 64% of viewers thought the serial had enhanced MB popularity. In fact, the screenwriter Wahid Hamid seemed sympathetic to the MB when he remarked that Hassan al Banna was a brilliant leader whose mistake was moving the Brotherhood away from its original socio-religious mission into politics. On one point, there was universal agreement: *Al-Gamaa’a* meant that Egyptians hitherto unaware of the history of the MB, now knew something about its background.

Teledramas can revise extant versions of history as with the 2008 serial *Malak Farouq* (*King Farouk*) which challenged the post-1952 narrative presenting pre-Revolution Egypt as a corrupt scene of debauchery. “In this more historically accurate rendering of the story, we see a constitutional monarchy, a multi-party parliamentary system and nationalist politicians” (Gaffney, 2010, p. 7). Politicians were pious, but determined to keep religion out of politics, and the royal family was

presented realistically. This upbeat view of pre-revolutionary Egypt was shocking to Egyptians raised on textbook versions of history.

### *Detective, mystery thrillers*

Escapist thriller and detective stories, these teledramas may have a social or political motif. I remember being captivated by the Egyptian serial *Al-Ankabuut (The Spider)*, which presented the star's schizophrenia and trail of crimes through a tortured spider-web like Ramadan media-scape. In a recent Syrian satellite's spy teledrama reminiscent of Agatha Christie murder mysteries set in exotic locales, an Israel Mosaad agent posed as an archaeologist in Syria. The scenario was replete with excavations, pricey antiques, love tangles, message drop boxes, surveillance, and suspicion.

### *Non-Arabic dramas*

Turkish serials, dubbed in Syrian colloquial dialect rather than the classical Arabic customarily used for Latin American telenovelas such as *Cassandra*, have skyrocketed in popularity in the Arab world. They have an advantage since they are set in a familiar Muslim, conservative context. The Turkish serial *Noor* has been so popular that Arab tourists now flock to Turkey to visit filming sites. A Sundance Festival blog suggests unanticipated windfalls for Turkish diplomacy from this private sector produced romantic teledrama.

Through the small screen, Turkey has begun to exercise significant influence at Arab dinner tables, in boardrooms, and bedrooms from Morocco to Iraq of a sort that the United States can only dream about. Turkey's cultural exports, not coincidentally, have also advanced its political ambitions in the same vein as recent assertive actions such as sending a flotilla to Gaza, defying the United States over sanctions on Iran, talking tough to its onetime ally, Israel, and giving Kemal Ataturk's constitutionally secular state an Islamic tinge.

Politics and culture go hand in hand, in the Middle East, as elsewhere. If most Arabs watch Turkish shows to ogle beautiful people in exotic locales, Arab women have also made clear their particular admiration for the rags-to-riches story of the title character in *Noor*, a strong, business-savvy woman with a doting husband named Muhannad. (A Saudi woman) volunteered how Arab husbands often ignore their wives, while on *Noor*, within what is for Arabs the familiar context of arranged marriages, respect for elders and big families living together, *Noor* and Muhannad openly love and admire each other. (Kimmelman, 2010, p. 1).

Other foreign serials include long time favorites from Latin America and a newcomer, Korea. During Ramadan 2010, one Arab channel initiated the Iranian series, dubbed in Arabic, *The Winds of Love* where an educated young woman overcomes her father's opposition and wins the legal right to marry the man of her choice (Gaffney, 2010).

### **Television Talk Shows: Religious Discourse**

Television talk shows provide a pliable arena where diverse political, social, and religious views clash and complement one another. One popular Egyptian talk show *Kalam Nawa'im (Women's Talk)* is a mixture of serious topics like obesity with light topics like pop culture idol interviews. Franchised

formats such as the Arabic version of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* are also widespread. Egyptian talk shows have blossomed after the Arab Uprising when they became “the most important form in the new landscape” in Egypt with renowned anchors talking for several hours about what happened that day in Egypt. An Egyptian researcher (Kandil, 2011) described post-Uprising talk shows:

There are four or five of these, to which Egyptian have been glued every evening to get a general idea of the state of the country...Although the Egyptian government started to interfere with them, the shows played a key role during the revolt, a role more critical than Facebook. (p. 12).

Talk shows on religion, a popular topic, are informed by a vibrant discourse on religion in a modern context amongst Muslim intellectual circles worldwide. This religious corpus, which includes such writers as Syria’s Shahrour and Morocco’s Jabri, debates everything from modernizing Muslim practice and rituals, to Islam and democracy. This discourse condemns extremist Islamic-themed pronouncements for masquerading as religion, exploiting Islam's themes to serve terrorist ideology (Early, 2010).

Religious discourse is its purest on religious channels. As mentioned, the Saudi channel *Iqra’a’* was until recently the most widely viewed Muslim channel in Arabic. Morocco installed televisions in its mosques to facilitate viewing of its alternative to *Iqra’a’*, the *Mohammad VI* channel, whose programs are a quintessential official moderate discourse. Morocco’s *First Channel*, a government feature channel, broadcasts such religious programs as *Fii Dilal al-Islam (In the Shadow of Islam)* where the moderator interviews Moroccans and foreigners about interfaith and contemporary religious issues. The *First Channel* also features several youth-oriented talk shows with call-in questions answered by scholars who are not theologians but are knowledgeable about Islam. Their advice on being Muslim in the modern world ranges from dating practices to religious ritual.

An analysis of religious discourses in different Arab countries is outside the scope of this paper. I focus here on religious talk shows in Egypt, using the three categories of religious speakers suggested in my interviews with Egypt media experts in September 2010. These are not everyone’s categories and they would not necessarily be used by an Egyptian, unless pressed by a researcher like me to categorize “kinds of religious expression.” Categories may say more about the speaker than about the religious figure described. For instance, I have heard the same televangelist termed “fundamentalist” by one speaker and “moderate” by another. Egyptians have coined a word *wasatiyya*, from the root w-s-t which means to be in the middle, to be “moderate.” They use it to differentiate themselves from Salafis, whom they see as extremists. The colloquial use of *wasatiyya* should not be confused with its specialized use by Shaykh Qaradawi to define a specific theological position.

Almost every Muslim I met in Egypt considered him/herself a devout, practicing Muslim, but some felt that faith is personal and others felt that religion has a role in public life. The majority of Egyptian Muslims would probably describe themselves as moderate, meaning in general that they adhere to Muslim values and practice Muslim rituals while at the same time engaging with the world. Moderate Egyptians may use other forms of the w-s-t root, such as the adjectival form used by

preachers who called themselves *al-du'a al-mutawasitooon* to describe their moderate approach. Egyptians who speak English, and are translating moderate, use *mu'atadil* (balanced) with much the same meaning as *wasatiyya*.<sup>90</sup> Moderate Egyptians who feel that faith is a personal matter that should not influence politics may also be termed *'ilmani* (secular). A devout, practicing Muslim may describe her/himself as secular; this does not mean atheist or agnostic, but rather that the person does not mix religion and politics. The term has become somewhat tainted with the connotation of being “too western” so that intellectuals often use the term “progressive” instead of secular.

The following three categories of religious figures were suggested by Egyptian media experts I interviewed about Egyptian religious discourse. The categories are not exhaustive, nor always exclusive, but they are helpful for our discussion:

- a) Salafi (fundamentalist) preacher televangelists, trained in theology. They have their own television programs.
- b) New preachers (*ad-du'a' al-judud*), also self-described as moderate preachers (*ad-du'a' al-mutawasiun*), who generally have no formal theological training. Like Salafi preachers, they have their own televangelist television programs.
- c) Moderate theologians, schooled at Al-Azhar. These are not televangelists but they may appear on talk shows where they present a moderate, theologically informed, viewpoint.

---

<sup>90</sup> *Wasatiyya* is a verbal noun whereas *mu'atadil* is an adjective. The new preachers described themselves as *mutawasitooon* (sic) which is the adjective form of the w-s-t root.

*Salafi preachers*

Salafi preachers present fundamentalist Islam on their own television shows; they tend to stick to a straight preaching format whereas new preachers diversify venues and format, including chats with their followers much like American talk shows. Salafi, widely used in Arabic and English, is derived from the word for “followers of the prophet” or *Salafiyun*. It has a specific meaning that is blurred in Egyptian everyday discussions, where it denotes everything from “a literal, rigid interpretation of Islam by mindless extremists” to “a conservative interpretation which seeks to link Muslim values with political life.” Reality is in the mind of the beholder and non-Salafi Egyptians think of Salafi televangelists as men in beards and white robes who preach on a fundamentalist Islam not practical for today. In pre-Uprising Egypt, for reasons explained shortly, Salafists were apolitical preachers. In other countries, Salafi applies to anything from Saudi-like Wahabbi to generic religious conservative.

*New preachers*

New preachers usually have no religious training, and excel at connecting Islam to everyday life by speaking from personal experience. They wear business attire whether on their own televangelist-style programs or on others’ talk shows, where they are thus visually indistinguishable from other participants. A famous televangelist, Amr Khaled, broadcasts from diverse sites including famous Muslim shrines and pilgrimage sites. During Ramadan 2010, he recorded shows from outdoor locations that displayed the beauty of nature and promoted environmental awareness. He has been compared to Billy Graham. “With his stylish business suits, trim moustache, thinning black hair, large, expressive eyes, and magnetic charm, Khaled moves audiences to tears with his retellings of Quranic stories and praises of God’s redeeming love” (Wise, 2004, para. 2). Amr Khaled has been called a “born-again” Muslim who rediscovered faith as a teenager and is proof that one can be religious without being a fanatic. One of his formats is a talk-show “featuring audience participation and testimonials from famous actresses, football players and ordinary young Muslims... partly inspired by Christian televangelist shows, which he sees as an effective hybrid between entertainment and spiritual education” (Wise, 2004, para. 3).

New preachers are like rock stars that have parlayed a basic understanding of Islam and their own beliefs as Muslims into a compelling television presence. A researcher completing her dissertation on televangelism in Egypt, Yasmin Moll, notes:

In Mubarak’s Egypt these televangelists’ credibility and authority with their primarily youthful publics derived, not from a mastery of the authoritative textual canon of the Islamic tradition a la Azharite scholars, but rather from their projected status as ‘ordinary Muslims’ struggling to lead an Islamically-correct life in a world where it is manifestly difficult to do so. They had authority not because they were different from the youth they preached to, but because they themselves as [sic] just like them. (para. 3)

Moll points out that these televangelists, which include Amr Khaled, Mustafa Hosni, and Moez Masoud describe themselves as *al-du’a al-mutawasitoun* [sic], moderate preachers.

One commentator, al-Ayman (2008) differentiates between Salafi preachers and new (non-Salafi) preachers as follows:

The image of the stylish religious preacher who is receptive of the developments of the age and closest to the people's daily lives has never existed in Islamic society as it does today. It evolved during the past years until it prevailed over the traditional image of the long-bearded sheikh (Salafi) who limits his sermons to purely religious matters. Today's preachers (non Salafi) now appear before the public like businessmen, not only in appearance but also in the way of presentation. One of the famous preachers, Kuwaiti preacher Tariq Suwaydan, says: 'We manage preaching today as traders manage their business, as a product that must be marketed the right way.' (p. 1)

Salafi and non-Salafi preachers both have their supporters. Some criticize Salafi preachers for donning modern attire and trying to speak in colloquial so as to "pass" for the "new preacher." Some criticize the "new preachers" for being too flashy. Others put all televangelists into one basket of "religious entrepreneurs." Many Egyptian Muslims with whom I spoke (including devout men and devout, veiled women) dismiss the whole lot of televangelists, Salafi and non-Salafi alike, as commercial opportunists exploiting religion.

#### *Moderate theologians*

During an interview in September 2010, an Egyptian television talk show host told me that he would invite neither a Salafi nor a new preacher for an interview on his program because he found both types too rigid and conservative. I asked him what kind of religious personality he might invite. It was then that I encountered the third type of religious media figure. The talk show host picked up his cell phone and called an Imam at one of the major downtown mosques. On the spot, we arranged a meeting for the next day. Dressed in a pants suit, I tucked a large scarf in my purse and took a taxi to the mosque. When I entered our meeting room, I asked the Imam if I should cover my hair since we were in the mosque building. He laughed and said I was fine as I was, and asked me if I wanted a glass of tea before settling comfortably on a couch to begin our interview.

The Imam, an Azhari-trained theologian who preaches in the mosque where we met, told me that he often appeared on Egyptian television talk shows where he was a discussant, but did not preach on television. He carefully distanced himself from Salafi preachers and from new preachers. He said that he considered his media mission to serve as a spokesperson for moderate (he used the term *mu'atadil*) Islam. He also felt it important to support civil society. He frequently speaks at public health events like campaigns to support maternal child health or to increase AIDS awareness.

Egyptian secularists whom I met in September 2010 were often devout Muslims who opposed mixing of religion and politics. These secularists criticized the paucity of enlightened voices on religion in any of the media. Dr. Hala Mustafa, a progressive Egyptian social scientist who has published widely on Egyptian extremism, characterized Egyptian media as follows:

I am a believer but this should be limited to the individual...One problem is that Islam didn't go through a real renovation [sic, reformation] movement...One cannot find in just one government newspaper, one who is a specialist in religious discourse and who at the same time has an enlightened

background...On Egyptian TV the philosophy is to give the enlightened a chance and to give the extremists a hundred chances to respond to him. This is their (GOE) strategy; the GOE allows this to happen so as to minimize demands for democracy (Mustafa, 2010).

Egyptian media experts told me that the overwhelming number of apolitical Salafi television shows in pre-Uprising Egypt was due to a deal where Salafists traded support of President Mubarak for expanded chances to broadcast. With the departure of Mubarrak, Salafis were well positioned media-wise to become politicized. Dr. Mustafa noted the irony that, at the same time that the MB serial sullied the reputation of the MB's founder Hassan al Banna, his younger brother Gamal al Banna (considered by Dr. Mustafa and others as a leading progressive commentator on Islam) was a frequent and important guest on Egyptian talk shows.

When I pressed the Imam about the role of Al-Azhar (where moderate theologians are trained in Egypt) in moderate discourse, he noted that the new rector of Al-Azhar, Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, held a doctorate from the Sorbonne, was very articulate, and had begun to create a media image. He was confident that Dr. Al-Tayeb would enhance Al-Azhar's role via the web and other platforms. This optimism appears well founded. The day after the post-Uprising 2011 referendum in Egypt, Dr. Al-Tayeb sent a detailed proposal intended to reclaim Al-Azhar's autonomy from the state, which Al-Azhar had lost in 1961 "by recovering its control of *waqf* (religious endowment) land and mosques, reintegrating *fatwa* specialists in the university, and changing the rector from a government appointee to an elected scholar, chosen by senior clerics" (Kandil, 2011, p. 19). Such a change would make Al-Azhar once again a "center of authority" in religious matters, which in turn would have a moderating influence and "undercut radical interpretations of scripture" thereby reassuring those fearing future "strict textualism" (Kandil, 2011, p. 19).

### *Get religion and see the world*

Televangelists aim to connect youth to religion by demonstrating that one can participate in global, pop culture while remaining a good Muslim and responsible citizen. For example, Amr Khaled has founded NGOs to work with youth, concentrating, for now, on long-neglected southern Egypt. His program of "faith in action," plus the euphoria after the Uprising, has inspired even more youth to join in grassroots programs that help the poor help themselves. It is this connectivity plus credibility with ordinary Muslim youth in Egypt that gave televangelists such as Amr Khaled an effective platform during the Uprising. "Many of Egypt's most prominent televangelists were vocal in their support of *thawrat al-shabab* (the youth revolution). And throughout the uprising and after, their catchwords have been religious tolerance (*tasamuh*) and religious co-existence (*ta'ayush*)" (Moll, 2011, para. 2) Amr Khaled, seen as a rival to Mubarak, was, until recently, barred from Egyptian television. After Mubarak departed, Amr Khaled appeared on state television and told the program host,

'I saw God in Tahrir...When you entered Tahrir Square you immediately noticed a different spirit,' he said. 'It is as if God was with the people there — Muslim and Christian, young and old, men and women, the people and the army.' Along with other televangelists, [Amr Khalid] framed Tahrir Square as an exemplar of a 'new Egypt,' a utopian space of tolerant faith and positive action. (Moll, 2011, para. 5)

Televangelists' work in civil society has an interesting impact on lower middle class youth. A recent study (Elsayed, 2010) of these youth in Egypt found they claimed that:

becoming a worldly and well informed global citizen is not about disconnecting oneself from the local and being seen in particular elite places, but about the way one draws on aspects of the global to improve and rework one's image as an Egyptian Muslim. (p. 16).

The study noted the importance of Amr Khaled's weekly program *Sunmaa' al-Hayab (Life Makers)*. On this program, Khaled "discusses a different aspect of social reform and encourages viewers to participate in development projects that will help bring about a *nabda* (revival or renaissance) in their communities, countries, and ultimately, the Islamic *ummah* (nation) as a whole" (Elsayed, 2012, p. 16). The new Muslim awareness connects believers to civil society and to other kinds of religious affiliations. The 2010 Cairo study found that 82 of 100 lower class youth questioned regularly watch the Islamic channels *Iqra'a* and *al-Nass*. These channels enable them to

imagine themselves as part of a transitional religious Islamic network where individuals are judged according to religious strengthened piety, and not on the make of their jeans or style of their hair. Through particular programs, especially ones where a religious scholar engages in a lively discussion with a young studio audience, these young Cairenes feel connected to like-minded Islamic Youth cultures across the globe. (Elsayed, 2010, p. 16).

Such youth are unlikely to be good targets for religious extremists.

Arab youth surf a cornucopia of media choices, some of which are religious. Marketing is important in televangelism, and marketing is likewise important in the music video industry, a genre outside of our scope. That said, I will mention one exceptional musician whose work overlaps with televangelism. Heart throb of the Muslim world youth scene, Sami Yusuf, has become a global youth icon. Born to Azerbaijani parents, raised in London, and singing in many languages, Yusuf studied at the Royal Academy of Music and released his first album in 2003. Stylistically his music is a blend of traditional devotional *anasheed* (musical praises of the Prophet) with a modern global version of youth music. A welcome antidote to the ravings of extremists, "Yusuf's message is one of tolerance and integration.... 'Islam teaches us to be balanced, to be in the middle,' Yusuf says" (Pond, 2006, para. 3). Kubala (2005) notes how Yusuf's video clip *Al-Mu'allim (The Teacher)* is about a dutiful young man who practices Islam through acts of kindness to family and community:

The video clip *Al-Mu'allim* juxtaposes lyrics in praise of the prophet Muhammad with images of a chic, young photographer going about his daily life, working in his studio, behaving kindly to his mother and the people in his community, and teaching religious lessons to children. (p. 40)

The first time I saw *Al-Mu'allim* on Egyptian television, I mistook it for a commercial; as two minutes went by I began wondering if the final frame was going to be a bank announcing "We care about you" or a health insurance plan proclaiming "Feel protected when you are with us" or (after the minute or so where Sami Yusuf is taking pictures in the desert) an environmental preservation fund. This suggests the thin line in popular culture's appeal between religious and secular

performance and between performance and advertisement. Indeed Sami Yusuf is so appealing that his image is sought by companies such as Vodafone.

### **Recommendations for Strategic Communication**

In this article, I suggest that decision makers, including policy makers, seeking to influence the Arab world be familiar with Arab popular culture, a “glocalized” mix of the global and the local that has a huge dose of western commercialized media. This culture, quite moderate, influences Arab public opinion. I also suggest that communicators seeking to improve America’s image amongst Arab populations recognize America’s cultural advantage at the same time that they recognize America’s policy disadvantage. The policy disadvantage is in part because recent American actions match those in the Arab narrative framework of outside, imperialist occupiers.

I considered two examples, teledramas and talks shows, from the Arab satellite television as exemplars of popular culture’s moderate discourse. Events like 9/11, and earlier terrorist actions, motivated teledramas that specifically criticized terrorism; Arab media, in general, abhors extremism. Arab progressives have called, and will continue to call, on the USG to be more consistent in USG support of democracy and human rights at the same time that they attempt to hold their own governments accountable. Keeping a finger on the pulse of popular culture is important to understand Arab society and culture as well as how Arab society defines national identity and religious discourse.

Until the Arab Spring, terrorists played on lack of confidence in Arab governments seen as corrupt and pro-American. This Al-Qaeda ideology, which links oppressive Arab regimes with USG support, has been severely challenged by the Arab Spring.

Below are a few of many possible action items to build on Arab popular culture’s dynamic support of tolerance and of civil society.

- Appreciate the roles of both Arab officials and local popular discourse and, where appropriate, support our partners in their endeavors to enhance moderate discourse—without trying to take over or control their programs.
- Appreciate that Muslims are engaged in vigorous discourse about the meaning of their religion and about such issues as democracy and human rights in myriad worldwide fora including conferences, seminars, satellite TV programs, and Internet. This discourse is not public, nor can we ask to join it; however, we should be aware that it profoundly influences Arab Muslims’ beliefs and Arab popular culture.
- Understand that public opinion, which is typically anti-USG policy, will likely continue to be so as long as the Palestinian-Israeli standoff remains unresolved and as long as the USG is seen to employ double standards in our Middle East policy. The issue here is Arab perceptions based on American actions, not American ability to craft a narrative to combat the Arab national narrative of outsider occupation.

- Increase funding for Public Diplomacy programs: offer what Arab audiences have requested—training in electronic journalism, investigative reporting, think tank management, and local artistic productions. Rather than hyping our own culture, we might follow the European model and support local culture and local talent.
- Fund media visits to the U.S., which can record American and immigrant lives through the lens of a host country's camera. Fund more Fulbright exchanges and continue best practices such as blogs on Fulbright and other web sites by returned grantees. These blogs record quite powerful, often positive, impressions of American people, culture, and society.
- Conduct more open source analysis of Arab popular culture, especially teledramas and talk shows.
- Conduct public opinion surveys that measure the impact of popular culture and of the media on Arab public opinion.

## References

- About El-Fadl, K. (2005). *The great theft: Wrestling Islam from the extremists*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (2001). *Dramas of nationhood: The politics of television in Egypt*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Al-Ayman, K. (2008, March 3). Islamic star preachers: Put your money under your feet; It raises you high. *Forbes Arabic Magazine*. (Translated from Arabic by OSC.)
- Arab world: Momentum from Cairo speech lost. (2010, January 26). Department of State Office of Research.
- Armbrust, W. (2002). The riddle of Ramadan: Media, consumer culture, and the “Christmasization” of a Muslim holiday. In Bowen and Early (Eds.). *Everyday life in the Muslim Middle East*, p. 335-349.
- As-Shaab, M. (2010, September 17). Interview at residence. Ma’adi, Cairo.
- Early, E. (1993). *Baladi women of Cairo: Playing with an egg and a stone*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Early, E. (2002). Syrian television drama: Permitted political discourse. In Bowen and Early (Eds.) *Everyday life in the Muslim Middle East*, pp. 322-335.
- Early, E. (2010, November 12). Muslim discourse and pan Arab satellite TV. *Center for Religion and Conflict Colloquium*, Arizona State University.
- Elsayed, H. (2010, Winter). I'm Egyptian, I'm Muslim, but I'm also cosmopolitan: The unlikely young cosmopolitans of Cairo.. *Arab Media and Society*, 12. Retrieved from: <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=760>.

- Field, N., & Haman, A. (2009, Spring). Salafi satellite TV in Egypt. *Arab Media and Society*, 8. Retrieved from: <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=712>.
- Gaffney, J. (2010, November). Expressions: Notes on the arts, culture, media and entertainment by Muslims around the World.
- Kandil, H. (2011, March-April). Revolt in Egypt: Interview. *New Left Review*, 68. Retrieved from <http://newleftreview.org/?view=2884>.
- Kimmelman, M. (2010, June 17). Official selection Sundance Film Festival Blog.
- Kubala, P. (2005). The other face of the video clip: Sami Yusuf and the call for al-Fann al-Hadif. In *Transnational broadcasting studies*, pp. 38-48. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Addicted to TV? (2010, December). *Layalina Review* VI(24). Retrieved from: [http://www.layalina.tv/Publications/Review/PR\\_VI.24/article4.html](http://www.layalina.tv/Publications/Review/PR_VI.24/article4.html)
- Mandel, R. (2002). A Marshall plan of the mind: The political economy of a Kazakh Soap Opera. In Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, & Larkin (Eds.). *Media worlds: Anthropology on new terrain*, pp. 211-228. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Moll, Y. (2011, February 17). Seeing God in Tahrir: Ethics of the revolution. *Revealer Blog*. Retrieved from: <http://therevealer.org/archives/6045>
- Mullen, M. (2009). Strategic communication: Getting back to basics. *Joint Forces Quarterly*. 55(4), 2-4.
- Mustafa, H. (2010, September 15). Interview at Al-Ahram Institute for Strategic Studies. Cairo, Egypt.
- Nordland, R. (2010, November 20). On TV, an Afghan unit tackles the Taliban. *New York Times*.
- Pond, C. (2006). The appeal of Sami Yusuf and the search for Islamic authenticity. *Transnational Broadcasting Studies*, 16,. Retrieved from: <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Pond.html>
- Salamandra, C. (2005). Television and the ethnographic endeavor: The case of Syrian drama. In *Transnational Broadcasting Studies' Culture Wars: The Arabic Music Video Controversy*, pp. 4-18. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Semerdjian, E. (2008). Gender trouble in *Bab al-Hara* II. *Syrian Studies Association Newsletter*. XIII: 2.
- Tellhami, S. (2010). *2010 Arab Public Opinion Poll*. Brookings Institute and Zogby International. Retrieved from: [http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2010/0805\\_arab\\_opinion\\_poll\\_telhami.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2010/0805_arab_opinion_poll_telhami.aspx)
- Wise, L. (2004, Fall). Amr Khaled: Broadcasting the *Nabda*. *Transnational Broadcasting Studies*, 13. Retrieved from: <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Fall04/wiseamrkhaleid.html>

THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF MUSIC IN PROMOTING (AND COUNTERING) VIOLENT EXTREMISM (ANTHONY LEMIEUX & ROBERT NILL)<sup>91</sup>

Anthony Lemieux, Ph.D.

Emory University

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)

[Anthony.lemieux@emory.edu](mailto:Anthony.lemieux@emory.edu)

Robert Nill

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

[robert.nill@dhs.gov](mailto:robert.nill@dhs.gov)

Given the prominence of music in social life, and its increasing presence in the online context of the radicalization process and terrorist recruiting, it bears a careful examination. In addition to its role in radicalization and recruiting processes, there may also be a potentially important role for music in countering radicalization and violent extremism. To this end, we will examine the scope and extent of the influence of music on attitudes and behaviors as supported in the scientific research literature, the influence and impact of music in the context of the global jihadist movement (compared with other movements and instances of intergroup violence), and the role of music in countering radicalization and calls for violence.

There has been a concerted and sustained effort to use music in the context of recruiting both domestically and abroad (Gruen, 2006). The use of music cuts across different types of terrorist groups including al Qa'ida (AQ) and affiliated jihadis, Hizb ut Tahrir, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and domestic terrorist groups (Nacos, 2006). The value of music for influencing, recruiting, and radicalizing is not lost on those who write, record, and disseminate jihadi-themed music. In particular, several examples of jihadi-themed music have garnered a significant level of attention at the international level in recent years (e.g., 'Dirty Kuffar'<sup>92</sup>). Even a cursory analysis of the themes and content indicates that the music is used to convey key pieces of information (such as the identity of the enemy, the commemoration of heroes, the airing of grievances, and the means through which the grievances can be addressed). By examining both the themes and content of the music (lyrical and musical content) and the technical aspects of the music through leveraging the capabilities of social media (popularity, number of

---

<sup>91</sup> This paper has been adapted from work coauthored during the 2010 Summer Hard Problem Session, ODNI

<sup>92</sup> In 2004, the Soul Salah Crew of London released the video "Dirty Kuffar." The video was set to a catchy beat, infectious melody, and lyrics that emphasized the 'pull' of AQ and Bin Laden ("UBL drew me like a shining star"). In addition to this suggestion of a social normative emphasis that makes it permissible to be influenced and drawn in by the jihadist message, the music video enumerates a range of enemies and associates each with negative images. Specifically, the video contained many images that morphed both AQ leaders, and world leaders, into a range of animals with symbolic value. In addition to these clearly dehumanizing images, the lyrical themes of the music emphasize a discrediting and de-legitimizing indictment of the U.S., UK, Israeli, Saudi, and Egyptian governments. Finally, the listener/viewer is exhorted to "throw them in the fire" with each repetition of the song's chorus. See Smith (2007) for detailed analysis.

downloads, number of available channels, etc.), we may be able to quantify both its potential reach and impact, much in the way that one would assess the impact of a multi-modal advertising or propaganda campaign. To do this effectively requires a consideration of the impact of music on attitudes, identity, inter-group relations, and behavior.

### **Exploring the Music – Behavior Link**

In prominent examples of both social movements (i.e., 1960s in the U.S.; Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; 2011 in Egypt, Blair, 2011) and intergroup violence (e.g., in Nazi Germany; Perris, 1985), music has been leveraged as a unifying and sometimes defining feature. In the context of the Rwandan Genocide, singer Simon Bikindi developed a significant following with songs like “I Hate These Hutus” which asserted that moderate Hutus and those who tolerated Tutsis were especially deserving of censure. Such songs were broadcast during the 1994 Genocide, along with interspersed messages about the location and identities of Tutsis that were to be discovered and murdered (McNeil, 2002). With this set of historical precedents in mind, we see music being leveraged in radicalization in several distinct forms, most notably in the genres of Hip Hop and Nasheeds, which are chant-like forms of music without instrumentation. While these distinct forms of music span the modern to traditional, they represent part of the genres represented in the overall trend of increased use of music as part of jihadi propagandists tools (e.g., Awlaki, 2009).

Music has the potential to influence attitudes, social norms, and potentially behavior, (Crozier, 1997) especially among adolescents who are more susceptible to peer pressure (Gavin & Furman, 1989; Roe, 1987). By working with music, jihadi propagandists open another avenue of potential indoctrination and recruitment that starts to cultivate an audience to be more sympathetic to broader causes, issues, and concerns. Further, it is possible that jihadi-themed music and music videos may prompt the most engaged members of the audience to further explore the underlying causes, messages, and groups. In this way, we should consider the potential for more popular examples of jihadi-themed music to provide a bridge from mainstream channels (e.g., YouTube; readily accessible websites) to those forums and formats that are more ‘underground’.

The impact of music varies significantly from person to person, partly on the basis of their preferences and partly on personal circumstance (North & Hargreaves, 2008). Specifically, when music is leveraged to facilitate deeper levels of social engagement and involvement, it creates a platform that enables shared interests, likes, dislikes, concerns, and ideas to be raised. Additionally, when people are involved with the issues being portrayed in the music, they are more likely to engage in deeper processing and consideration (North & Hargreaves, 2008; Petty & Caccioppo, 1981). Within this context, we should expect that music fits in with other aspects of fundamental group dynamic processes, such as group polarization – in which people’s initial attitudes and judgments become increasingly extreme with mutually reinforcing interactions (Forsyth, 2010). However, the question of how music influences behavior has been researched primarily in the contexts of “problem” music (North & Hargreaves, 2008). Music with aggressive or violent lyrics has the potential to increase the amount of aggressive thoughts and feelings, which can lead to subsequent violent behaviors (Anderson, Carnagey, & Eubanks, 2003). However, because music has a tremendous potential to evoke emotion, (Giles, Denes, Hamilton, & Hajda, 2009) it may not be necessary for music to link directly to behaviors in all instances, but rather it may lay the groundwork for new behaviors. Whether it serves as a basis for a behavior change intervention

(Lemieux, Fisher, & Pratto, 2008) or for the basis for subsequent group interactions and discussion, music has empirically demonstrated potential as a catalyst for attitude and behavior change (Stephens, Braithwaite, & Taylor, 1998).

In their assessment of the relative weighting of the importance of melodic aspects of music with lyrical content, Ali and Peynircioglu (2006) found that negatively themed lyrical content bolstered the emotional experience of anger and sadness. There may be several reasons for this finding, including the ability of negative stimuli to be especially salient in causing a focus of attention (Pratto & John, 1991). Applying this information in the context of jihadi music, a quick analysis of some melodic features and lyrical content reveals potential application, suggesting an important area for further analysis. There are examples that contain more upbeat melodic elements (i.e., the chorus section of 'Dirty Kuffar'), which suggest that we should also pay attention to elements of music that make it especially engaging, which may be more associated with a particular melody or rhythm. When music 'hooks' its listener with a melody, the underlying message can be repeated and rehearsed quite readily. When lyrics are set to a melody or rhythm, they have the potential to be more 'catchy' which increases their ability to deliver messages. To the extent that such messages connect with their intended audience, they can be further propagated through social networks and media channels (Lull, 1987). Therefore, music has value to the extent that messages that can be rehearsed, repeated, and remembered in an engaging way (Lull, 1987). One key function of terrorist indoctrination that music may provide is the identification and discussion of the enemy in an engaging way (Forest, 2006). To evaluate music's educational and influential potential, it is important to understand how lyrics are understood and interpreted by listeners, which suggests another area for further analysis (North & Hargreaves, 2008).

### **Music in Intergroup Relations: Forging Identities, Airing Grievances, and Portraying Enemies**

Music establishes and reinforces social norms and identity (Frith, 1996). The portrayal of violence in lyrics, particularly in rap music, can be an indicator of a core component of identity via a suggestion of strength and potency against outsiders (Kubrin, 2005). Musical preferences can serve as markers of an individual's social identities, fulfilling a fundamental need to belong to a group while simultaneously having a core aspect of his or her personal identity differentiate this individual from other group members (Brewer, 1991; Abrams, 2009). Musical preferences also serve as a potential marker of identity in adolescents especially (North, Hargreaves, & O'Neill, 2000; Williams, 2001). Taken together, this suggests that music can play a pivotal role in establishing both social identity and group boundaries.

The dehumanizing power of music is especially worthy of focused consideration, particularly with regard to its ability to foster harsh, negative, and de-legitimizing images. In addition to establishing and reinforcing intergroup boundaries, music can identify and portray enemies and out groups in negative terms. These portrayals may be received less critically by their target audiences when set to music because it engages them on a more emotional level. By promoting a negative view of enemies and out groups, music can then be used to advocate or support taking actions against a particular enemy. This can take the form of an implied response, or an overt call to arms (e.g., image theory; see Alexander, Brewer, & Livingston, 2005).

The airing and elaboration of grievances in music is a fairly prominent feature of jihadi-themed music, and is reified by images and themes intended to reinforce a sense of shared struggle. For violent white supremacists, several annual events are convened to commemorate the arrest and imprisonment of the Aryan terrorist group, The Order, whose members are heralded as “prisoners of war” in the struggle against a Jewish-controlled America (Flynn & Gerhardt, 1990). Integral to these assemblies is the performance of racist rock music lauding the surviving Order members and mourning the death of its founder resulting from a shoot-out with federal authorities. Radical jihadis make reference to the sacrifice of specific members and to a pantheon of martyrs hailing back to the time of Saladin and the Crusades. In the compositions of Bilal Ben Aboud, themes of deprivation (having no job prospects despite having an education) and abuse at the hands of authorities (a man being beaten at a border checkpoint) are lyrical focal points for the listener (Elliott, 2007). In this way, the lyrics describe instances in which fellow Muslims were unjustly treated.

In more immediate contexts, music has the potential to influence the trajectory of intergroup conflicts or cooperation. In the analysis of different types of songs (protest, religious, or folk) sung by Israeli protesters in the context of the 2005 evacuation of Gaza (the “Disengagement”), Bensimon (2009) studied how different forms of music influenced the dynamics between protesters and security personnel. Protest songs that evoked images of conflict appeared to increase intergroup tensions between soldiers and protesters. Folk songs that emphasized shared aspects of a common identity had the potential to blur the lines between protesters and security forces. Prayer songs that emphasized solidarity led protesters to remain resolute in their resistance to withdrawal from Gaza. In this context the style of music that lessened intergroup tensions and conflict consisted of slower, quieter songs with spiritual overtones. The conclusion drawn from this study is that music has the potential to intensify or diminish the trajectory of intergroup conflict.

The music of violent jihad provides a convenient platform through which a variety of meanings and messages can be conveyed. Beyond its value as a recruiting tool, extremist music can help achieve a myriad of other goals essential to any revolutionary struggle, regardless of its ideology or objectives. The relative importance of each of these goals varies from group to group, but each retains some significance in the context of the over-arching struggle. Common themes espoused through radical music include the importance of commemorating significant dates and events, heralding the sacrifice of imprisoned and martyred group members, increasing the organization’s public profile and reputation, maintaining group cohesion, promoting the organization’s platform, and increasing monetary and material contributions to the group and its allies.

In comparison with neo-Nazis and white supremacists, violent jihadists appear more focused on the use of music as a recruiting and radicalization tool, and do not seem dependent on it to solicit operational funds. The music of violent jihadists, directed to a single audience, often appears as short videos in which the music is secondary to the images. These videos are typically found on media and social networking sites frequented by like-minded individuals. Little importance appears to be given to concerts, compilations, or other long-form performances. Essentially, jihadis are producing a series of music videos promoting jihad to the Islamic community as an individual viewing experience. Environmental radicals, animal rights militants, and violent white supremacists all place a greater degree of importance on promoting attendance at mass events. In the case of racist skinheads, concerts and other large gatherings are the most significant events the group conducts (Simi & Futrell, 2010).

## **Music Related to Islamic Social Movements and the Global Jihad**

Music has also taken a prominent role in the communication, depiction and portrayal of struggles, civil resistance, and social change (e.g., Schade-Poulson, 1999), most recently as part of the protest in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 (Blair, 2011). In the Egyptian context, several noteworthy and remarkable songs were written, recorded, and subsequently distributed in short order. Literally, within hours and days of the ouster of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, the number of ‘hits’ for each of these songs was growing exponentially. In addition to the impact and reach at the local level, these songs and their accompanying videos served to communicate the situation to the world through melody, rhythm, and image. In this way, we see the power of music in the context of social change as a prominent medium for communication and conveyance of emotion.

Music has long provided a way to express criticism, frustration, and even hate. Although popular genres like hip-hop, rap, and heavy metal have all become a medium for Arab youth to express their opinions, hip-hop tends to be most closely associated with political activism (Sandhu, 2008). Hip-hop has also been used as a means to express group and ethnic identity, often by tapping into the narrative of civil right movements in general and the lives of prominent activists, such as Malcolm X.

Many bands in the Middle East are formed as a means of personal and artistic expression, and some have begun to engage in political activism. For instance, there are bands and performers on both sides of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict who utilize music as a medium through which issues common to both sides can be presented. Artists and musicians on both sides decry the abuse of power and other excesses and express scorn for the authorities they believe to be responsible. The prevailing message is one of simmering resentments, coupled with a yearning for equality and respect.

The propaganda arm of the Shiite terrorist group Hezbollah makes significant use of music as a means to disseminate its message and is seen by many as part and parcel of a larger program that equates art with another front in the war of resistance against Israel. After Hezbollah succeeded in fighting the Israeli army to a standstill in 2006, Hezbollah’s music sales nearly doubled. *Al-Wilaya*, a Hezbollah affiliated band, has performed not only within Lebanon, but also has held concerts in Kuwait and Bahrain. The group’s chants and recitals are intended to glorify the exploits of Hezbollah fighters and to exhort them to put forth greater effort in the name of armed jihad (AFP, 2006). Much like Hezbollah, Hamas has made considerable investments in media production as an effective means through which to spread its ideology, a tactic also used by other Palestinian terrorist groups. A nascent hip-hop movement has also begun providing a means of peaceful protest to younger Palestinians (i.e., the group *DAM*).

## **Music as a Tool for Recruitment and Fomenting Violence in the Name of Global Jihad**

Hip-hop is being utilized by Abu Mansoor al-Amriki, an American jihadist based in Somalia, as a creative way to attract Western Muslims to the cause of Al-Shabaab, in particular, and violent jihad, in general. Initially released as snippets interspersed in his video diatribes against the West, the raps are now presented in their entirety on the Internet (Newton, 2009; Schactman, 2009; AFI, 2010). The propaganda effort of Hizb ut Tahrir (HT) includes youth group activities that involve recording and performing Islamic-themed hip hop. Some compositions authored by Islamic groups encourage

political activism, while others promote social change through armed insurgency. The lyrics of the HT-allied hip hop group, *Arab League*, express anger over U.S. military actions in Muslim countries. Another HT associated band is *Soldiers of Allah*, which was formed in Los Angeles in an effort to inspire members of the LA hip hop community on behalf of Islam. A music production company called *An Nasr Productions* (ANP) markets itself as “Islamic carriers of Dawa using hip-hop to convey the message of Islam!” ANP also promotes a group called the Muslim Youth Network, which has chapters in the U.S. that operate community centers, youth retreats, and summer camps (also see Forest, 2006).

*Fun-Da-Mental*, a British act fronted by Aki Nawaz, is noteworthy for its strong Islamist advocacy. In 2006, their record label threatened to ban the release of their album *All is War* because it included songs that discussed bomb construction and suicide bombers (“Cookbook”) and Osama bin Laden. In the wake of this incident, the band sought to set up a label to sell its own music (Rollings, 2006).

### **Music as a Unifying Force: Potential Applications Counter-radicalization & Countering Terrorism**

Possible points for intervention can be identified by understanding the dynamics of music and social influence regarding radicalization. First, we must recognize the potential of countervailing messages that admonish violence and intolerance (Waller, 2008), as exemplified by Salman Ahmad (Ahmad, 2010). Ahmad is the foremost advocate of the use of rock and roll as way to counter violent Salafi extremists like Osama Bin Laden. Although some conservative imams may denigrate Ahmad’s efforts, he remains unwavering in his belief that rock music provides a means through which people of all faiths can come together. Ahmad has gained a devoted following among rock fans throughout India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. A devout Muslim, Ahmad also recently published a book addressing the challenge posed by Islamic extremism (Muir, 2010).

The importance of musical subcultures and identities throughout the Muslim world is detailed in Mark LeVine’s (2008) book *Heavy Metal Islam*. Taken together, these accounts portray a compelling image of music as a force for cultural mediation and social change. These reference points provide relevant examples in which music that promotes tolerance and reconciliation can be used to reconnect with “at-risk” individuals and groups. A more thorough analysis would require knowledge of various local and regional music scenes and subcultures, each of which could provide a point of entry into the same communities that jihadis are attempting to reach. Another area of intervention is to use music and musical preferences as a basis for furthering intergroup dialogue, and as a way of reducing intergroup conflict. A common musical preference is one method of fostering positive intergroup exchanges (Bakagiannis & Tarrant, 2006).

For any counter-messaging efforts to be successful, several factors must be considered: first, the underlying emotional content of music (beyond the ‘rational’ or cognitive component), second, the role played by the performer in framing the music’s context and message, third, audience characteristics, fourth, the medium with which the music is broadcast to the audience (radio, Internet, television, etc.), and finally, the messaging and themes used to link the audience’s emotions with musical and lyrical content.

### **Summary and Future Directions**

Based on this brief review, there are some important points that are necessary to further establish the role and impact of music in radicalization and recruiting, and also to assess its potential for countering violent extremism. One of the primary considerations is the actual size and scope of the problem. Specifically, one might ask how substantial is the audience for jihadi-themed music? Where are potential audience members going to locate music and videos with these themes? There are myriad websites and online forums established by groups and individuals who support violent jihad, which provide the most accessible sources of this type of music. One way to develop a more comprehensive understanding would be to analyze links or assess linked pages, included in the comments portion of these videos, to discover useful indicators to the types of websites or other locations that viewers recommend.

In the context of using music to counter violent extremism, one could critically examine the fidelity of music in reflecting the attitudes of broader populations. A comparative analysis of the content of the music and associated media, such as videos and discussion forums, could help establish what themes are shared and where there is meaningful variation. Analyzing these variations may uncover how a general message is adjusted or refined to prove more appealing to a particular audience. However, to effectively do this, it will be essential to establish the kinds of data that would need to be collected to better understand this phenomenon.

Further research in this domain should examine the links across social media web sites used by producers and consumers of jihadi-themed music. In this context, the research could examine links that take a potential audience member (or recruit) from one initial set of videos, music and content, to additional, increasingly radical content. As in the instance of “Dirty Kuffar,” YouTube may serve as first stop, but a motivated audience member can easily do a bit more searching to find additional content. For instance, someone might be initially interested in a particular sermon or lecture, but may be exposed to similar themes and content in musical context. We could pose the question as follows: Does music engage people and lead them to seek out more ‘traditional’ elements—i.e., the shift from the jihadi-themed rap to more traditional formats including Nasheeds. What do they look for next? Where do they go and what kind of messaging do they find there? To what extent does music serve as motivator to learn more and to inquire further?

In conclusion, the available evidence suggests that music is being used to recruit young jihadis, mobilize supporters, and inspire greater involvement in the global jihadist movement. However, the extent or effectiveness is not well understood. Music with aggressive lyrical themes has demonstrated the potential to increase aggressive thoughts, feelings, and potentially behaviors among listeners. To the extent that jihadi-themed music portrays out groups in dehumanizing terms, and glorifies violence committed against them, it does so in a potentially engaging and compelling way. However, the core findings here also suggest that the rapid increase in music distribution platforms and technologies being leveraged by jihadis can also be used to counter violent extremism. Specifically, countervailing themes can be emphasized in intervention and distributed through similar channels, by artists or performers who can deliver the message with credibility. Finally, music can be leveraged to forge positive group perceptions and contacts, and may be useful within an intervention or counter-radicalization context. Taken together, this analysis suggests that music serves a potentially important role on the radicalization and recruitment side of terrorism, and may provide a point for leverage in efforts to counter violent extremism going forward.

## References

- Abrams, D. (2009). Social identity on a national scale: Optimal distinctiveness and young people's self-expression through musical preference. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, 12*, 303-317.
- Ahmad, S. (2010). *Rock and roll jihad: A Muslim rock star's revolution*. New York: Free Press.
- Alexander, M. G., Brewer, M. B., & Livingston, R. (2005). Putting stereotype content in context: Image theory and interethnic stereotypes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 31*, 781-794.
- Ali, S. O., & Peynircioglu, Z. F. (2006). Songs and emotions: Are lyrics and melodies equal partners? *Psychology of Music, 34*, 511-534.
- AFP. (2006). Hezbollah rhythm shoots to commercial success. Retrieved from <http://www.sawfnews.com/entertainment/24590.aspx>
- Anderson, C. A., Carnagey, N. L., & Eubanks, L. (2003). Exposure to violent media: The effects of songs with violent lyrics on aggressive thoughts and feelings. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 960-971.
- ANI. (2010). Somalia-based American jihadist using Rap music to attract Western recruits. Retrieved July 17, 2010 from [http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report\\_somalia-based-american-jihadist-using-rap-music-to-attract-western-recruits\\_1385586](http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report_somalia-based-american-jihadist-using-rap-music-to-attract-western-recruits_1385586)
- Awlaki, A. (2009). 44 ways to support jihad. Nef Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.nefafoundation.org>
- Bakagiannis, S., & Tarrant, M. (2006). Can music bring people together? Effects of shared musical preference on intergroup bias in adolescence. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 47*, 129-136.
- Bensimon, M. (2009). The dynamic of songs in intergroup conflict and proximity: The case of the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, 12*, 397-412.
- Blair, E. (2011). The songs of the Egyptian protests. NPR. Retrieved 2.17.2011 from <http://www.npr.org/2011/02/11/133691055/Music-Inspires-Egyptian-Protests>
- Brewer, M. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 17*, 475-481.
- Crozier, W. R. (1997). Music and social influence. In D. Hargreaves & A. C. North (Eds.). *The social psychology of music* (pp.67-83). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Elliott, A. (2007). Where boys grow up to be jihadis. *New York Times Magazine*, Nov 25, p.79.
- Eyerman, R. & Jamison A. (1998). *Music and social movements: Mobilizing traditions in the twentieth century*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Flynn, K. & Gerhardt, G. (1990). *The silent brotherhood*. New York: Signet/Penguin Books.
- Forest, J. F. (Ed.). (2006). *Teaching terror: Strategic and tactical learning in the terrorist world*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Forsyth, D. R. (2010). *Group dynamics*. New York: Wadsworth/Cengage.

- Frith, S. (1996). Music and identity. In S. Hall & S. du Gay (Eds.). *Questions of cultural identity* (pp.108-127). London: Sage.
- Gavin, L. A., & Furman, W. (1989). Age differences in adolescents' perceptions of their peer groups. *Developmental Psychology, 25*, 827-834.
- Giles, H., Denes, A., Hamilton, D. L., & Hajda, L. M. (2009). Striking a chord: A prelude to music and intergroup relations research. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, 12*, 291-301.
- Gruen, M. (2006). Innovative recruitment and indoctrination tactics by extremists: Video games, hip-hop, and the world wide web. In J. Forest (Ed.). *The making of a terrorist: Vol 1. Recruitment* (pp.11-22). Westport, CT: Praeger Security International.
- Kubrin, C. (2005). Gangstas, thugs, and hustlas: Identity and the code of the street in rap music. *Social Problems, 52*, 360-378.
- Lemieux, A. F., Fisher, J. D., & Pratto, F. (2008). A music-based HIV prevention intervention for urban adolescents. *Health Psychology, 27*, 349-357.
- LeVine, M. (2008). *Heavy Metal Islam*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Lull, J. (1987). Listeners' communicative uses of popular music. In J. Lull (Ed.). *Popular music and communication* (pp.140-174). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- McNeil, Jr. D.G. (2002, March). Killer songs. *New York Times Magazine*. March 17, 2002.
- Muir, H. (2010). Hideously Diverse Britain: In tune with the Rock' n' roll Jihadi. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/may/27/hideously-diverse-britain-salman-ahmad>
- Nacos, B. (2006). Communication and recruitment of terrorists. In J. Forest (Ed.). *The making of a terrorist (Vol 1: Recruitment)* (pp.41-52). Westport, CT: Praeger Security International.
- Newton, P. (2009). Al Qaeda exporting jihad with a hip hop vibe. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/africa/05/04/somali.jihad.video/index.html?iref=allsearch>
- North, A. & Hargreaves, D. (2008). *The social and applied psychology of music*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- North, A.C., Hargreaves, D. L., & O'Neill, S. A. (2000). The importance of music to adolescents. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 70*, 255-272.
- Perris, A. (1985). *Music as propaganda: Art to persuade, art to control*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press.
- Petty, R. & Caccioppo, J. (1986). *Communication and Persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change*. New York: Springer Verlag.
- Pratto, F. & John, O. P. (1991). Automatic vigilance: The attention-grabbing power of negative social information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61*, 380-391.
- Roe, K. (1987). The school and music in adolescent socialization. In J. Lull (Ed.). *Popular music and Communication*, 212-230. Beverly Hills: Sage.

- Rollings, G. (2006). Fury at Suicide bomb rap. *The Sun*. Retrieved from <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sollhomepage/news/article53959.ece>
- Sandhu, S. (2008, September 6). We play heavy metal because our lives are heavy metal. *London Daily Telegraph*. Art Section, 16.
- Smith, B.R. (2007). Behind the music: Dirty kuffar, Islam, and global hip-hop. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Simi, P. & Futrell, R. (2010). *American swastika: Inside the white power movement's hidden spaces of hate*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Stephens, T., Braithwaite, R. L., & Taylor, S. E. (1998). Model for using hip hop music for small group HIV/ AIDS prevention counseling with African American adolescents and young adults. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 35, 127-137.
- Waller, J. M. (2008). Cultural battlespace: Muslim rockers resist extremism. Retrieved from [http://www.iwp.edu/news\\_publications/detail/cultural-battlespace-muslim-rockers-resist-extremism](http://www.iwp.edu/news_publications/detail/cultural-battlespace-muslim-rockers-resist-extremism)
- Williams, C. (2001). Does it really matter? Young people and popular music. *Popular Music*, 20, 223-242.

**SECTION 4: PURSUE AND PROTECT/RISK MANAGEMENT/DERADICALIZATION****USING CITIZEN MESSENGERS TO COUNTERACT RADICALISM (QAMAR-UL HUDA)**

Qamar-ul Huda, Ph.D.  
United States Institute of Peace (USIP)<sup>93</sup>  
[qhuda@usip.org](mailto:qhuda@usip.org)

Defeating the threat posed by extremists and terrorists requires measures that go beyond intelligence, military, and security approaches. Numerous countries in Europe, America, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East operate programs to counter or prevent radicalization. A key question is whether these programs effectively persuade individuals already involved with radical extremist groups to disengage (Gunaratna, 2007, pp. 113-127; Hassan, 2007; Horgan, n.d.; Kruglanski, 2004). To be effective at prevention and disengagement, these counter-radicalization programs must encourage people to question the beliefs and values promoted in radical ideologies. These programs should educate current extremists about different perspectives to keep them from remaining isolated in their extremist views (Bjørge & Hargan, 2009; Horgan, 2009). Proactive measures aimed at preventing individuals from developing a radical world view are also needed. Civil society actors, or civil messengers, can effectively communicate a variety of anti-radicalization messages to populations vulnerable to extremist groups.

Citizen messenger programs use mass media to propagate anti-radicalization messages to keep vulnerable individuals who are not yet involved with extremist groups from ever joining them. Other programs seek to encourage current members to leave the extremist groups, and stop promoting radical ideologies. The messengers help disseminate mainstream thinking and beliefs in their faith traditions. They can also encourage others to accept the rule of law, governance, and legal methods of dispute resolution.

**Citizen Messengers**

These citizen messengers include high-profile individuals from civil society and popular culture—actors, models, sports figures, newspaper columnists, news anchors, thought leaders, academics, or recognized national achievers—who are viewed as upstanding or role models. By communicating anti-radicalism messages, famous people express their desire to preserve the society in which they live. The public also may grant the citizen messengers greater legitimacy, especially for subjects related to their industries, than non-public figures. For example, sports champions or famous doctors serve as effective advocates for physical and mental health issues. Similarly, citizen messengers could oppose the spread of radical ideology.

---

<sup>93</sup> The views in this essay do not necessarily reflect the views of USIP, which does not advocate specific policy positions.

Individuals recognized for contributions to more than one industry can be considered some of the most respected and effective citizen messengers. Their contributions in multiple fields demonstrate an ability to adapt, adjust, and make a priceless imprint in the public consciousness as national leaders. For example, renowned basketball star Michael Jordan became a successful businessman after his retirement from sports. Other successful figures who have crossed over to other sectors include Al Franken, a former comedian who was later elected as a U.S. Senator; and Mitt Romney, a businessman who was elected Governor of Massachusetts.

Citizen messengers may also include religious leaders who have authority within their communities and civil society. These religious figures may be particularly effective at communicating messages that counter extremist narratives. A combination of religious leaders and other citizen messengers can counteract the radical ideology in an integrated de-radicalization program.

### **Strategies for Countering Radicalism**

One strategy to work against radicalism is to use citizen messenger communications to describe the falsehoods, deception and hopelessness present in extremist ideology. Supplying alternative interpretations of various teachings and events will challenge extremists to question and change their extremist worldviews. In addition, for other audiences, these messages will weaken the appeal of radical ideologies. Former militants renouncing violence and publicly speaking against extremist groups and ideology provide an important indicator of success in counter-radicalization. When citizen messengers cooperate with former militants in public messages, they show society the importance of rehabilitating former militants and reconciling with those who were misled by extremists.

Counter-radicalization and disengagement programs are engaged in a war of ideas (Rosenau, 2006), or the market of ideas. Engaging citizen messengers, especially those who understand the theological, cultural, social, and political nuances, helps the messages resonate with the programs' target audiences—discontented youth, extremists trying to recruit new members, and current extremists (Berman, 2009; Leuprecht, 2010).

Radical extremist groups convey teachings and interpretations of Islam that promote their extremist agendas. Islamic religious leaders, who have authority and legitimacy based on their knowledge of the Qur'an and theology, should make similar efforts to educate the public about their interpretation of Muslim teachings and traditions. In addition, business and professional associations and social organizations could also help persuade the public that the radical messages run counter to the society's productivity and laws. Other citizen messengers, like movie actors and public health doctors, as participants in the national debate and dialogue, could articulate the analogy of radical ideology being a virus that infects society, which can be remedied.

Of those involved with violent extremist groups, religious actors seem more resistant to material rewards or punishments than extremists less motivated by religion. These religious extremists focus on rewards and punishments in another time and space—the hereafter. With this deep-seeded belief system, programs or strategies must cause the current and potential militants to question their radical ideology and consider an alternative world view (Ribetti, 2007; Bjørgo & Hargan, 2009). In other words, de-radicalization programs must address the beliefs and values that serve as the foundation for extremism.

For example, recruits to violent extremist groups come to rely on the group for camaraderie and practical support and networking. They may believe the group offers practical answers to their real-world concerns and conflicts. Reaching this group calls for a different approach than reaching those motivated by ideology. Citizen messengers can use different emotional, psychological, cultural, and practical reasoning in the public space to counteract the radical logic (Casebeer & Russell, 2005).

Citizen messenger programs should engage in open dialogue about domestic and regional issues, such as youth unemployment, or lack of education, using constructive language and vocabulary. Programs that deny these issues inadvertently support radical groups' assertions that ruling elites tightly govern society based on their needs, with little regard for the larger population. Citizen messenger programs should emphasize the rule of law and the importance of governance. They should communicate the proper rule of governance, education, and building institutions in improving society. These programs must create plans and private institutions to address the societal issues. In this way, citizen messenger programs can reach young people, whether they be unemployed, lack an education, or confused by a plethora of mixed messages (Ingle, 2000; O'Connor, 1999; Adams, 2001). Citizen messengers should highlight specific opportunities available for youth to enhance their skills, and receive training, vocational development, or even training for new jobs in other regions (Bjørge & Carlsson, 2005; Klandermands, 1997).

However, citizen messenger programs should not be placed within the government's Ministry of Information or a department or organization responsible for propaganda. If the citizen messenger program is openly associated with propaganda organizations, the target audience may be resistant to the program's messages. Instead, a citizen messenger program for counter-radicalization should balance the support of the national security, intelligence, and defense departments, as well as non-governmental and non-profit organizations.

## **Conclusion**

The citizen messenger programs should employ help from popular public figures, thinkers, scholars, academics, NGO leaders and scientists, mathematicians, singers, and sports stars to affirm positive messages about society to neutralize or defuse the messages promoted by extremist groups. While the program's messages should portray the society as resolute and resilient, they should also not shy away from uncomfortable discussions about societal ills. Citizen messenger programs should openly address previous failed policies, explain how those policies have been revised, and show other citizens that they are stakeholders in the program and in society.

Citizen messenger programs should have a dual purpose: convince those already engaged in violent extremism to abandon it, and dissuade those sympathetic to extremist causes from becoming actively involved in them. To address the pragmatic and ideological foundations of radicalism, citizen messengers should think of themselves as rebuilders of a community damaged by radicalization. They should highlight positive developments at the local, regional, and national levels. As citizen messenger programs grow, they should share information with leaders at all levels to develop best practices and guidance for counter-radicalization programs.

Using effective citizen messengers to counteract radicalism should be part of any strategy to counter violent extremism. Governments cannot afford to embark on a partial solution that weakens violent extremist organizations in the short term. To be successful in the long run, de-radicalization or

disengagement programs should include pragmatic and ideological components; citizen messengers, who have widespread legitimacy and authority, can be an effective tool for counter-radicalization.

## References

- Adams, G. (2001, January 17). Equality cannot be an illusion: It must be a fact. *Belfast Telegraph*. Opinion.
- Berman, E. (2009). *Radical, religious, and violent: The new economics of terrorism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bjørgo, T., & Carlsson, Y. (2005). *Early intervention with violent and racist youth groups*. Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.
- Bjørgo, T., & Horgan, J. (Eds.). (2009). *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective disengagement*. New York: Routledge, pp. 152–169.
- Casebeer, W. D., & Russell, J.A. (2005). Storytelling and terrorism: Towards a comprehensive counter-narrative strategy. *Strategic Insights*, 4(3), 1–16.
- Gunaratna, R. (2007). Combating al Jama'ah al Islamiyyah in southeast Asia. In A. Aldis, & G. P. Herd (Eds.). *The ideological war on terror: Worldwide strategies for counter-terrorism* (113-127). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hassan, M.H. (2007). Singapore's Muslim community-based initiatives against JI. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 1 (5).
- Horgan, J. (n.d.). Deradicalization or disengagement? A process in need of clarity and a counterterrorism initiative in need of evaluation. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2(4), 3-8.
- Horgan, J. (2009). *Walking away from terrorism: Accounts of disengagement from radical and extremist movements*. London: Routledge.
- Ingle, R. (2000, August 5). Paramilitary ex-prisoners struggle to find employment and normal life. *The Irish Times*.
- Klandermans, B. (1997). *The social psychology of protest*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kruglanski, A.W. (2004). *The psychology of closed mindedness*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Leuprecht, C., et al. (2010). Narratives and counter-narratives for global jihad: Opinion versus action. *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives*, 58-70. The Hague: National Coordinator for Counterterrorism.
- O'Connor, F. (1999, August 28,). No One Wants the Peace Jeopardized. *The Independent*, London edition.

Ribetti, M. (2007). The unveiled motivations of violence in intra-state conflicts: The Colombian guerrillas. *Small Wars and Insurgencies* (18: 4, 699–720).

Rosenau, W. (2006). Waging the war of ideas. Washington, D.C.: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from [www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/2006/RAND\\_RP1218.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/2006/RAND_RP1218.pdf).

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DE-RADICALIZATION PROGRAMS: TOWARDS A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO TERRORISM RISK REDUCTION (JOHN HORGAN & KURT BRADDOCK)

John Horgan and Kurt Braddock<sup>94</sup>  
International Center for the Study of Terrorism  
The Pennsylvania State University  
[horganjohn@psu.edu](mailto:horganjohn@psu.edu)

## Introduction

One of the most creative and innovative developments in counterterrorism in recent years has been the emergence of de-radicalization programs. Several factors contribute to their popularity. There is an increasing recognition of the inability to stem the tide of recruits to terrorist movements. In addition, there has been a substantial rise in the amount of attention being paid to how, why and when terrorism ends, both for individual terrorists, as well as entire groups (e.g. see Cronin, 2009). Furthermore, there is a growing realization of the failure to effectively and imaginatively manage the problem of terrorist detainee populations.

In parallel with this, a growing number of states have come to accept the view, implicitly or otherwise, that their respective national security interests may be served by exploring how to facilitate and manage the reintegration of convicted terrorists back into society (Horgan and Braddock, 2010). An idea has taken root that such efforts might be accomplished by attempts to change terrorist behavior, primarily by “rehabilitating” or otherwise “de-radicalizing” those that have been detained as a result of their engagement in terrorism. In some situations, these efforts are manifest in fully-fledged behavior change programs with formal titles and specific terminology (ibid.). These initiatives work in varied ways, and carry context-specific expectations about what constitutes success.

The objectives of de-radicalization programs are manifold. As described by Bjorgo and Horgan (2009), they include:

- Reducing the number of active terrorists
- Reducing violence and victimisation
- Re-orienting ideological views and attitudes of the participants
- Re-socializing ex-members back to a normal life
- Acquiring intelligence, evidence and witnesses in court cases
- Using repentant ex-terrorists as opinion builders

---

<sup>94</sup> Some of the material used here appeared previously in Horgan, J. and Braddock, K. 2010. “Rehabilitating the Terrorists? Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalization Programs.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22 (1):1–25.

- Sowing dissent within the terrorist milieu
- Providing an exit from terrorism and ‘underground’ life
- Reducing the dependency on repressive means and make more use of more humane means in counter-terrorism
- Reducing the economic and social costs of keeping a large number of terrorists in prison for a long time, and
- Increasing the legitimacy of the government or state agency

A widespread incorrect assumption is that all de-radicalization programs involve attempts at re-orienting ideological views and attitudes of its participants (the assumption being that changing one’s attitudes will lead to behavior change). Not only is attitudinal change a poor predictor of behavior change, but also the closer we look at de-radicalization programs, it becomes evident that de-radicalization is an inaccurate and misleading characterization of what these programs aspire to do. This issue is even more challenging when we consider another basic fact: it is widely accepted that not everybody who holds radical views will become a terrorist, but it is rarely acknowledged that not every terrorist necessarily becomes involved in terrorism because of holding radical views in the first place (frequently, exposure to a radical ideology comes after initial involvement). Therefore, employing de-radicalization as a strategy, in the sense of seeking cognitive or attitudinal change, is not necessarily the logical principle for achieving the goal risk reduction or reduction in violence.

The distinction (and its significance) between disengagement from terrorism and *de-radicalization* from terrorism has been well made by now (e.g. Horgan, 2005; Bjorgo and Horgan, 2009; Horgan, 2009). Let us reiterate briefly that while disengagement involves behavioral change (e.g. cessation of terrorist activity, or change in role from violent to non-violent etc.), de-radicalization implies a cessation of, or change in beliefs deemed conducive to violent radicalization or violent extremism. However, there is plentiful evidence of disengagement from terrorism that did not involve bringing about a change in views about the legitimacy of violence or its consequences.

The inappropriateness of the label ‘de-radicalization’ is further emphasized when we take a closer look at the terminology associated with a variety of these initiatives. These terms include (but are not limited to), Disengagement, De-radicalization, Demobilization, Dialogue, Deprogramming, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, Reconciliation, Reincorporation, Reformation, Counter-radicalization, and Prevention.

A more constructive and reliable term might be what Horgan and Braddock (2010) describe as ‘risk reduction program’, given that reducing the risk of involvement (or re-engagement) in terrorism is the one clear common feature of all such initiatives. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the focus of the CONTEST (a counterterrorism) strategy is essentially a long-term, multi-level series of programs focused on attempting to channel those youth deemed vulnerable to involvement in terrorism into a community-based scheme aimed at displacing and re-directing grievances, anger, and frustration. It is not aimed at detainees of any description, or attempts to prepare detainees for reintegration upon release. This is in stark contrast to the Saudi Arabian program that places primary emphasis on equipping detainees with the social, religious, and psychological skills for reintegration into the community. What these very different programs have in common, however, is risk reduction of one kind or another.

## **Are They Effective?**

The most frequently asked question about risk reduction (either de-radicalization or disengagement) initiatives is: do they work? The simple answer is – some do, some do not, and for others, we simply do not know. Thus far, it has been practically impossible to ascertain what is implied by or expected from programs that claim to be able to de-radicalize terrorists. No such program has formally identified valid and reliable indicators of successful de-radicalization or even disengagement, whether couched in cultural, psychological, or other terms. Consequently, any attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of any such program is beset with a myriad of challenges that are as much conceptual as they are practical (Horgan and Braddock, 2010).

These initiatives, as discussed earlier, are vastly different from one another. Because of the ‘de-radicalization program’ label, it is incorrectly assumed that these efforts have more in common with each other than they actually do. In truth, risk reduction programs are heavily context-specific. What works in Yemen cannot possibly be expected to work in Indonesia, and what works in Singapore is unlikely to work anywhere else. The success of the Early Release Scheme in Northern Ireland cannot possibly be understood outside the context of the complex and carefully choreographed Peace Process that has brought relative stability to the region. As a result, these programs are difficult to comparatively evaluate, and it can be challenging even to identify best practices to ‘export’ to other jurisdictions or programs.

Perhaps more problematic is that the claims of success associated with several programs have not been validated or supported. The main reason for this is that there are implicit and inconsistent criteria for what constitutes success.

In a recent study, Horgan and Braddock (2010) provided a basis for systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of extant and future de-radicalization initiatives. They presented brief overviews of five initiatives in five different countries (Yemen, Colombia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Northern Ireland) to illustrate the multi-faceted respective approaches taken for risk reduction in each context. They offer a solution to the challenge of evaluation by laying out the case for the use of Multi-attribute Utility Technology (MAUT, also known as Multi-attribute Evaluation). MAUT is attractive for drawing not only useful comparative conclusions about the assessment of the initiatives, but also, more significantly, it may provide a framework for guiding the development of future such initiatives based on lessons from existing programs (effective or otherwise).

### *Multi Attribute Utility Technology*

Although it is reasonable that different societies with unique cultural characteristics tailor their expectations to fit their particular needs, formal comparison of the initiatives, as well as systematic efforts to evaluate claims of success by individual initiatives, requires a scheme that permits assessment across common program elements. MAUT affords this ability by systematically and quantitatively assessing aspects of each risk reduction initiative. MAUT is an assessment technique developed and popularized by Edwards and Newman (1982) that facilitates identifying and weighting the goals and objectives held by a set of stakeholders, and assesses how well a given program meets those goals or objectives. MAUT is based on six fundamental assumptions described by Edwards and Newman:

1. When possible, evaluations should be comparative in nature. MAUT assumes that the best decisions are made when programs are put in competition with one another to determine which provides the most benefit for the least cost.
2. Any initiative normally serves multiple constituencies: any program will have a number of individuals or groups that have a vested interest in the form the program takes.
3. Programs typically exist to serve multiple objectives, and those objectives are very rarely of equal significance.
4. Making judgments is an integral part of any program evaluation.
5. Judgments of great consequence (e.g., what types of methodologies should be implemented in a risk reduction initiative) should have underlying evidence to inform them.
6. Finally, evaluations of programs typically are, or at least should be, directly relevant to policy decisions about those programs.

There are a number of reasons why one would want to perform a multi-attribute evaluation on any program. There may be interest in examining the ongoing performance, particularly when or if the criteria for success associated with that program (implicit or otherwise) change. Furthermore, MAUT can be applied if a program requires fine-tuning to alter the overall effectiveness of the program. Perhaps most salient for issues raised here, however, is the utilization of MAUT for the sake of programmatic choice. MAUT can be used to help determine which of a number of initiatives or programs is the most appropriate, given needs, goals, and available resources. Ultimately, MAUT is useful in any situation in which one or more programs require comparative assessment.

There are distinct steps in performing an analysis using MAUT. First, and most obvious, it is important to identify which objects (e.g., a de-radicalization program or its attributes) are to be evaluated and what functions the evaluation itself should perform. In principle, MAUT could be employed to (a) monitor the performance of these programs, (b) identify any problems associated with the individual initiatives, and (c) select which attributes in each program would be most appropriate for the development of an effective risk reduction initiative to be implemented elsewhere. Second, those who hold a stake in the evaluation need to be identified. Stakeholders, in the context of MAUT, are those individuals or groups with a vested interest in the decisions to be made who have enough political power to influence those making a decision about the program under evaluation. In the case of risk reduction initiatives, stakeholders may include officials from the governments that are operating the program, influential citizens, representatives from affected extremist groups, etc. Third, relevant attributes of the initiative under evaluation must be elicited from the identified stakeholders and organized into a hierarchical structure called a “value tree” (for a more detailed explanation of how to perform MAUT, see Horgan and Braddock, 2010).

Although we believe MAUT to be the most suitable evaluation framework with which to examine terrorism risk reduction initiatives, there are also other frameworks that could be used to evaluate them (see Horgan and Braddock, 2010); however, MAUT avoids the problems associated with these and other evaluative models. Including stakeholders in not only evaluating an existing program, but also developing a new program ensures that multiple constituencies are accommodated. In addition, evaluations are based on mathematical calculations rather than qualitative survey or interview data. Although MAUT may not be the ideal for any program evaluation, the unique nature of risk reduction programs (i.e., multiple stakeholders with sometimes opposing views, goals, insights, etc.)

requires the application of a framework that is multifaceted, comprehensive, and resistant to accusations of bias or tampering by virtue of the way in which the developmental process evolves. The MAUT process is unique in that it provides a numerically based method by which to appraise the success of the kinds of initiatives described here. By employing MAUT as a tool to evaluate the aforementioned programs and their unique, context-specific attributes, we are able to draw general conclusions regarding (a) which goals are important, (b) the relative difficulty in achieving certain goals, (c) where efforts should be focused to develop a successful de-radicalization initiative, and (d) the differences in the priorities of the initiatives we have mentioned here (*ibid.*).

## Conclusions

Despite the enormous attention being paid to de-radicalization or, more appropriately, risk reduction initiatives, there remains little systematic research on the underlying issues, an understanding of which is critical to enhance operational knowledge. There is a need for greater empirical evidence to inform our knowledge of the construction, execution, and outcome measurement (effectiveness) of these programs. Most obviously, there is a dire need for research on the area of terrorist risk assessment; that is, we lack an empirically informed risk assessment to not only help inform decisions to release detainees back into the community, but also to reliably inform decision to identify at-risk individuals in the first place. Similarly, there is virtually no research on terrorist recidivism.

Even those programs with highly publicized claims of success associated with risk reduction initiatives face major barriers to accomplishing even the most conservative evaluation:

1. There are no explicit criteria for success associated with any initiative.
2. There is little data associated with any of these initiatives that can be reliably corroborated independently.
3. There has been no systematic effort to study any aspect of these programs, even individually, let alone collectively.

A common defense against critiques of risk reduction initiatives is that “there cannot be a scientific study of how effective they are.” This is a fallacy and, most often, a pre-text to a failure to justify claims of success that demonstrate little to no transparency. On the one hand, there is an obvious sense in which attempting to evaluate the collective success of such programs represents a naïve task. As argued earlier, what works in one region could not necessarily be expected to work in another, and the internal expectations of the initiatives vary considerably. From this perspective alone, it may be that attempting to identify lessons across programs, while noble, may produce more limited knowledge than originally anticipated. At the very least, we can assert that “de-radicalization programs” is a misnomer, given what these diverse and innovative programs aspire to do, and the significance of this misleading term having led us to false start should be recognized explicitly. However, even here there is room for optimism. By careful evaluation of multiple features associated with these programs (whatever they are called), we can tentatively identify lessons learned from experiences of these initiatives, both within specific programs, as well as across them. For this reason alone, we should explore further the promise offered by MAUT as a possible guiding framework for the development of risk reduction programs and their assessment. Given the glaring lack of standards associated with verifiable outcomes and success measures associated with the programs, it would appear that there are substantial benefits to be exploited.

**References**

- Bjorgo, T. & Horgan, J., eds. 2009. *Leaving terrorism behind: Individual and collective perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Cronin, A.K. (2009). *How terrorism ends: Understanding the demise and decline of terrorist campaigns*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Edwards, W. & Newman, J.R. (1982) *Multi-attribute evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Horgan, J. 2005. *The Psychology of terrorism*. London: Routledge.
- Horgan, J. 2009. “De-radicalization or Disengagement? A Process in need of clarity and a counterterrorism initiative in need of evaluation.” *Revista de Psicologia Social* 24 (2):291–298.
- Horgan, J. 2009. *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- 

**BATTLING THE “UNIVERSITY OF JIHAD:” AN EVIDENCE BASED IDEOLOGICAL PROGRAM TO COUNTER MILITANT JIHADI GROUPS ACTIVE ON THE INTERNET (ANNE SPECKHARD)**

Anne Speckhard, Ph.D.<sup>95</sup>

Georgetown University Medical Center, American College of Greece

[Anne.Speckhard@gmail.com](mailto:Anne.Speckhard@gmail.com)

Militant jihadi<sup>96</sup> ideologues and their propaganda materials are on a daily basis winning recruits, sympathizers, and supporters among Muslims (and even non-Muslims) the world over via the Internet. This paper proposes the development of a set of creative and effective measures to battle the radicalizing effect of the militant jihadi Internet presence by strategically uploading “countering jihad” materials, while carefully monitoring and scientifically evaluating, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, the interest and effects created by each of these Internet based interventions. To date, no countering materials exist that match Al Qaeda’s (AQ’s) image driven and emotionally provocative materials that also artfully make use of Islamic verses, hadiths, traditions, and music to convince potential adherents. This paper argues for a change in tactics and puts forward a method to carry out a countering campaign whose impact can be both quantifiably and qualitatively measured. The goal is to de-legitimize and strongly counter Internet-based militant jihadi propaganda materials, their claims, their authors, and ultimately de-legitimize the militant jihadi ideologues and their ideology.

### **Militant Jihadi Use of the Internet**

Al Qaeda and its affiliate groups operate with leadership, ideologues, instigators, training camps, financiers, members, supporters, and plotters existing in real time and in real space. Many of their activities, however, especially between Al Qaeda’s central leadership and its huge global following, take place on the Internet. For instance, AQ “scholars” regularly upload ideological and practical lessons, answer questions from their worldwide following, as well as debate among themselves about ideological issues concerning the legitimacy of terrorism. This occurs so frequently that one researcher who closely follows such debates dubbed the Al Qaeda presence on the Internet as the “University of Jihad” (Paz, 2011).

An example of the ideological debates that take place within militant jihadi forums include a

---

<sup>95</sup> This paper was written in May 2011 before the raid on the Osama bin Laden compound.

<sup>96</sup> The author makes use of the term “militant jihad” as a reference to terrorists groups who claim that they are carrying out a “jihad” and acting in the name of Islam by attacking both civilian and military targets. These groups heavily rely heavily upon and promote “martyrdom” (suicide) operations claiming the rewards referred to in Islamic scriptures will be accorded to the person(s) who carries out such an act. When referring to militant jihad the author is fully aware of and respectful of the religious and completely non-terrorist related references to the greater jihad in the Koran, which refers to the constant and ever vigilant need for an inner struggle to master oneself and attain a moral lifestyle, and assures her readers that in writing about those who believe in a call to militant jihadi terrorism she has tried to find the best term that describes both their ideology and actions and by doing so means no disrespect to the Islamic faith nor to the majority of Muslims that follow Islam peacefully.

discussion that followed the recanting from inside an Egyptian prison of Sayyid Imam, the former head of the Egyptian al-Jihad and author of influential books that many AQ leaders used to indoctrinate recruits and justify killing. When his defection was reported in various news outlets, AQ leader and ideologue Ayman Al Zawahiri retaliated by asking in a sardonic letter posted to the Internet, “Do they now have fax machines in Egyptian jail cells? ... I wonder if they’re connected to the same line as the electric-shock machines,” (Wright, 2008).

Al Zawahiri also held an Internet question and answer session in which he answered pre-submitted questions from his loyal followers (Zawahiri, 2008). Likewise, the AQ “superstars” such as Al Zawahiri, Osama bin Ladin, Sheikh Anwar Al-Awlaki, Adam Gadahn, Samir Khan, and others use the Internet to distribute video and audio statements, issue statements about world events, and directly speak through Internet productions to supporters, potential recruits, and, at times, even addressing national leaders (e.g., U.S. Presidents). Their video productions often include instructions for their supporters and put forth arguments to try to attract further adherents to their cause.

Ideological development within militant jihadi thinking can also be witnessed occurring in Internet space, which functions as a safe “gathering” space for Al Qaeda leaders to “meet” and air their views. In recent years, ideology was shaped around the justification for suicide bombing as a form of Islamic martyrdom. At first, many agreed that suicide bombings were justified in Muslim occupied territories against enemy combatants, as in the Palestinian struggle against Israel. Later, debate centered on the justification of suicide terrorism against civilians. It was argued that Israel is a militarized society and therefore has no civilians. Further, some espoused the view that citizens of countries who support totalitarian Arab regimes and occupations in Muslim lands (usually citing the United States and nations with forces in Iraq and Afghanistan) voted for their leaders and therefore may be punished for their country’s military actions (Paz, 2011).

Subsequent debates ensued on the topic of whether women should be involved in fighting jihad and carrying out suicide missions. This debate continues to the present and has broadened into being the focus of fatwas, forums, and even Internet magazines (Al-Khansa and Al Shamika) aimed at advising and equipping women for their role in militant jihad (Knop, 2007; SITE, March 14, 2011).

Another debate occurring in cyberspace concerns the Islamic justification for the use weapons of mass destruction and poisons. The justifications given are often based upon previous western use of such methods, i.e., the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima and the Russians sending poison socks to Chechen rebel leader Basaev, which killed his chickens, and a poisoned letter to Arab fighter Khattab in Chechnya, which killed him (Paz, 2005; Speckhard, 2006).

Most recently, there has been an onslaught of advice and directives on the Internet, aimed at U.S. Muslims, to become homegrown terrorists and strike at U.S. government, civilian, and military targets inside the homeland. The argument justifying these attacks is based on retribution for numerous alleged and actual war crimes and human rights violations against Muslims in occupied territories. These Internet relayed directives give detailed advice on how to train, what not to do (i.e., do not leave the U.S. to go to a foreign training ground), how to evade arrest, and how to successfully mount and carry out a terrorist attack inside the U.S.

In addition to all of the above, there are also a plethora of Internet based pamphlets, books, letters, videos, photos, music, and multimedia presentations that call new recruits and supporters to activate

in behalf of the militant jihad. If there is any doubt as to how to activate, numerous manuals and even online courses are available to teach how to manufacture and strategically disperse poisons, toxins, bombs, incendiary devices; how to plan and carry out an effective terrorist attack including even cyber-terrorism; and how to promulgate the militant jihadi messages even further (Brachman, January 31, 2011).

These are only a small recounting of the numerous ways in which militant jihadi groups make use of the Internet. Entire books and conferences have been devoted to the subject and go well beyond the scope of this brief paper (Weimann, 2006; Boaz Ganor, 2007). The important thing, however, is to understand that the militant jihadi groups are currently highly successful in promulgating their ideological messages and through the skilful use of emotionally manipulative messaging, recruiting, motivating, and equipping men and women all around the world to become highly lethal terrorists.

### **Al Qaeda's Media Manipulation**

When it comes to its Internet presence, Al Qaeda devotes considerable resources and thought to its multimedia materials. There is a dedicated media arm of Al Qaeda that continues to expand. Followers can even sign up for online instruction courses on how to create and promulgate militant jihadi materials. Significantly, a decade ago, Bin Laden wrote to Mullah Omar (the Taliban leader) that ninety percent of his battle was conducted in the media (Bergen, 2011).

A quick perusal of Internet and downloadable "products" makes clear that Al Qaeda leaders are adept at making use of highly emotional and vivid portrayals of both alleged and actual cases where Muslims are victims of actions by western-supported regimes or the military. Often, the emotion-packed imagery in their Internet "products" is enough to cause secondary traumatization in viewers, galvanizing them to action. This is especially true for those who identify with the victims. This identification with "fictive kin" becomes strengthened for Muslim viewers who are told that these victims are Muslim "brothers and sisters" that need to be defended and avenged.

The usual strategy is to use strong imagery and emotional pleas to convince the viewer that Islam and Islamic people and lands are under attack. Then, further arguments are made to justify the need for a "defensive" jihad and for extraordinary measures including so-called "martyrdom" missions or suicide attacks on civilian populations.

Al Qaeda producers are also very savvy in artfully weaving familiar Islamic scripture, hadiths, traditions, and music into their emotionally packed ideological messaging in order to make it more persuasive to the viewer. In this way, they gain adherents and spread their ideology, drawing new recruits and supporters--those who volunteer, those wishing to become "martyrs," as well as those who support the movement by spreading messages, raising money, etc.

We can discover how they develop multimedia Internet materials by examining examples of uploaded militant jihadi videos made during the recent U.S. led invasion in Iraq that depicted (in video and photographic images) U.S.-led forces taking part in an "unjust occupation," harming people who appeared to be civilians. Out of context video clips of U.S. politicians making statements that could be perceived as callous and imperialist statements were often juxtaposed next to these images in order to create outrage and the impression that Islam was under attack. Video clips were interspersed with inspirational Islamic music and images of small "David" type heroes

and winning battles against the “Goliath” U.S. forces. Some of the clips included snipers attacking U.S. soldiers, militants exploding U.S. convoys, and even beheadings of those deemed responsible for “war crimes.” The viewer was then invited to support the “jihad” to the best of their ability.

Similar videos have been produced portraying Muslims in the Chechen, Palestinian, Kashmiri and Afghani conflicts. Chillingly, American militant jihadi converts are imploring American Muslims to rise up and attack within their own country (Ambinder, June 30, 2010). Any emotionally vulnerable person watching these videos that is swept up in the provocative imagery and emotional language can find it relatively easy to accept the false statements and be led down a path of logic that emotionally manipulates them into supporting the militant jihad.

### **The Current Countering Militant Jihad Internet Battle**

At present, many western intelligence services monitor, and even clandestinely take part in, militant jihadi discussion groups, as well as tracking militant jihadi ideological postings. Some non-profit organizations and governments also attempt to take down militant jihadi Internet sites via cyber warfare or criminal prosecution.

Despite this, on a daily basis, militant jihadi Internet forums provide a space for discussion, debate, and promulgation of militant jihadi ideological materials. Very little is currently being done using multi-media messaging to pro-actively address the same audience militant jihadis are targeting, to delegitimize their leadership and messaging.

The Saudis were, perhaps, the first to create an Internet presence countering militant jihadi ideologues (in Arabic) on their discussion forums. Saudi Salafi scholars participated in the forums and gently, but firmly, pointed out to participants how the militant jihadi claims were Islamically incorrect. Then they guided potential new followers away from believing in or continuing deeper along the militant jihadi path.

This was followed by numerous UK initiatives in English. One, the Radical New Way, is a UK sponsored website devoted to capturing the attention of an English speaking audience, similar to the one targeted by AQ, by posting Islamic opinions, teachings, and mediating discussions all directed toward non-violence. In another effort, the Salafi scholars of Siraat monitor English language militant jihadi sites without overtly participating and then strategically post Salafi-based scholarly papers to the sites at moments in discussions when their arguments can successfully inject doubt on the correctness of the militant jihadi claims.

However, to this author’s knowledge, no one has produced multi-media Internet-based materials similar to the AQ products that we know are effective, i.e., products that are image driven, emotionally intense, and make strategic use of Islamic scripture verses, hadiths, traditions, and music to convince adherents of the other side of the argument. To counter AQ’s effective use of the Internet, it is necessary to not only produce materials that are targeted at the same audiences they reach and capture and rivet their attention on the same level emotionally, but to also take the argument in other directions or, at a minimum, delegitimize the arguments being made by the militant jihadi groups. This paper proposes a program to do just that.

## Target Audience

The populations we propose to influence through our activities are those individuals vulnerable to and exposed to Internet recruitment and indoctrination. This includes those who are simply exploring but are vulnerable to becoming radicalized; those already partially influenced by the rhetoric; and those who have already fallen prey to it and have become extremists endorsing militant jihadi ideologies, political violence, and terrorism. This includes those in the United States, where AQ has, in recent months, increased its calls for Muslims in the United States to join the militant jihad as well as the UK.

United States Militant jihadi extremism has not yet found a solid footing among American Muslims. Yet these calls urge American Muslims to rise up and attack the U.S. from inside for its policies and actions in Afghanistan and Iraq and do so using fiery and emotionally manipulative discourse that plays upon Muslims fears that Islam and Islamic people, especially civilians, are under attack from the west. Already two serious attacks on the U.S. military inside the U.S. have occurred carried out by fellow American Muslims who believed that the answer to the troubling issues brought up by these ideologues is to rise up in violence against their own country. Likewise, Somali immigrants in the Twin Cities (Minnesota) and elsewhere were encouraged and activated, in part via the Internet, to go on militant jihad outside the U.S. While U.S. Muslims have far less vulnerability to becoming radicalized than do those in Europe, it is a serious propaganda threat that must be countered. This program aims at the same U.S. Muslims that may be engaging over the Internet with militant jihadi materials and propagandists.

United Kingdom The UK has already seen numerous militant jihadi terrorism plots; most of them were thwarted. However, others have been activated with deadly results. The current AQ global strategy promoting violent attacks on the west is based on the slow and steady indoctrination of Muslims worldwide into the AQ ideology, in part or in whole, and, in doing so, to slowly build a very strong base from which to later draw recruits to rise up and strike. This strategy was advocated by AQ ideologue Al Suri (Lia, 2008). The ideological battle to successfully convince even moderate Muslims that suicide attacks and terrorism are legitimate means of influencing the political process is one that takes place largely over the Internet, but also occurs in mosques, study groups, and training camps, both inside and outside of the UK.

The slow indoctrination strategy to win hearts and minds of Muslims and even non-Muslims appears to be working in many regions including Europe, and particularly the UK, in regards to endorsing suicide terrorism. In the UK, recent surveys have shown an alarming level of endorsement for militant jihadi terrorism tactics with up to five percent of UK Muslims endorsing suicide terror attacks against civilians within the UK as a legitimate means to influence foreign policy (Dodd, 2005; Basham, 2006; King, July 23, 2005).

Moreover, we have seen clear evidence in the UK of militant jihadis in action—attacking the metro twice, attacking a hospital, plotting multiple attacks including a major plot to down multiple airliners bound for the U.S. Likewise, there is clear evidence that the jump from simply radical views to becoming a full-blown homegrown extremist capable of carrying out a violent attack is one that can occur in a matter of only weeks. The ground is already laid for the quick and lethal activation of

radicalized Muslims to engage in violent extremist actions; this is a very real possibility. The basis is a growing widespread acceptance of many tenets of the militant jihadi ideology among UK Muslims, increasing the possibility for indigenous terrorists to appear, activate, and act violently in a very short time frame once pushed along the terrorist trajectory—from being an ideological supporter to an active agent of violence.

Clearly there is a need in the UK and beyond to find ways to prevent Internet based radicalization, to protect vulnerable populations, and reverse the militant jihadi trajectory (i.e., from becoming sympathizers to ideologically committed and, hence, vulnerable to becoming active and violent militant jihadi extremists).

It is possible to engage with, and try to turn, those who are vulnerable, as well as those who have already begun to be radicalized or who are indeed already extremists, away from militant jihadi ideologies. Given the speed with which vulnerable individuals are currently radicalized in the UK (and possibly the U.S.), it is important to develop a powerful strategic capability to actively counter the call to vulnerable populations to become active in the militant jihad on the Internet.

It is important to note that UK authorities estimate that there are already 1600 identified militant jihadi extremists living in the UK, the majority of these passport holders, and that monitoring is taking place of up to thirty active militant jihadi plots (Manningham-Buller, November 10, 2006). Likewise, UK intelligence estimated in 2005 that three thousand British-born or British-based people had passed through Osama Bin Laden's training camps and an additional ten thousand have attended extremist conferences (Winnett and Leppard, July 10, 2005). Already radicalized UK citizens who are passport holders as well as those vulnerable to be radicalized are a danger not only to the UK but also to the U.S. as they have visa waivers to easily enter the U.S., as do all UK citizens. The recently thwarted airline plots made clear that the U.S. could be a serious target of UK extremists.

### **Countering Materials**

The way to create an active counter militant jihadi presence on the Internet is through the strategic placement of intellectually and emotionally provocative materials that initiate an effective alternate discourse with those individuals most vulnerable to, and already interacting with, militant jihadi materials. To do this requires the monitoring of English language militant jihadi websites and chat rooms in order to learn and keep abreast of the contemporary concerns and changes in the militant jihadi discourse and narratives that are available to American, British, and other English speaking audiences. It is important to understand the particularly compelling and persuasive elements in current militant jihadi discourse, propaganda films, and materials to understand what draws recruits and supporters and is able to radicalize them into accepting violence and terrorism as an answer to social problems.

The next step is to develop and test creative materials that actively intervene in the current discourse and that directly counter their Internet materials, turning these same compelling elements against them. These materials must be developed to challenge the Islamic-based justification for violence (the call to militant jihad), arguing that the calls (to jihad) and justifications are a false interpretation of Islamic doctrine; their logic is false; and that, despite the fact that the emotions the militant jihadi products engender and the grievances, they call to attention are genuine, the call to engage in

terrorism is unjustified and based on false logic. Likewise, countering materials should also offer an alternative, but equally compelling, discourse that actively engages the same vulnerable English speaking Muslim populations to turn them from political violence and terrorism and toward dealing with political issues in a non-violent manner.

To do so, the materials developed must make use of all the persuasive techniques that we know work: intense imagery related to issues important to the target audience (i.e., social justice, the wellbeing of the worldwide ummah, etc.) that is emotionally provocative; Islamic justifications and arguments based in the Koran, hadiths, and well known Islamic traditions; and emotional signals that carry particular meaning to them such as mujahideen speaking, Islamic music, the use of iconic images, etc. It is possible to even take their own digital products and rework them in a way that deconstructs their message. In doing so, their own emotionally evocative and skilfully crafted materials can be turned against them.

The next step is to load the materials on the Internet using an anonymous website such as YouTube and track the response. By uploading to YouTube, it is possible to quantitatively and qualitatively assess the impact the materials have. More on the means of measuring success will be discussed further on.

An effective countering program must thus include a combination of psychology and emotionally based approaches skilfully interwoven with Islamic arguments to turn individuals away from the path to violence. Some candidate programs are:

- a) A series of interviews called “My Jihad.” One idea is to feature an Algerian former jihadi who fought alongside Osama bin Ladin in Afghanistan but who no longer agrees with the militant jihad, AQ, and violence against civilians. This is a man who knew Osama bin Ladin personally and was mentored by Azzam. He calls himself a mujahideen and still desires to die a “martyr,” but he totally disagrees with the use of the tactics of suicide terrorism or attacking civilian targets. He is charismatic and would be able to delegitimize the leaders and message of AQ. He agreed to be interviewed for a video that could be uploaded to YouTube in order to de-legitimize and attack the religious and militant legitimacy and reputation of bin Ladin, as well as the militant jihadi ideology. His interview(s) would certainly spark a lively discourse. Other possibilities include video interviews with the Egyptian recanters from al-Jihad (e.g., Sayyid Imam al-Sharif) who caused Al Zawahiri to write a book discounting their new non-violent stance, or others who have credibility with the militant jihadis but who can also discredit them.
- b) A series of “deconstruct” teaching units that make use of militant jihadis’ own propaganda materials; for example, downloaded highly emotionally manipulative videos that are taken apart (literally deconstructed) and then modified to add commentary that discredits their conclusions. For instance, American born Adam Gadahn’s video calls to militant jihad could be partitioned and modified, adding segments to disagree with him and calling attention to the ways he is manipulating both the Koran and the emotions of the audience to call for violence. It is possible to do the same with jihadi films that glorify violence, taking them apart and putting them back together in a way that delegitimizes their claims and creates disgust rather than attraction in the viewer.

In this way, we can make direct use of the emotionally based justifications and materials that are not consistent with traditional interpretations of Islamic doctrine that are currently on the Internet calling for engaging in terrorism. This provides the viewer a chance to become aware of their strong emotional responses and to see how the propaganda they are exposed to is emotionally compelling but totally manipulative, so much so that they have failed to notice the faulty logic and false claims based on Islam that are used to argue for militant jihad. Countering materials can also build directly upon the same emotionally compelling calls for action and use the very same visually and emotionally provocative materials that have already been placed on the Internet, but offer a competing and alternate discourse. It is also possible to create emotionally compelling clips that compete directly with the calls to violence and that engender a different set of emotional reactions (disgust, horror, and shame rather than excitement, glory, and adventure).

- c) New creative and emotionally impacting interventions that discuss, in a provocative manner, the militant jihadi rhetoric including false Islamic conclusions made. The rhetoric can provide a serious challenge to seeing clearly the falsehoods imbedded in militant jihadi materials. New Islamic based interventions can experiment with rhetoric using pictures, music, and rap lyrics. These could be aimed at engaging gang audiences who, in the UK, are particularly vulnerable to engagement by Muslim based extremists who justify gang related crimes (as legitimate acts while in a state of war) and encourage gang members to continue criminal activities to help fund AQ type extremism. Competing materials can challenge these views and offer an alternative discourse.
- d) Anonymously uploaded papers written by well-known and respected (by the jihadis) Salafi scholars that directly address the question being discussed and answer it in a way that is delegitimizing to the claims made by the militant jihadi ideologue.

### **Methods: Measuring the Impact**

This paper describes a concept for a program to engage a target population through a series of creative Internet-based interventions. To measure the impact of these interventions we propose a two-prong approach to testing the materials. The first step is to develop, test, and fine-tune the materials using focus groups matched to the target audience (i.e., English speaking Muslims who engage with militant jihadi materials or feel some sympathy for these groups and their objectives) to learn how they respond to the materials. The second step is to create a natural experiment to gain feedback directly from the target audience by anonymously uploading strategically designed materials onto the Internet—to militant jihadi websites when appropriate but in most cases, to popular sites such as YouTube, Facebook, etc. This step will strategically place the materials in such a way as to garner attention to them, compete with the prevailing discourse, and begin to de-legitimize it. The interventions consist of a variety of products, each when deployed will be carefully monitored and evaluated both for immediate and long-term impact to see what kind of “buzz” or attention it creates both on the targeted website to which it was uploaded as well as on other (e.g., militant jihadi websites). The goal would be to learn if, and how exactly, it is challenging militant jihadi discourse and where the interventions are effective.

Some websites facilitate monitoring; for example, when materials are uploaded to YouTube, it is possible to measure how many viewers have seen them and to qualitatively assess comments written in response. Likewise, if a countering material/intervention has gone “viral” (i.e., rapid, widespread dissemination) we can find evidence of it being discussed elsewhere on the World Wide Web. If we are successfully reaching our target audience, we should be able to find evidence of it being discussed on militant jihadi websites—evidence that our materials have indeed “infected” their discourse.

Thus first through the focus groups and second through monitoring various websites, it is possible to track the influence level of our materials, measuring them by the number of views (hits) made, responses posted, qualitative content of the responses and the resulting discourse created, as well as where the discourse takes place. As we analyze the qualitative responses, we can begin to assess what types of attitude and reported behavioural changes the materials may be creating. We will also, when appropriate and useful, use scholars and others with no apparent connection to the program or program sponsors to independently and strategically comment on our materials and inject further materials.

## **Results**

This proposed project aims to engage via the Internet those vulnerable to be influenced by militant jihadi propaganda, as well as those already engaged in militant jihad, to challenge them to see the emotionally manipulative and totally non-Islamic aspects of the militant jihadi ideology and materials and to attempt to turn these audiences from a commitment to political violence and terrorism toward engaging with political issues in a non-violent manner. In doing so, the project materials will be an active agent to deconstruct and disagree with current militant jihadi propaganda.

Once countering militant jihad materials are developed and deployed, both quantitative and qualitative measurements of their impact are possible. This monitoring will include measuring the number of hits (views) a particular Internet intervention has, the discourse it creates, and the content of that discourse at the site where it was placed and at other sites to which the content and related discourse spreads, especially known militant jihadi websites. An important metric is the extent to which the intervention product was able to penetrate the existing militant jihadi discourse and make some measurable effect upon it. Each strategic intervention will, in effect, be treated as a natural experiment--observing an active change agent and monitoring to assess its effect.

This program would result in a significant step toward the prevention and reversal of radicalization among U.S., UK, and English speaking Muslims worldwide, who are exposed to militant jihadi ideologies and militant groups active on the Internet. A secondary and very important result would be to learn more about the militant jihadi discourse and how it works via the Internet, both by passively monitoring it and by actively intervening in the Internet discourse in an experimental modality. Developing and testing various Internet engagement tools is, in effect, testing multiple strategies/tracks for countering Internet based militant jihadi ideologies, ideologues, and their adherents, and improving them over time. These tracks will, in all cases, make use of clerical interventions that challenge militant jihadi beliefs as well as address the psychological underpinning for embracing extremist beliefs and discovering effective techniques for protecting or turning radicalized English speaking Muslims from an ideological commitment to militant jihadist beliefs. It

is possible to evaluate success in all of these arenas and build a model and database of approaches that work, as well as an on-going analysis of those that do not.

The first phase in this proposed program is to develop Internet-based multi-media materials to protect vulnerable English speaking Muslims from becoming extremists and also to intervene with English speaking extremists to disengage them from violent ideologies. However, there is no reason the same tactics cannot be applied in other languages with careful attention to cultural mores. In carrying out this project, we would be learning, first hand, what motivates English speaking Muslims to engage with militant jihadi extremism via the Internet and what tactics work best to engage them to question and perhaps even relinquish their extremist views and activities. We could track and report on the psychological mechanisms, vulnerabilities, group processes and ideological issues involved as we witness it first hand in the population we work with. This can be a huge benefit to fighting extremism, and ultimately defeating, militant jihadi terrorism within and beyond the English-speaking world.

## References

- Ambinder, M. (June 30, 2010). Al Qaeda's first English language magazine is here. *The Atlantic*.
- Basham, P. (2006). Many British Muslims put Islam first.
- Bergen, P. (2011, march 31) Al Qaeda responds to CNN. *CNN*
- Boaz Ganor, K. v. K., & Duarte, C. A. M. (2007). *Hypermedia seduction for terrorist recruiting*. IOS Press.
- Brachman, J. (2011, January 31). Al Qaida's new leaders. *Worldwide Antiterrorism Conference*.
- Dodd, V. (2005). Guardian/ICM Poll: Two-thirds of Muslims consider leaving UK. *Guardian*.
- King, A. (2005, July 23). One in four Muslims sympathises with motives of terrorists. *The Telegraph You Gov Survey*.
- Knop, K. V. (2007). The female jihad: Al Qaeda's women. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30(5): 397-414.
- Lia, B. (2008). Doctrines for jihadi terrorist training. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20(4): 518-542.
- Manningham-Buller, E. (November 10, 2006). The international terrorist threat to the UK. *ICJS Research*.
- Paz, R. (2005). Global jihad and WMD: Between martyrdom and mass destruction. *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 2: 74-86.
- Paz, R. (2011). Reading their lips: The credibility of militant jihadi websites as "soft power" in the war of the minds. *RTO Technical Report*. A. C. Speckhard, NATO. Psychosocial, Organizational and Cultural Aspects of Terrorism.
- SITE (2011, March 14). Al-Shamikhah, Al Qaeda women's magazine, launches: Report. *Huffington Post*

Speckhard, A. (2006). The new global jihad, 9-11 and the use of weapons of mass destruction: Changes in mindset and modus operandi. *Democracy and Security* 2(2): 287 - 298

Weimann, G. (2006). *Terror on the Internet: The new arena, the new challenges*. U.S. Institute of Peace.

Winnett, R. and D. Leppard (2005, July 10). Leaked No 10 dossier reveals Al-Qaeda's British recruits. *The Sunday Times*

Wright, L. (2008, June 2). The rebellion within: An Al Qaeda mastermind questions terrorism. *The New Yorker*.

Zawahiri, A. A. (2008). *The Open Meeting - Part 1 and Part 2*. A. Qaeda.

## MEDIATION AND CIVIL WARS INVOLVING TERRORISM (KARL DEROUEN &amp; PAULINA POSPIESZNA)

Karl DeRouen Jr., Ph.D.  
The University of Alabama  
[kderouen@bama.ua.edu](mailto:kderouen@bama.ua.edu)

Paulina Pospieszna, Ph.D.  
University of Konstanz

### Introduction

The prevalent form of armed conflict is civil war. Whereas at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most war victims were soldiers, an estimated 90% of those killed in armed conflicts since the end of the Cold War have been civilians (Collier, 2003). There has also been a dramatic increase in the use of terror since 1970. Many acts of terror take place in the context of a civil war. Given the importance of mediation as a means of managing civil violence and the threat civil war poses to regional and global security, mediation of these wars is receiving increasing attention from practitioners and scholars. However, while mediation in internal conflicts has been studied extensively, few scholars have examined the linkage between mediation and the use of terror by rebel groups as those researching terrorism and civil wars tend to have separate lines of inquiry.

The purpose of this essay is to provide an overview of the nexus between civil wars involving terrorism and mediation. Specifically, the paper will provide preliminary answers to the following basic questions:

- What do we know about the linkage between civil war and terrorism?
- Are territorial wars (related to demands for secession or autonomy) more likely to involve terror?
- Can mediation ameliorate the use of terror in civil wars?

### Terms

The study defines domestic **terrorism** as a subset of violent strategies, or threat of use of violence, that can be used during civil war for political ends—to achieve national independence, influencing government policy, or overthrow the government (Lake 2002; Sandler 2003).

**Civil war** is defined here as a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths (“UCDP definition of civil war”).

The literature on civil wars makes an important distinction between territorial and governmental types of conflicts. *Governmental* conflicts concern the type of political system, the replacement of the central government, or the change of its composition, whereas *territorial* conflicts stem from those who seek secession or autonomy. Some of the most highly visible civil wars, such as those in Sri

Lanka, Northern Ireland, Israel, and Spain concern the status of a specified territory, often with regards to demands for autonomy or secession. In general, research has shown that territorial wars tend to be intractable, last longer, and are more likely to recur than wars fought over control of government (DeRouen & Bercovitch, 2008). Moreover, territorial wars tend to end much less conclusively, i.e., they are less likely to end with a peace agreement or military victory than governmental wars. However, at the same time, territorial wars are also more likely to involve mediation than governmental wars (DeRouen, Bercovitch, & Pospieszna, 2011).

**Mediation** is “a process of conflict management where disputants seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an individual, group, or state, or organization to settle their conflict or resolve their differences without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of law” (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Willie, 1991).

In order to determine linkages between civil war, terrorism, and mediation this study relied on several datasets including the University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP). The GTD identifies the date, location, the name of the group, the attack type, weapon used, target type, and number of fatalities (Dataset available at <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>). Civil war data are from the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP). In addition, the Civil War Mediation (CWM) dataset (DeRouen, Bercovitch, and Pospieszna, 2011) was used, which provides detailed information about mediation efforts between 1946 and 2004 for each civil war episode identified by the Uppsala Armed Conflict Termination data (ACT) (“*Armed conflict termination dataset codebook*”).

### **Terror within the Context of Civil War**

The specific nature of the relationship between terrorism and civil war is an understudied topic of research. The civil war literature has focused on the onset (e.g., Collier, 2003; Fearon & Laitin, 2003), outcome (e.g., DeRouen & Sobek, 2004), duration (e.g., Fearon, 2004), process of peace building (e.g., Doyle & Sambanis, 2000), and level of violence (e.g., Kalyvas, 2006; Krueger & Laitin, 2008; Lacina 2006). As mentioned, until recently the analysis of terrorism was completely separate from the empirical study of civil war. There are, of course, some important exceptions.

Terrorism can be either a precondition or a cause of civil war, or both (Boulden, 2009; Sambanis, 2008). According to Sambanis, if terrorism is a strategy in civil war then the links between civil war and terrorism are obvious: civil wars create opportune environments for terror and terrorists. However, Sambanis argues that terrorism usually does not evolve into civil war. In some cases, however, “terrorism is in effect a proto-civil war and terrorist violence is a strategy used in the first stages of an insurgency” (Sambanis, 2008). Governments also use terrorism as a tactic. The rationale is that terrorism substitutes for traditional combat when the latter is not advantageous. Since rebels rely on the population for support, the government may use terrorism to weaken an insurgency by killing civilians (Azam & Hoeffler, 2002).

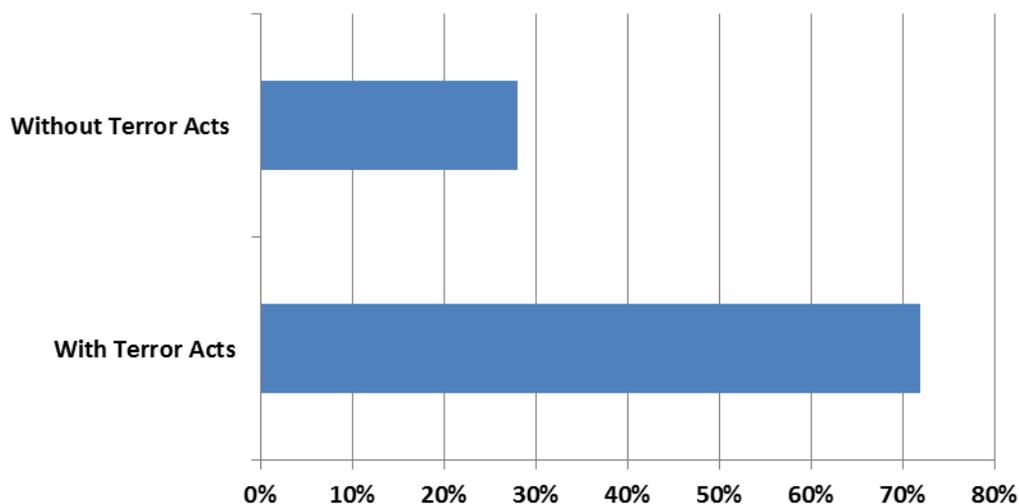
There are several contradictory explanations of the use of terrorism by rebels. One explanation is that, rebel groups will be less likely to target civilians because they are dependent on the civilian population for resources, logistical support, or funding (Zahar, 2001). Alternatively, rebels will be more likely to kill civilians because, by punishing the broad population, extremists seek to provoke a response, secure compliance, demonstrate how determined they are, and mobilize additional recruits

and financial support (Lake, 2002). Another argument is that violence allows rebels to fulfill a variety of functions related to the war. For example, Kirk (1983) offers a rent-seeking model of terrorism where violence becomes a means of generating wealth.

Pape (2003) provides another model. He asserts that terrorism during civil wars follows a strategic logic, i.e. it is designed to achieve specific political purposes. Rebels have used terror tactics to compel an enemy to withdraw; for example, to force Israel to abandon the West Bank and Gaza in 1994 and 1995, or to coerce nations to make significant concessions (e.g., al Qaeda pressuring the United States to withdraw from the Arabian peninsula).

Finally, some researchers argue that rebel groups adopt extreme methods to compensate for their political weakness, and in order to shift bargaining range to their advantage especially under time pressure (e.g., Hultman, 2007; Lake, 2002). Often, rebel groups, who are losing battles, target civilians in order to impose extra political and military costs on the government (Hultman, 2007).

Civil war and terrorist tactics employed by rebels are often tightly linked. By adapting our CWM data on civil war episodes and the GTD data on terror we demonstrate in Figure 1 that rebels tend to use terrorist tactics in most civil wars (Krueger & Laitin, 2008).



**Figure 1. Use of Terror by Rebels Groups in Civil War, 1970-2008**

Sources: GTD, ACT, and CWM.

The type of war also has interesting implications for the use of acts of terror. Given that territorial wars are more intractable we now explore the use of acts of terror in territorial civil wars.

### **Use of Terror by Organized Rebel Groups in Territorial Civil Wars**

Using the UCDP and GTD datasets we find that territorial civil wars are more likely to contain acts of terror than governmental wars. In 84% of all territorial civil war episodes since 1970, terror was used by rebels as a strategy, whereas in governmental conflicts, terror was used by rebels in 62% of cases. It should be kept in mind that territorial wars are also more likely to recur and this affects these percentages.

Table 1 below demonstrates that wars in the 20 sampled countries have yielded a high number of terrorist-related fatalities.<sup>97</sup>

	<b>Terror Acts</b>	<b>Total Number of Fatalities</b>
<b>Angola (Cabinda)</b>	3	21
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	9	159
<b>Bosnia-Herzegovina</b>	13	26
<b>Croatia</b>	2	1
<b>Ethiopia</b>	45	413
<b>India</b>	1251	4468
<b>Indonesia</b>	130	262
<b>Iran</b>	41	39
<b>Israel</b>	994	1265
<b>Moldova</b>	6	8
<b>Myanmar</b>	142	525
<b>Niger</b>	24	134
<b>Philippines</b>	1559	4474
<b>Russia</b>	348	2037
<b>Spain</b>	369	235
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	1319	10305
<b>Sudan</b>	54	423
<b>Thailand</b>	77	58
<b>Turkey</b>	1027	3587
<b>United Kingdom</b>	2237	1714

**Table 1. Terror in a Sample of 20 Countries with Territorial Civil Wars (1970-2008)**

*Sources: GTD and ACT.*

Next we assess the relationship between the duration of war and number of terrorist incidents in our sample of 20 countries with territorial civil wars. We find a correlation between war duration and number of incidents. The implication is that long-standing incompatibilities are more likely to

---

<sup>97</sup> These territorial conflicts are in: Angola (Cabinda), Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Moldova, Myanmar, Niger, Philippines, Russia, Sri Lanka, Spain, Sudan, Thailand, and Turkey, the United Kingdom.

involve acts of terror. This was certainly the case in Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

There are four countries from our sample of 20 that exhibit the greatest number of terrorist acts: UK/Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and India. Table 2 summarizes data for those cases. Even though the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland organized the greatest number of terror acts (bombings/explosions), those incidents produced far less fatalities than terror acts in the other three countries.

The LTTE rebels of Sri Lanka were responsible for the most violence of all rebel groups in our sample of 20 countries. Approximately 34% of the people who died from terror in territorial civil wars were killed by LTTE bombings/explosions.

Location	Start Date	End Date	Rebels	Terror Acts	Fatalities	Popularity of Attack Type
India	7/1/1982	12/31/1988	People's Liberation Army (PLA)	3	15	1.Armed Assault 2.Bombing/Explosion 3.Assassination
	1/1/1978	8/12/1988	Tripura National Volunteers (TNV)	29	151	
	3/16/1989	12/31/1990	All Bodo Students Union (Bodo Militants)	54	363	
	5/29/1990	12/31/1991	United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)	19	11	
	10/12/1992	8/23/1993	All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF)	2	7	
	1/1/1983	12/31/1993	Sikh insurgents	716	2371	
	10/31/1995	12/31/1995	National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)	1	5	
	7/1/1992	8/1/1997	National Socialist Council of Nagaland	23	214	
	1/1/2000	12/31/2000	National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM)	1	10	
	1/1/1992	12/31/2000	PLA	6	13	
	12/11/1989		Kashmiri Militants, Bodo Militants;	125	379	
	1/1/1993		National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)	34	207	
	1/1/1997		NLFT	24	171	
	1/1/1994		ULFA	184	496	
		1/1/2003		United National Liberation Front (UNLF); PLA; NSCN-IM; National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K)	30	
			<b>Total</b>	1251	4468	
Philippines	8/20/1970	12/31/1990	Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), New	931	2908	

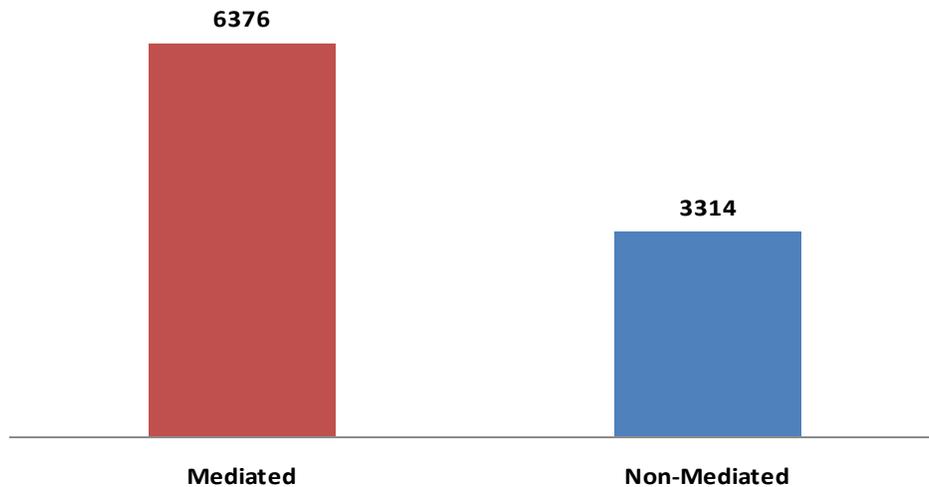
			People's Army (NPA)			1.Armed Assault 2.Bombing/Explosion 3.Assassination
	1/1/1993		Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG); MNLF; Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF); NPA	628	1566	
			<b>Total</b>	1559	4474	
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	7/1/1983	12/24/2001	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE); Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO)	1312	10284	1.Armed Assault 2.Bombing/Explosion 3.Assassination
	6/23/2003	12/31/2003	LTTE	7	21	
			<b>Total</b>	1319	10305	
<b>UK</b>	8/1/1971	12/31/1991	Irish Republican Army (IRA); Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA)	2219	1709	1.Bombing/Explosion 2.Assassination 3.Armed Assault
	1/1/1998	8/18/1998	IRA; Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA)	18	5	
			<b>Total</b>	2237	1714	

**Table 2. Scale of Violence and Popularity of Attack Type in Four Countries with Territorial Civil Wars (1970-2008)**

*Sources: GTD and ACT*

**Establishing Relationship between Mediation and Terror**

Figure 2 depicts the relationship between terror acts and mediation during civil wars. However, it would be premature to judge the direction of causality. Is mediation more likely to take place in countries where terror is frequently used or is terror more likely to occur when mediators intervene in the conflict?



*Figure 2. Number of Terror Acts in Mediated and Non-Mediated Territorial Civil Wars in a Sample of 20 Countries (1970-2008).*

*Sources: GTD and CWM.*

Research has shown that mediation is more likely in intractable conflicts (Bercovitch & Diehl 1997; Bercovitch & Gartner 2006; Bercovitch & Jackson 2001). Terrorism can play a role in increasing intractable conditions (Bapat, 2007; Lozano-Gracia, 2010; Ibáñez & Velásquez, 2009; Sambanis, 2008). Terrorism can undermine stability in a region and lead to the internationalization of the war, thus increasing the probability of mediation.

Our data demonstrate that mediation makes a difference in wars that experience terrorism. Mediated civil war episodes with acts of terror tend to recur less than non-mediated episodes with terror acts—26% and 51% of conflict episodes respectively. We are also able to report that mediation helps to reduce violence. Using our sample of 20 territorial wars we find that mediation reduces the number of terrorist episodes. It should be kept in mind that this is a small sample and that future work should account for possible two-way relationships between mediation and terror. This can be accomplished with simultaneous equations modeling.

Like most policies, mediation does not work in all cases. In some cases mediators may be biased towards rebel groups who are using terrorism. Critics of the Norwegian mediation efforts in Sri Lanka, for example, have argued that Norway was biased towards the LTTE (Weerasinghe, 2005) perhaps because of the influence of the Tamil diaspora in Norway (Rovik, 2005). Others report that terrorist attacks occur in association with the peace talks to derail or destroy peace negotiations (Cronin, 2010). Finally, there could be selection effects at work, which result in the worst civil wars never being mediated. This might be, for example, because the government does not want to negotiate with terrorists because it would appear to grant them legitimacy.

## Conclusion

This brief essay has broken ground on an important yet under-studied relationship between terror, civil war, and mediation. There is much more to be said on this topic and we admit that we have only scratched the surface here.

Revisiting the questions posed in the beginning:

*What do we know about the linkage between civil war and terrorism?* We have shown, as others before us, (e.g., Krueger & Laitin, 2008) what may be considered quite obvious: civil wars and terrorism are tightly linked and terrorism in civil wars can be used by both governments and rebels. In this study, we focused on the use of acts of terror by rebel groups and we report that, in most civil wars since 1970, rebels used acts of terrorism against civilians.

*Are territorial wars more likely to involve terror?* Yes. A theoretical argument, which explains this empirical finding in more detail, needs to be developed. One reason could be that territorial wars are so long that eventually the rebels turn to terror (e.g., Colombia). It could also be that the rebels are simply trying to increase the costs on the government in order that more concessions can be gained at the negotiating table. Wars over control of government, on the other hand, tend to be all-or-nothing affairs that are (usually) shorter (Fearon, 2004).

*Can mediation ameliorate the use of terror in civil wars?* The tentative answer is yes. Again, more work, with more sophisticated modeling techniques and control variables, is needed.

We call upon the research and operational communities to look at these interrelated relationships in closer detail. One focus of study could be exploring the impact of mediation styles. For example, perhaps there is a certain form of mediation that will be more successful in civil wars involving terror. In any event, it is imperative that we break away from at the current trend of studying civil wars, terrorism, and mediation in isolation.

## References

- Armed conflict termination dataset codebook.* (n.d.). Unpublished manuscript. Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden. Retrieved from <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/>
- Azam, J.P., & Hoeffler, A. (2002). Violence against civilians in civil wars: Looting or terror? *Journal of Peace Research* 39 (4): 461-485.
- Bapat, N.A. (2007). The internationalization of terrorist campaigns. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 24 (4): 265-280.
- Bercovitch, J. & Diehl, P.F. (1997). Conflict management of enduring rivalries: The frequency, timing and short-term impact of mediation. *International Interactions* 22 (4): 299-320.
- Bercovitch, J. & Jackson, R. (2001). Negotiation or mediation? An exploration of factors affecting the choice of conflict management in international conflict. *Negotiation Journal* 17(1): 59-77.

- Bercovitch, J. & Sigmund Gartner, S. (2006). Is there a method in the madness of mediation? Some lessons for mediators from quantitative studies of mediation. *International Interactions* 32: 329-354.
- Bercovitch, J., Anagnoson, J.T., & Wille, D.J. (1991). Some conceptual issues and empirical trends in the study of successful mediation in international relations. *Journal of Peace Research* 28: 7-17.
- Boulden, J. (2009). Terrorism and civil wars. *Civil wars* 11 (1): 5-21.
- Collier, P., Elliot, L., Hegre, H., Hoeffler, A., Reynal-Querol, M & Sambanis, N. (2003). *Breaking the conflict trap: Civil wars and development policy*. Washington, D.C. and New York: World Bank and Oxford University Press.
- Cronin, A.K. (2010). Negotiating with groups that use terrorism: Lessons for policy-makers. Background papers available at Center for Human Dialogue's website <http://www.hdcentre.org/publications/negotiating-groups-use-terrorism-lessons-policy-makers>
- DeRouen, K., Sobek, D. (2004). The dynamics of civil war duration and outcome. *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3): 303-320
- DeRouen, K., Bercovitch, J. & Pospieszna, P. (2010). Introducing the Civil Wars Mediation (CWM) dataset. International Studies Association Annual Convention, New Orleans, LA, USA, February 17-20.
- DeRouen, K. & Bercovitch, J. (2008). Enduring internal rivalries: A new framework for the study of civil war. *Journal of Peace Research* 45(1): 55-74.
- Doyle, M. & Sambanis, N. (2000). International peacebuilding: A theoretical and quantitative analysis. *American Political Science Review* 94 (4): 779-801.
- Fearon, J. (2004). Why do some civil wars last so much longer than others? *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3): 275-301.
- Fearon, J.D., & Laitin, D.D. (2003). Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. *American Political Science Review* 97: 75-90.
- Hultman, L. (2007). Battle losses and rebel violence: Raising the costs for fighting. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19 (2): 205 – 222.
- Ibáñez, A.M., & Velásquez, A. (2009). Identifying victims of civil conflicts: An evaluation of forced displaced households in Colombia. *Journal of Peace Research* 46 (3): 431-451.
- Kalyvas, S.N. (2006). *The logic of violence in civil wars*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kirk, R.M. (1983). Political terrorism and the size of government: A positive institutional analysis of violence political activity. *Public Choice* 40: 41-52.
- Krueger, A. & Laitin, D.D. (2008). Kto Kogo?: A cross-country study of the origins and targets of terrorism. In *Terrorism, economic development, and political openness*, eds. Philip Keefer and Norman Loayza. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Lacina, B. (2006). Explaining the severity of civil wars. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50 (2) 276-289.
- Lake, D.A. (2002). Rational extremism: Understanding terrorism in the twenty-first century. *Dialog-IO*, Spring, 15–29.
- Lozano-Gracia, N., et al. (2010). The journey to safety: Conflict-Driven migration flows in Colombia. *International Regional Science Review* 33 (2): 157-180.
- Pape, R.A. (2003). The strategic logic of suicide terrorism. *American Political Science Review* 97 (3): 343-361.
- Rovik, F. (2005). Norway: A terrorist safe haven? In *Peace in Sri Lanka: Obstacles and opportunities*. Nugegoda: World Alliance for Peace in Sri Lanka, Colombo.
- Sambanis, N. (2008). Terrorism and civil war. In *Terrorism, economic development, and political openness*, eds. Philip Keefer and Norman Loayza. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sandler, T. (2003). Collective action and transnational terrorism. *World Economy* 26: 779-802.
- Stepanova, E. (2009). Trends in armed conflicts: One-sided violence against civilians. *SIPRI Yearbook 2009: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*.
- UCDP definition of civil war. (n.d.). Retrieved from [http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/data\\_and\\_publications/definitions\\_all.htm#i](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/data_and_publications/definitions_all.htm#i)
- Weerasinghe, M. (2005). Kissinger, Nobel committee, Kissingerian mutants, or how Norway became a sanctuary for terrorists. In *Peace in Sri Lanka: Obstacles and Opportunities*. Nugegoda: World Alliance for Peace in Sri Lanka.
- Zahar, M.J. (2001). Protégés, clients, cannon fodder: Civilians in the calculus of militias. In Adekeye Adebajo and Chandra Lekha Sriram, eds., *Managing armed conflicts in the 21st Century*. London: Frank Cass.

## DETERRENCE, INFLUENCE, AND VIOLENT EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS (PAUL DAVIS)

Paul K. Davis, Ph.D.  
RAND Corporation  
[pdavis@rand.org](mailto:pdavis@rand.org)

## Introduction

The question is often asked whether violent extremist organizations (VEOs) can be deterred.<sup>98</sup> Three observations are especially relevant in response:

- It is more fruitful to ask how a VEO can be *influenced*.
- A VEO is not a single entity, but rather a system with many components subject to different influences (in some cases, even deterrence).
- Influencing someone or some organization to forego terrorism (i.e., primarily, the deliberate killing of many innocent civilians) is very different from influencing them to give up their cause or forego all violence.

The first part of this paper discusses these matters in somewhat more depth. The remainder of the paper sketches an approach to thinking about *how* a VEO may be influenced.

## Deterrence and Influence

The traditional meaning of deterrence refers to successfully avoiding an action by another party by threatening to punish that party if the action is taken (and, implicitly, foregoing that punishment if the action is not taken). In its most familiar form, the superpowers during the Cold War achieved a state of mutual deterrence by having the assured and credible capability to respond effectively to a nuclear attack by the other. People still disagree about what was necessary for deterrence, but the *countervailing strategy* that emerged after study in the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations was, arguably, the mature U.S. Cold War concept (Slocombe, 2003; Brown, 1983).

A classic deterrent strategy is unlikely to succeed against people such as Osama bin Laden or Ayman al Zawahiri. First, the United States and their coalition partners are already attempting to destroy the al Qaeda organization and to capture or kill them personally (it has now succeeded with bin Laden); it is unlikely that they would desist if the al Qaeda leadership merely promised a measure of future restraint. Deterring top leaders, then, is probably a non-starter. What, then, would make more sense?

As mentioned in the introduction, the answer is that it is far better to think in terms of a spectrum of *influences* (Davis & Jenkins, 2002). Classic deterrence is one such influence, but many others exist as well, as noted also by the late Alexander George (George & Smoke, 1973; George, 2003) in his

---

<sup>98</sup> This paper summarizes a presentation made in a related workshop. It is based largely on earlier research on terrorism (Davis and Jenkins, 2002; Davis, 2010) and the social science of terrorism (Davis & Cragin, 2009), but includes some additional material drawn from current research.

work on coercive diplomacy. When referring to a generic VEO, the ways to influence include: (1) co-opt, (2) induce, (3) persuade, (4) dissuade, (5) deter (by threat of punishment), (6) head off (by raising perceived risks and uncertainties), (7) be seen as able to defeat an attack (sometimes called deter by denial), (8) deter an additional attack by punishing now (perhaps to illustrate what punishment means or to demonstrate credibility), (9) deter the next attack by defeating now, or (10) deter the next attack by essentially crushing the other party now. The first four of these do not involve the use of force or even threats regarding the use of force as others do. In any case, a wide range of options exists.

The first argument against an influence approach has its basis in incredulity about co-opting, inducing, persuading, or dissuading the ilk of bin Laden or al Zawahiri. But what about others in the VEO system? Historically, the end of terrorist activities has often been accompanied by compromises in which some opposition figures become part of the political system, despite—in some cases—the fact that they have blood on their hands. Current-day discussions between the Afghan government and elements of the Taliban illustrate the pragmatism of this point.

A second argument against adopting the influence approach is based on the claim that “deterrence” can simply be broadened in meaning to include everything of interest. Communication and clear thinking, however, argue for careful use of language, not obfuscation. We *need* the original meaning of deterrence; we need to make distinctions; obfuscation is not good for decision-making or command and control, even though it is sometimes a necessary element of diplomacy.

### **Seeing the VEO as a System**

It is only natural to think of a VEO as a single entity. However, the al Qaeda system and other VEO systems include lieutenants (with a range of motivations), foot soldiers, logisticians, facilitators, recruiters, spiritual leaders, and other theoreticians; they also include external supporters, whether nations, organizations within a nation (such as elements within Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence), or individuals. And, importantly, the VEO “system” includes those in the public who support the VEO, either directly or passively (by turning a blind eye and tolerating their presence) (Davis, 2010). No one doubts that the effectiveness of a VEO depends on all of these components to greater or lesser degree, i.e., that such a system view is essential. All this means, however, that we should ask how a component could be deterred or otherwise influenced.

This observation about the need to decompose “the system” and consider which influences might be effective against the individual components has become more obviously crucial as the “al Qaeda” threat has morphed into something much more complex—al Qaeda Central and its many al Qaeda “affiliates.” The affiliates have greatly varied motivations, allegiances, and vulnerabilities. Further, the system is networked, which creates additional strengths, weaknesses, and targets for attention (Arquilla & Borer, 2007).

### **Insurgency, Revolution, and Terrorism**

The United States has been embroiled in Iraq and Afghanistan for nearly a decade as part of what was earlier called the “Global War on Terrorism.” Counterinsurgency (COIN) has become a primary element of U.S. actions. It is, therefore, easy to confuse counterinsurgency with counterterrorism.

Terrorism, however, is a tactic (and sometimes a strategy) that may or may not be used by insurgents (Hoffman, 2006).

To be concrete, for insurgents to plant improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to disrupt or destroy U.S. military convoys is extremely troublesome to U.S. counterinsurgent efforts, but it is not terrorism. Nor is it terrorism for combatants to kill enemy leaders, whether by sniper fire or by drone attacks. Nor is it terrorism to mount attacks on the other sides' military forces with some accidental "collateral damage" in the form of civilian deaths or destruction of infrastructure. Such side effects are tragic and the United States goes to extraordinary lengths to avoid them, but such attacks are not terrorism (Massive firebombing of cities, as in World War II, was another matter.).

Making the distinction is important because the plausibility of influence is very different depending on what behavior one is attempting to prevent.

### Applying the Themes

In the remainder of this paper, I apply the above themes, discussing research about ways in which to influence VEOs. This includes deterring particular VEO components.

### Factors Affecting Insurgency and Terrorism

A useful step in contemplating strategies to counter terrorism is understanding the factors that contribute to it. A recent RAND study (Davis & Cragin, 2009) reviewed the social-science literature for insights about factors underlying terrorism; much of the resulting book also applies to insurgency, but the focus here is on terrorism. Figure 1 is one summary depiction from that work, expressed as a "factor tree." Forthcoming work (Davis, Larson, et al., 2011), peer reviewed but currently undergoing security review for public release, has a richer version of this "factor tree" informed by further empirical study, but Figure 1 will suffice to illustrate the concept.

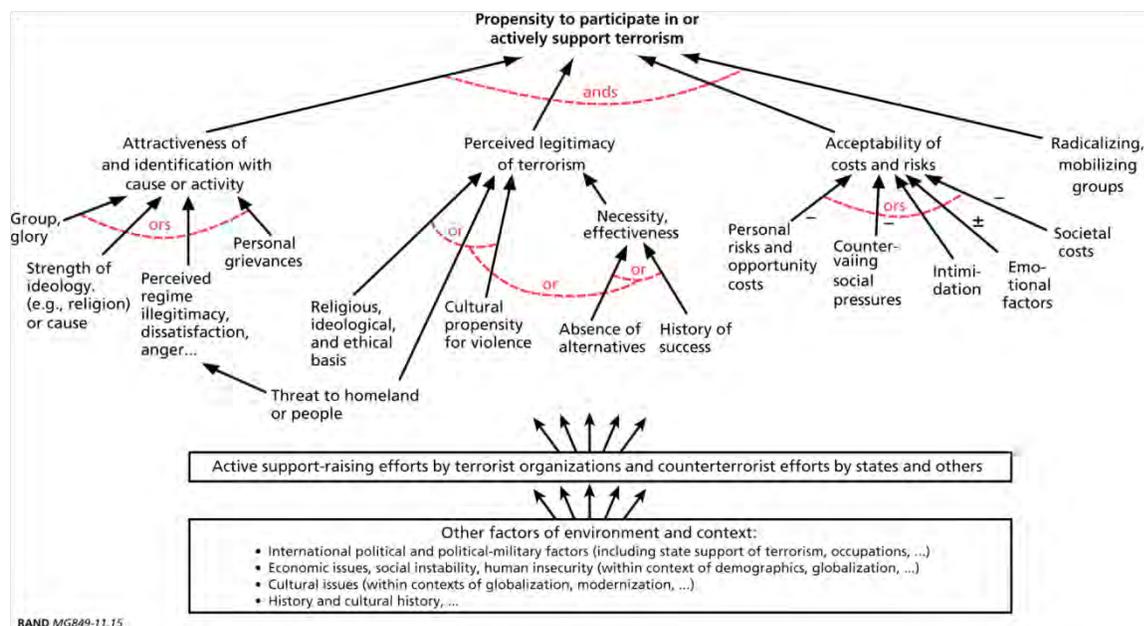


Figure 1. Factors Affecting Terrorism

The left branch of Figure 1 highlights motivations as an important factor in insurgencies and terrorism; often, terrorists and insurgents see themselves as part of a greater movement for a righteous cause. This cause may be a revolution inspired by repression and despotism, or rooted in extremist Salafi religious ideology, something noble such as defending one's country against foreign invaders, or something very different, such as the excitement and glory of being involved in a violent group. The figure also suggests that to participate in or support terrorism per se, not just joining a cause, also requires some sense of the legitimacy of terrorist actions. The basis for that sense may come from any of several sources, such as a religion or other ideology, a dire threat to the homeland, or necessity (the absence of other alternatives). In some cases, to be sure, terrorism may not need much rationalization because violence and brutality are seen by the relevant subculture as normal. Moving rightward in the figure, those participating or supporting terrorism are effectively making the judgment that doing so is worth the costs and risks. This "decision" may be neither conscious, explicit, nor "rational" in that people can be caught up in the emotions of revolution, for example, or too frightened to continue. People may also be greatly influenced by family, local respected personages, or icons. Finally (rightmost branch), a key factor is the existence of a mechanism, such as a mobilizing organization to join that has the leadership, resources, planning capability, and logistics actually to "do something." Most societies have young "hot heads" willing to engage in violent acts; fortunately, they usually lack the mechanism for being effective.

## **Influencing the Components**

### *Mobilizing Groups*

This factor tree can be used to think systematically about how to influence different aspects of a violent extremist system. Starting at the right, with a factor that is different in kind than the others, it is only reasonable to attack the "mobilizing mechanisms." This could mean destroying infrastructure, killing or imprisoning leaders, repressing certain political parties, etc. The actions taken might be justified by law and carefully restrained, or might be the actions of a despot cracking down on a dangerous faction. This aspect of an overall deterrence strategy is better dealt with elsewhere and has little to do with influence—except that highly disruptive actions against an organizing mechanism can help dissuade or deter individuals from joining (they may deem it "not in their interest" or too dangerous). Such effects would manifest themselves in Figure 1 by reducing the perceived acceptability of costs and risks.

### *Motivations*

Moving now to the issue of motivations (left branch of Figure 1), it is straightforward to identify potential issues and contemplate how to influence matters positively. If the motivation for insurgency/revolution is to overthrow or change an inept and despotic government repressing the people, then governance needs to improve. This may or may not be something that the United States can affect. If a primary motivation is religious or otherwise ideological, then strategic communications to counter the extremist philosophy can play a role. In this connection, two cautions have strong support in the literature (Egner, 2009; Egner, 2010), as discussed also in other papers within the current volume.

- Strategic communications perceived to be from outsiders often have little credibility and can be counterproductive (exceptions exist, such as President Obama's Cairo speech)

- Strategic communications need to be credible and persuasive, rather than blatant propaganda at odds with reality.

One seldom-tapped social science research topic relevant to influencing motivations is study of big-city violence by gangs. Such studies (e.g., Kennedy, Braga, & Piehl, 2001) are quite relevant to the “group and glory” sub-branch of Figure 1. They note that in multiple big cities, the number of murders has been greatly reduced by directly engaging the relevant groups, pointing out certain realities (such as that their “brothers” routinely snitch on other brothers and pick up with girl friends of those in prison), and asking questions such as “Just who is it that says it’s all right to kill innocent people in drive-by shootings? Not your mother or your grandmother.” Thus there is a moral component amidst others. A key element, however, is social pressure, such as the threat that, if a killing occurs and seems to be from a gang, then all the gang members will be hassled (legally, of course, as in punishing parole violations). From a theoretical perspective, this is a kind of collective punishment.

### *Legitimacy*

Addressing the factor of “perceived legitimacy” is similarly challenging and is usually best done by an individual or group from within the society. Interestingly, field researchers sometimes report that the concept of terrorism as being wrong and immoral does not resonate with those they interview. Instead, related questions are turned on their heads by interviewees, who mention state terrorism and the killing of innocents by U.S. air strikes. We should not expect people to agree with outsiders trying to make the argument that terrorism is bad. At the same time, they may come to accept the argument implicitly and change behaviors accordingly, as in withdrawing their support of terrorist organizations. Sometimes, the explicit reasoning is less than ideal, as when Muslim populations turn against al Qaeda because of its indiscriminate killing of Muslims labeled by al Qaeda as “apostates.” Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that rejection of terrorism (especially mass killing of innocent civilians) is potentially a universal value. After all, it is accepted across much of the globe, including in societies that were once quite brutal. However, as with so much in this domain, the positive influences will have to emerge from within the populations—perhaps with indirect assistance that does not compromise those with the positive messages.

### *Acceptability of Cost and Benefits*

The third top-level factor of Figure 1 is named acceptability of costs and benefits, rather than, for example, “cost-benefit calculations,” because both decisions and behaviors are often not based on calm, objective, cost-benefit assessments. In my view, the origins of the myth of rational-actor decision making being generally descriptive are three: (1) sloppiness in defining “rational decision,” (2) the fact that people and organizations’ behaviors can, in fact, often be “understood” (or at least rationalized) by applying a kind of rational-actor model, and (3) the strawman argument that very few leaders and groups are irrational in the sense of acting randomly. A better term for describing actual decision-making is “limited rationality” (Davis, Kulick, & Egner, 2005).

The research on this issue is extensive. The late Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon upset the economics profession a half-century ago with work on bounded rationality (Simon, 1982), pointing out that businesses could not, in reality, apply the prescriptions of decision theory because they lacked information and the necessary calculation capability. The information, moreover, was often not

available to be found, i.e., it did not exist, because of profound uncertainties. Further, the calculations would depend on details of unknown conditional probabilities. Simon argued that people actually depend heavily on heuristics to make decisions.

Simon's early work overlapped with the earliest years of psychological research pioneered by Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman and his late collaborator Amos Tversky. (Kahneman, 2002). Their laboratory work, extended in hundreds of studies across the globe, demonstrates how profoundly actual human decisions vary from the rational-actor model due to so-called "cognitive biases." Political scientists such as Robert Jervis have interpreted historical decisions of national leaders in light of these cognitive biases (Jervis, Lebow, & Stein, 1985). Related issues were discussed recently with respect to the seeming "selection bias" of authorities reviewing intelligence about Iraq's WMD program (Harvey, 2008).

Still another strand of psychological research makes the case that "naturalistic decision making" (i.e., human decision making dependent on intuition and heuristics) is actually very good for many purposes (Gigerenzer & Selten, 2002), something that should not be surprising to anyone who has observed the role of intuition, experience, and "art" in respected leaders. A review of modern decision science (Davis, Kulick, & Egner, 2005) compares the strengths and weaknesses of the rational-analytic and naturalistic styles and notes how they can be reconciled in decision support (Davis & Kahan, 2006).

Despite the above protestations about the rational-actor model, it can be very useful for some purposes, especially if pains are taken to understand the values and perceptions of reality of the actor involved rather than our own—allowing for risk-taking propensity—or for looking at eventual results rather than instantaneous ones. Even the actions of suicide bombers can be so understood, although they might reasonably be viewed as irrational by someone who views their religious notions as absurd.

How can attitudes about the "acceptability of terrorism" be affected? Forthcoming work says more about the subject and adds use of a conceptual model from social movement theory (Davis, Larson, et al. 2011); however, some observations are possible here and a number of important observations are made elsewhere in this volume by John Horgan (2009) and others, based on a large body of continuing research. Let it suffice here to point out that in countering support, one would want to dramatize terrorism's negatives: the horrors and unfairness to innocent people and the negative consequences for terrorists, their families, and societies. A second intent might be to make known alternative courses where they exist. Some countries are attempting to accomplish this with programs to rehabilitate extremists; several include religious education or counseling to counter the extremist themes, financial subsidies, and opportunities. The jury is still out on their effectiveness, which likely varies with program.

Perhaps most important in affecting this behavioral factor is *avoiding* the negative influences that operate on emotions. Many scholars have concluded that overreaction by states in the form of brutal repression, or even highly advertised deaths of a relatively small number of arguably innocent people in security raids, can enrage the public and enhance support for the terrorists. Recognition of this led to fundamentally different policies in the latter years of the British struggle with the IRA. It also plays a dominant role in U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, which mandates working with and in

protection of the relevant public, rather than merely conducting attacks on terrorists that result in numerous civilian deaths.

## Conclusions

In this paper, I have briefly recounted some themes reported in research over the last few years, much of it drawn in turn from the academic social science literature, but drawing also from policy analysis at RAND and other institutions. Some admonitions include: structuring thought in terms of influence rather than deterrence; recognizing that different influences apply to different components of the VEO when viewed as a system; and distinguishing between causing a VEO to avoid terrorism and causing it to lay down arms or give up its cause. Finally, I have discussed the value of simple analytic methods such as “factor trees” to provide structure in thinking about counterterrorism strategy. In some cases, these represent a move toward systemic theory, albeit one that is qualitative and descriptive rather than quantitative and predictive in the manner of an operations-research model. This approach has, in fact, been used successfully in a number of studies and that experience in applying these methods is improving the methods.

## References

Extensive references to the relevant social science literature can be found in Davis and Cragin (2009) and the forthcoming Davis, Larson, et al. (2011). Other relevant RAND studies are not in the public domain. Those have been led, respectively, by Kim Cragin, Todd Helmus, Brian Jackson, and Eric Larson.

Arquilla, J & Borer, D.A. (Eds.). (2007). *Information strategy and warfare: A Guide to theory and practice*. New York: Routledge.

Brown, H. (1983). *Thinking about national security: Defense and foreign policy in a dangerous world*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Davis, P.K. & Kahan, J.P. (2006). Theory and methods for supporting high-level decision-making, In *Proceedings of SPIE, Conference on Enabling Technologies for Modeling and Simulation*.

Davis, P.K., Kulick, J. & Egner, M.E. (2005). *Implications of modern decision science for military decision support systems*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp.

Davis, P.K. (2010). *Simple models to explore deterrence and more general influence in the War with Al-Qaeda*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., OP-296.

Davis, P.K., & Cragin, K. (eds.) (2009). *Social science for counterterrorism: Putting the pieces together*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp.

Davis, P.K., Larson, E., Haldeman, Z., Oguz, M., & Rana, Y. (In press, 2011). *Understanding and influencing public support of insurgency and terrorism*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp.

Davis, P.K., & Jenkins, B.M. (2002). *Deterrence and influence in counterterrorism: A Component in the War on Al-Qaeda*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp.

- Egner, M. (2009). Social science foundations for strategic communications in the Global War on Terrorism, in *Social science for counterterrorism: Putting the pieces together*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corp.
- Egner, M. (2010). *Between slogans and solutions: A frame-based assessment methodology for public diplomacy*, Santa Monica, Calif. RAND Corp.
- George, A.L. (2003). "The need for influence theory and actor-specific behavioral models of adversaries," in Barry R. Schneider and Jerrold M. Post, eds., *Know Thy Enemy: Profiles of Adversary Leaders and Their Strategic Cultures* (2nd Edition), Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air War College, pp. 271–310.
- George, A. & Smoke, R. (1973). *Deterrence in American foreign policy: Theory and practice*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gigerenzer, G., & Selten, R. (2002). *Bounded rationality: The adaptive toolbox*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Harvey, F. (2008). *President Al Gore and the 2003 Iraq War: A Counterfactual critique of conventional wisdom*, Calgary, Alberta: Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute.
- Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside terrorism* (2nd Edition), New York: Columbia University Press.
- Horgan, J. (2009). *Walking away from terrorism (Political violence)*. Routledge.
- Jervis, R., Lebow, R.N., & Stein, J.G. (1985.) *Psychology and deterrence*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kahneman, D. (2002). *Maps of bounded rationality: A Perspective on intuitive judgment and choice* (Nobel Prize Lecture), 2002. As of March 22, 2010:  
<http://www.nobel.se/economics/laureates/2002/kahneman-lecture.html>
- Kennedy, D., Braga, A. & Piehl, A. *Reducing gun violence: The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire*, National Institute of Justice Research Report, NCJ 188741, Washington DC, 2001.
- Slocombe, W. (1981). The countervailing strategy. *International Security*, Vol. 5, pp. 18–27.

## COERCING VIOLENT NON-STATE ACTORS (TROY THOMAS)

Troy Thomas

Special Assistant to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Office of the CJCS (OCJCS)

[troy.thomas@js.pentagon.mil](mailto:troy.thomas@js.pentagon.mil)

## I. Introduction

Suicide bombers are inspired and coached to their victims by al Qaeda and its franchises in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and beyond. Somali pirates disrupt shipping in the Indian Ocean, kidnapping civilians and extorting governments. Warlords terrorize the creeks of the Niger Delta as part of a ‘blood oil’ trade. These violent non-state actors (VNSA) pervade the global conflict landscape: conflicts pitting nation-states against armed groups working to exploit, subvert, and overthrow the international system; conflicts fueled by globalization’s dark dynamics and punctuated by unconscionable violence against innocents; conflicts induced by true believers and hardened criminals armed with low and high-tech weapons of mass destruction and disruption. In such conflicts, do we have options short of war? Are such adversaries susceptible to coercion? If so, how might a coercive strategy work?

This paper aims to answer these questions by examining the proposition that VNSA can be coerced by the threat or limited use of military force. I conclude that *coercion is a viable option for confronting a VNSA*. Even when leaders resist pressure, opportunities exist to induce change in the behavior of the organization. That said, coercion is exceptionally difficult, and the prospects for success are not promising. Hard does not equal futile. Coercion offers options when destroying the enemy is not desired or feasible, when diplomacy needs muscle, or when development takes too long to alter conditions driving undesirable behaviors. By studying the utility of coercion, we can reclaim potential options in the strategic space between development and destruction.

The case for coercion is made by defining the problem, adapting strategy to the problem, and assessing the historical record. What are VNSA and why are they hard to coerce? Section II addresses these issues. Groups are the unit of analysis—terrorist groups, not individual terrorists or terrorism writ large. The logic of coercion is adapted to VNSA in Section III. What are its ends, ways, and means? Coercion applies armed force to gain compliance by deterring or compelling adversary behavior.<sup>99</sup> Coercion works on the target’s decision calculus by holding something of value at risk; it is directed at influencing the adversary’s will as opposed to destroying his capability. As noted by Nobel laureate Thomas Schelling in his classic *Arms and Influence*, the power to hurt leverages potential force, or uses it in limited and discrete ways (Schelling, 1966, pp 2-3). To test the conceptual logic, a sub-set of the recent U.S. record with regard to coercion is examined in Section

---

<sup>99</sup> Variations on compellence, used throughout this paper, include coercive diplomacy, forceful persuasion and armed suasion.

IV. The success rate is underwhelming, but the prospects for success can be improved by applying lessons from available case histories. Thus armed, Section V concludes with recommendations for coercing VNSA.

## II. Problem

As a point of departure, VNSA are *non-state organizations that use collective violence* (Thomas, Kiser, Casebeer, 2005). When compared to states, they are harder to find, understand, signal, and pressure. The VNSA may be elusive, but they are neither impenetrable nor impervious to pressure. By examining common organizational dynamics, we can diagnose the problem in a way that guides strategy.

VNSA are not official entities or instruments of the nation-state. Although VNSA may serve as a state proxy, or be highly dependent on the resources provided by states, they retain sufficient autonomy to make their own strategic choices. As VNSA like Hezbollah in Lebanon, or Hamas in Gaza, integrate with and become government, they start losing non-state status. The line between state and non-state blurs, and the closer aligned the group is to a state, or the more governing responsibilities it assumes, the more susceptible it is to coercion.

*States are hard to coerce; non-state actors are harder.* First, VNSA are harder to find. They do not usually have an address, preferring to operate in under-governed spaces and through illicit networks (Naim, 2005). Second, VNSA are harder to understand. Their illegal status and secretive nature obscures answers to key questions: who decides? what do they value? what is their resolve? how do they judge costs and benefits? and how are decisions made? Third, VNSA are harder to signal. Well-established means for communication and negotiation do not exist. In fact, dialogue carries a strategic cost; it conveys legitimacy not earned or desired. Fourth, VNSA are harder to pressure. In most cases, they have “fewer identifiable high value assets” that can be held at risk (USSTRATCOM, 2006, p.18). Some groups value their physical infrastructure and resources while others are willing to sacrifice people and things, but not ideas.

*VNSA are goal-directed social groups* (Daft, 2004, p.11). The goals, stated or implied, reveal the organization’s orientation to a transcendental or transactional agenda. The former stresses ideology, religion, or some other existential code. Types include religious extremists such as al Jihad in Egypt, revolutionary Marxists such as the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Colombia, and ethnic nationalists such as the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) in Spain. These true believers are in the grip of a subjective reality that is highly resistant to external influence (Billington, 1980). Because their agenda may be “divinely sanctioned,” concerns over a low probability of success or loss of life are minimal. In contrast, transactional VNSA build and lose value more quickly because they rely on more fungible rewards. Defection is more likely if “profit or power is available elsewhere with acceptable risk” (Thomas, 1966, p.122). The primary types are transitional criminal organizations (TCO), such as the Chinese Triads, and warlords with private militias, such as Thomas Lubanga of the Congo. *The most challenging VNSA are hybrids*, leveraging pragmatic and normative agendas to expand their appeal, resources, and survivability.

*VNSA make imperfect decisions resulting in unexpected behaviors.* Rather than dismissing VNSA choices as irrational, we must appreciate their logic in its context. Like all social organizations, VNSA decisions reflect what Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon termed “bounded rationality” (Simon, 1985, p. 294). Incomplete information and problem complexity shape a bargaining process involving internal and external elites with their own constituencies, preferences, and sources of power (Allison & Zelikow, 1999). Terrorism expert Brian Jackson argues that each party to the decision process will make choices based on beliefs about whether the proposed behavior 1) positively influences relevant audiences, 2) advances group goals, 3) produces a positive internal reaction, 4) is worth the risk relative to alternatives, 5) will be sufficiently resourced, and 6) is based on “enough” information (Jackson, 2009). Coercion has a role to play in shaping each of these perceptions.

At one time or another, all VNSA members operate at the group’s boundary, linking it to an array of external stakeholders including state sponsors, operational enablers (financiers, smugglers, etc.), and affiliated groups. For example, Hamas receives weapons from Iran overland through Sudan and Egypt. (Heller, 2009). Not to be forgotten, external players often have a say in VNSA decisions. Certainly state sponsors are key drivers of decisions and behaviors, but so are religious leaders and communities such as the Sri Lankan and Irish Diasporas (Post, 2007). Not all stakeholders share the same level of commitment. Consequently, external relationships present lucrative targets for coercion as well as communication conduits to VNSA decision-makers.

*VNSA are dependent on violence.* Knowing why violence is used is elemental to deterring further use or compelling a shift in use. When directed externally, collective violence comes in three main forms: conventional, guerrilla, and terrorism (O’Neill, 1990). Historically, if a VNSA is weak relative to the state, there is a greater likelihood of guerrilla warfare or terrorism, often in combination. There are notable exceptions where armed groups were able to field a conventional force, including Hezbollah or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) before its defeat in 2009. To gain conventional capability, VNSA must overcome barriers to entry such as access to physical space, weapon systems, and financial resources. Conventional strength comes with risk; the group actually becomes more vulnerable to coercion because 1) it now has forces that can be more easily put at risk, and 2) the state’s asymmetric advantage increases the probability that VNSA objectives will be denied.

In contrast, guerrilla warfare and terrorism are indirect, coercive approaches. As postulated by British strategist B. H. Liddell Hart in *Strategy*, both take the path of least resistance in the physical sphere and least expectation in the psychological (Liddell Hart, 1968). Guerrilla warfare avoids positional, force-on-force encounters. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate the impotence of government institutions and gradually erode the will of the state and populace.<sup>100</sup> Whereas the guerrilla generally avoids them, the terrorist aims at the innocent. Victim selection is central to terrorism’s heinous logic. As violent theater, it creates and exploits fear to drive political change (Jenkins, 1975). The normative violation associated with killing innocents is intended to have a psychological impact on the target of the violence—the public and, ultimately, the government.

---

### III. Strategy

Traditionally applied only to states, coercion can be directly applied to the VNSA problem. Like grand strategy, coercion has inherent logic resources (means) that are applied (ways) in order to achieve desired results (ends). Means include all sources of hard and soft power, mobilized as diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments. Power and its instruments serve the national security objectives, or ends, of the state (von Clausewitz, 1984). Ways relate means to ends through a concept of how to integrate and sequence the instruments.

*Compliance is the minimum goal of coercion.* Compliance only requires that a desired behavior occurs, even when such behavior is not in the interest or a preference of the VNSA. Compliance is more reliable when it results from group members deliberately and faithfully carrying out a decision. While not preferred, compliance may also be obtained even when the leadership does not intend it due to the effect of coercion on other stakeholders inside and outside the organization.

“Ways” describe how we achieve compliance by applying means, or resources. *Compellence and deterrence represent the broad ways of coercion*; however, the distinction between the two fades in practice—whether we are trying to change a behavior (compellence) or prevent one (deterrence), they are both about influencing the adversary’s calculus of costs and benefits through punishment and denial.

The logic of coercion starts simply—the costs of not complying outweigh the benefits—but quickly become complicated (Byman & Waxman, 2002). The two main costs of not complying are punishment and denial. However, complying also has a price. Internal and external pressures for action, to mount one more spectacular terrorist attack, can be significant. Mature, transcendentalist VNSA groups like Jemaah Islamiya in Southeast Asia are driven by religious duty underpinned by perceived injustice. Alternatively, for groups like the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain, sustained operations are necessary to prove the group’s vitality. As for benefits, group survival is on top, followed by assurances that more punishment is not forthcoming and long-term goals remain viable. Benefits of not complying also exist—enhanced prestige as well as monetary rewards, promotion, or spiritual validation for individuals and groups.

Of course, perceptions of value trump “real” costs and benefits every time (Byman & Waxman, 2002). A sense of how much the VNSA values the behavior indicates resolve. The jihadist, seized by religious duty, values the fight more than the pirate seeking to score another high seas ransom. Value is also assigned to costs and benefits; disruption of a weapons proliferation network may be less threatening than the loss of a safe haven. The available options have value too—attack, do not attack, attack later, attack a different target, and so on. Finally, it is necessary to overcome the human tendency to discount the future—“imagined future pain hurts less than present pain” (Art, 2003). VNSA value sunk costs more highly and takes more risks to preserve a current position than enhance it (Byman, 2002).

On the whole, the coercer is less able to manipulate benefits (Pape, 2005). Therefore, we return to *cost imposition through punishment and denial* as the main ways of achieving coercion. Punishment threatens pain and/or damage to something of value (Art, 2003). Direct punishments include seizing

assets, denying sanctuary, killing personnel, exposing illicit activities, and more. Cumulatively, this isolates the VNSA from its support network and generates dissension, widening the decision-action gap. VNSA can be punished indirectly by strengthening partners through security cooperation and military diplomacy while undermining VNSA support. Punishment is less useful for damaging intangible values such as group's worldview. If the pain reaches existential proportions, group resolve strengthens to the degree that group survival is threatened—*it is possible to over-punish*.

Given the difficulty of locating something to credibly punish, particularly for transcendentalist groups, denial has better prospects. It threatens the VNSA by denying *opportunity and objectives* (Smith & Talbot 2008; Johnson, Mueller, & Taft, 2002). Opportunity is denied by protecting potential victims and preventing target access. Layered defenses complicate terrorist planning and execution, leading to more complex and visible operations. Measures to conduct surveillance or harden critical infrastructure lead the terrorist to “look elsewhere or to change (delay or defer) their decisions to act” (USNORTHCOM, 2007).

Denial of *objectives* is a counter-coercion approach oriented against the adversary's strategy. It hinges on interrupting the intended psychological chain reaction associated with the group's use of violence. To this end, one aims to impact VNSA target and method selection, and consider how our response relates to their logic and narrative. In particular, it is important to *dampen and undercut the psychological reaction the terrorist seeks to provoke*. Strong defenses, rapid recovery, and decisive, but not excessive, retribution can mitigate fear and embolden a resilient target audience, consisting primarily of domestic communities and government.

Coercion is rarely sufficient; it must be integrated with *inducement and persuasion*. Inducement flips the logic—it increases the benefits of compliance or reduces the costs of non-compliance (USJFCOM, 2008). The benefits go beyond withholding pain to providing incentives. Incentives involve concessions and compensation, such as lifting sanctions or providing safe haven. Whereas coercion and inducement manipulate costs and benefits, persuasion aims to alter “the decision context in which costs and benefits of various options are weighed” (USJFCOM, 2008). Efforts to shape perceptions require a credible authority appealing to the reason and emotion of the intended audience. Consistency between words and deeds establishes credibility and is thus a powerful form of persuasion.

*When it comes to means, overwhelming military power is not the answer*. First, coercion involves limited force by definition. “Going big” contradicts our declared aim of altering behavior without destroying the group. Second, threats of nuclear retaliation or massive conventional attack lack credibility. Third, overwhelming military power is rarely effective. *Coercive contests are more about influencing intentions than capabilities* (Snyder, 1960, p. 165). The key questions are not about inventories, but about 1) threshold—how much pain or how little success to tolerate and 2) expectation—what will happen next. Therefore, follow-through with right-sized capabilities is best.

#### **IV. Record**

Coercion works about a third of the time. This is the conclusion of Alexander George in *Forceful Persuasion* and *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy*, edited by Robert Art and Patrick Cronin (George & Smoke, 1977; George, 1991). Six of the 15 cases studied involve VNSA. Failure is obvious when the adversary does not comply; however, the reasons for success are difficult to discern. Consequently, the number of case studies focused on coercion, short of war, is limited. Still, we can cull several lessons from a sub-set of recent cases involving the United States as primary coercer.

VNSA are central actors in two *cases of failure*: Kosovo and al Qaeda. Kosovo in 1999 is a failure because an air war was ultimately carried out by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in order to gain concessions from Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic. Moreover, NATO had trouble influencing the behavior of the non-state Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which was fighting on the ground, but not party to the negotiations and was a competitor to NATO's main partner in Kosovo (Burg, 2002). U.S. coercive attempts against terrorism in the 1990s consisted primarily of criminal prosecutions and limited military operations such as the cruise missile attacks against al Qaeda-related targets in Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998. These coercive measures did not prevent successive attacks leading to 9/11. According to Martha Crenshaw, coercive attempts failed because 1) the enemy was hard to identify and understand, 2) al Qaeda and its operations were never at risk, 3) it was difficult to credibly threaten escalation, and 4) there was no sense of urgency until after 9/11 (Crenshaw, 2002).

*Mixed results* were obtained in Nicaragua and Somalia. Beginning in 1981, the United States aimed to contain and later destabilize the Soviet-backed Sandinista regime in Nicaragua by backing the Contra rebels. After eight years of stalemate, and in the shadow of the Iran-Contra affair, the approach only served to stimulate strong domestic opposition and a remarkable effort by Central American leaders to insulate the Daniel Ortega regime (George, 1991). The confrontational approach was abandoned for carrots and sticks, which included \$50 million to sustain the Contra deterrent along with agreement to abandon efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas by force (Baker, 1995).

The United States and the UN obtained mixed results in Somalia from 1992 to 1995. UN Operations in Somalia I (UNOSOM I) gained acceptance to comply with the introduction of peacekeepers who were unable to protect relief distribution. The aid was, in turn, exploited by warlords, particularly the Somali National Alliance led by Mohamed Farah Aideed. Initially, active diplomacy by the UN Special Envoy held promise, but was undermined by inconsistent policy, insufficient muscle, and counterproductive inducements. With U.S. leadership of the United Task Force, warlord compliance with demands not to use violence reflected a sensible decision calculus based on being no match for coalition firepower, deriving massive profits from relief distribution, and waiting for the mission's expiration. During UNISOM II, a disorganized and seam-filled transition and a weaker UN invited challenge. Coercion by the international community gave way to a personalized war for which the UN lacked the means and will to win.

It is reasonable to claim *success* in Laos and Bosnia. In 1961, newly elected President John F. Kennedy used coercion to check Pathet Lao guerrilla advances while scaling back U.S. commitment

to the Royal Lao government. The effort was complicated because the Soviet Union, China, and North Vietnam all differed in their perception of costs, benefits, and risk (George, 1991). To communicate resolve, Kennedy moved forces to Thailand and “ordered the four hundred U.S. ‘civilian advisors’ to put on their military uniforms and join Royal Lao army units on the front line” (George, 1991, p.29). As inducement, he offered disengagement in exchange for a neutral Lao. Initially rejected, a ceasefire and weak coalition government eventually resulted.

Before Kosovo, the United States participated in UN and NATO efforts to coerce a cessation of hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina among three ethno-nationalist VNSAs with strong ties to state sponsors: Bosnian Muslims, Croats, and Serbs. There were at least five attempts to compel Bosnian Serb behavior, including ending a Serbian siege of Sarajevo. A stalemated conflict facilitated compliance by the Bosnian Serbs (Burg, 2002). Milosevic was motivated to exert pressure on the Bosnian Serbs by limited air strikes and the potential of sanctions being lifted. The comprehensive coercive strategy led to a complicated and tenuous peace.

These cases, as well as others involving states, suggest success is more likely when these conditions are met: clarity and consistency in demands, stronger relative motivation, a sense of urgency, domestic and international support, adversary fear of unacceptable escalation, and clarity on how to settle the crisis (George, 1991; George, Hall, & Simons, 1994). Art and Cronin endorse these determinants, adding that the odds are further enhanced when positive inducements are offered; less, not more is demanded; and military force is threatened or used in a denial, not a risk of punishment, mode (Art, 2002). These lessons are consistent with the conceptual logic of coercion.

## **V. Conclusion**

Even though the prospects for success are limited, coercion may be the best or only option. In these situations, the analysis points to at least eight consequences for adopting coercion as part of a counter-VNSA strategy. Although the strategy process is never linear, they also suggest a certain sequence for developing, integrating, and implementing a coercive attempt.

1) *Diagnose the problem.* As social organizations, VNSA are open to investigation and engagement even though they are harder to find, understand, signal, and pressure. Groups that integrate a transcendental and transactional agenda are more resistant to pressure. Decisions emerge from a bargaining type decision-making process that reflects bounded rationality within their context. Behaviors also emerge; they are rarely a true reflection of the decision.

2) *Choose narrow goals.* The more we demand, the less successful we will be. Demands to do nothing (i.e., deterrence) are easier for VNSA to accommodate than demands to do something different (i.e., compellence). It is not necessary to change attitudes or beliefs, but only the perception of costs and benefits relative to the available options. It is sufficient to gain the behavior we want even if the group does not share our preferences. Once we adopt goals that fundamentally threaten a group’s source of power or existence, coercion no longer has utility.

3) *Aim at the organization.* Stakeholders in the decision process are a priority target for coercion; however, we should also target sub-groups and individuals within the organization. In many cases, inducing deviation from assigned roles may be sufficient to get the behavior, or lack of behavior, we seek. We must also attend to external stakeholders on whom the VNSA depends and who do not always share the same level of commitment. An approach aimed at the whole system is more likely to generate the net effect of coercion even when elites prove resistant.

4) *Communicate clearly and consistently.* For the threat or limited use of force to be credible, our demands, the costs of non-compliance, and the benefits of compliance must be articulated, transmitted, and received in the way we intend. To this end, our signaling should leverage the media most relevant to the VNSA. It is imperative that our actions appear consistent with our rhetoric. When military force is used, it must be “exemplary.” That is, the use of force is symbolic; it should be just enough of the right kind to send the desired message.

5) *Emphasize denial.* VNSA are highly resistant to pain even if we find something of value to hurt; so we must go beyond pain caused by punishment to the psychological pain of denial. Countering VNSA strategies by denying opportunity and objectives is better. Moreover, it focuses on what we control—how we respond. Understanding why the VNSA uses violence, we can neutralize the psychological chain reaction essential to their strategy.

6) *Induce and persuade.* Coercion rarely works on its own. Success correlates well with inducements. This not only means a clear pathway to settling differences, but that incentives are used to motivate compliance. Persuasion is linked to communication, but also incorporates the idea of shaping the decision context. That is, a credible authority can appeal to reason and emotion to introduce new options and encourage different perceptions. Persuasion runs well in parallel, but positive inducements have their greatest effect when offered after threats are made (Art, 2002).

7) *Plan for the future.* Coercion is a contest that extends into the future. It is the expectation that the relationship will continue that enables coercion to work. Therefore, our strategy must consider the implications for subsequent rounds of interaction. If compliance does not result following our initial demand, what next? After an exemplary use of force that fails to alter behavior, what next? To avert an unwanted transition to war, our strategy must have a clear idea for how to settle the conflict and a plan for how to control escalation.

8) *Be motivated.* Coercion is a contest of wills. Before initiating a coercive attempt, we must judge our willingness to follow through on threats. The failure to follow through is a deathblow to credibility, which is certain to result in a worse situation than when the crisis started. Once it is clear that the adversary’s will exceeds ours, if we are not willing to escalate further, we need to transition away from a coercive strategy quickly and credibly.

## References

Allison, G., Zelikow, P. (1999). *Essence of decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* NY: Longman.

- Art, R. (2003). Coercive diplomacy: What do we know? In R. Art & P. Cronin (Eds.) *The United States and coercive diplomacy*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Peace Press.
- Asprey, R.B. (1975). *War in the shadow: The guerilla in history*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1(xi).
- Baker, J.A. (1995). *The politics of diplomacy: Revolution, war and peace 1989-1992*. NY: GP Putnam's Sons.
- Billington, J.H. (1980). *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of revolutionary faith*. NY: Basic Book Publishers.
- Burg, S. (2003). Bosnia and Kosovo. R. Art & P. Cronin (Eds.). *The United States and coercive diplomacy*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Peace Press.
- Byman, D. & Waxman, M. (2002). Coercion should work when the anticipated suffering associated with a threat exceeds the anticipated gains of defiance. in *The dynamics of coercion: American foreign policy and the limits of military might*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Crenshaw, M. (2003). The response to terrorism. in R. Art & P. Cronin (Eds.). *The United States and coercive diplomacy*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Peace Press.
- Daft, R.L. (2004). *Organization theory and design*. Mason, OH: South-Western.
- George, A. (1991). *Forceful persuasion: Coercive diplomacy as an alternative to war*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Peace.
- George, A., Hall, D.K., & Simons, W.E. (1994). *The limits of coercive diplomacy: Laos, Cuba, Vietnam*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- George, A. & Smoke, R. (1977). *Deterrence in American foreign policy: Theory and practice*. NY: Columbia University Press.
- Heller, A. (2009). Organizational Decisionmaking by Terrorist Groups. In P. Davis & K. Cragin (Eds.). *Social science for counterterrorism: Putting the pieces together*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Jackson, B.A. (2009). Organizational decisionmaking by terrorist groups. in *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the pieces Together*.
- Jenkins, B. (1975). International terrorism: A new mode of conflict, in D. Carlton & C. Schaerf (Eds.). *International terrorism and world security*. London: Croom Helm, 1975.
- Johnson, D.E., Mueller, K.P., & Taft, W.H. (2002). *Conventional coercion across the spectrum of operations: The utility of U.S. military forces in the emerging security environment*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp.
- Naim, M. (2005). *Illicit: How smugglers, traffickers, and copycats are hijacking the global economy*. NY: Doubleday.
- Pape, R. (2005). *Dying to win: The strategic logic of suicide terrorism*. NY: Random House.

- Post, J. (2007). *The mind of the terrorist: The psychology of terrorism from the IRA to al-Qaeda*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schelling, T. (1966). *Arms and influence*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Simon, H. (1985). Human nature in politics: The dialogue of psychology with political science. *American Political Science Review*, 79 (294).
- Smith, J. & Talbot, B. (2008). Terrorism and deterrence by denial. In P. R. Viotti, M. Opheim, and N. Bowen (Eds.) *Terrorism and homeland security: Thinking strategically about policy*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Snyder, G.H. (1960). Deterrence and power. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 4(2).
- Thomas, T., Kiser, S., and Casebeer, W. (2005). *Warlords rising: Confronting violent non-state actors*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM). (2008). *Strategic communications joint integrating concept (JIC)*. Washington, DC: The Joint Staff.
- U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM). (2007). *Homeland defense and civil support JOC*. Washington, DC: The Joint Staff.
- U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM). (2006). *Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept (JOC), Version 2.0*. Washington, DC: The Joint Staff.
- Von Clausewitz, C. (1984). *On war*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Parté, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.