Journal of Terrorism Research

Volume 6, Issue 2, May 2015

ISSN: 2049-7040

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence

Journal of Terrorism Research

Contents

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence
Journal of Terrorism Research

Articles

This is Not Your Mother's Terrorism:

Social Media, Online Radicalization and the Practice of Political Jamming

by Laura Huey

Abstract

It is commonly recognized that social media presents vast new opportunities for terrorist groups seeking to radicalize audiences. However, few scholars have studied the actual mechanisms by which radicalizing messages are delivered to those audiences. Within this paper, the author explores one key aspect of the phenomenon of 'jihadi cool' – that is, the rendering of pro-Islamic terrorism into something hip and trendy among online audiences. Discussed is the use of political jamming: a subversive, satirical activity that draws on humor to reinforce ideological messages. The opportunity for countering these messages through the same technique is also considered.

Keywords: radicalization, social media, Twitter, political jamming, counter-terrorism, jihadi cool.

> *"@ABC: JUST IN: FBI: Alleged ISIS supporter in Ohio arrested over plan to carry out "jihad" attack on US Capitol with bombs, guns" HAHA COOL (Twitter user 2015).*
>
> *"I like watching angry arab videos bc the arabs in the videos are angry … Angry arabs are cool and dangerous at the same time" (Twitter user 2015).*

For the past couple of years, news and social media outlets have been trending with stories concerning the phenomenon of 'jihadi cool' – the rebranding of Jihadist forms of terrorism into an appealingly 'hip' subculture through the use of social media, rap videos, counter culture magazines, clothing and other forms of propaganda aimed at disaffected youth. Of potential sources of radicalization, commentators cite online spaces as a primary concern, noting how sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram function as 'radicalizing milieus' (Bloom 2013) within which young people are introduced to pro-jihadist messages, networked to others with similar (reinforcing) views, and, in some cases, actively recruited to join in Islamic terrorist groups (Stevens and Neumann 2009; Venhaus 2010). Although much has been written on various aspects of this phenomenon, there is one propagandistic device frequently found on social media sites that has generated little attention: the subversion of popular memes to propagate pro-terrorist messages, a device known as political jamming.

Within this paper, I draw on materials collected from online sources to explore the phenomenon of political jamming by those promoting radical jihadist ideology. This material was collected as part of a larger study

on the role of gender in social media in fostering online radicalization. Through tracking online activities of those disseminating material in support of the Islamic State (IS), a group of Islamic jihadists also known as ISIS or ISIL, a number of different propaganda techniques aimed at Western audiences, or those familiar with Western culture, were identified. Notable among these are pro-jihadist messages presented in rhetoric and imagery linked to memes in Western popular culture to create results intended to be satirical. Originally a tool of a counter-culture movement, political jamming is today familiar to anyone who has watched an episode of the Colbert Report or spent any length of time on the Internet. As I document in the pages that follow, pro-jihadist ideologues use political jamming to appeal to younger audiences raised within cultures that treat forms of dark, political humour as hip, trendy and counter-culture. Disseminated through online milieus to individuals already potentially interested in receiving such messages, political violence becomes 'jihadi cool.'

In the pages that follow, I begin tracing this phenomenon with a discussion of the emergence of 'jihadi cool' through social media, before providing a more detailed examination of political jamming as a technique used to endorse political violence and racist ideology, among other sentiments. While much of the focus of this paper will be on analyzing political jamming by pro-jihadi individuals and groups, I also explore the use of this technique by individuals and groups for counter-terrorist purposes.

'Jihadi cool' and the emergence of pro-jihadi political jamming

Conducting terrorist operations is a resource intensive enterprise, requiring organizations to continually seek out new recruits in order to replace individuals lost to fighting, suicide bombings and arrests (Bloom 2011), as well as to add new recruits in order to expand operations. Over the past couple of years, groups such as IS and Al-Qaeda have turned to the Internet as a recruitment tool, presenting their ideology in often fairly slick packaging (Stern 2010). Indeed, IS members and their supporters can be found using a variety of social media apps and file-sharing platforms, from Facebook and Ask.fm to kik and YouTube (Klausen 2015). Within these spaces, they provide consumers access to, among other things, rap videos and online magazines with messages aimed directly at disaffected youth. What these communications typically have in common is that they present jihad as a "cool way of expressing dissatisfaction with the powerful elite" (ibid.). One study of U.S. Al-Qaeda recruits found that these individuals were typically confused, young people searching to define themselves and gain a sense of purpose. "Al-Qaeda's ability to turn them to violence," the study's author (Venhaus 2010: 1) suggests, "is rooted in what each seeks: Revenge seekers need an outlet for their frustration, status seekers need recognition, identity seekers need a group to join, and thrill seekers need adventure." Media content is pitched at audiences in ways that exploit these longings. Videos on YouTube emphasize romantic notions of brotherhood, revolution and sacrifice in pursuit of an Islamist utopia (Payne 2009). Interaction with others through Internet channels fuels a sense of belonging and common cause. Photos of dead 'martyrs' and children wounded in drone strikes are used as propagandistic devices for representing jihad as a defensive strategy against Western, Saudi and other powers– messages that are ubiquitous across the twitterverse and other social media sites (Payne 2009).

> *Bomb by bomb,*
> *blast by blast,*
> *only going to bring back the glorious past*
>
> *"Blow by Blow" by Abu Mansoor al-Amriki (2009).[1]*

None of the above is to suggest that online spaces that provide radicalizing platforms have a direct causal

effect in producing terrorists. Indeed, research on radicalization appears to suggest that most become individuals who become actual participants in foreign fighting and/or terrorist activities are not recruited online, but rather are influenced by connections to pro-jihadist social networks in the 'real world' (Bjelopera 2013). Thus, instead of thinking about the role of the Internet and, in particular, the accessibility of radicalizing content on social media sites such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, in terms of direct effects it is perhaps more useful to think of the ways in which online radical milieus normalize political violence through messages that promote pro-terrorist ideology to audiences who may be susceptible (Stevens and Neumann 2009). They also serve to continually reinforce those messages through the posting activities of one's friends and online acquaintances, increasing both retention of the message and its credibility (ibid.; Venhaus 2010). In describing the potential effects of online radical milieus, Bjelopera (2013: 20-21) puts the matter most succinctly:

> *The interactivity of chat rooms, blogs, social networking sites, message boards, video hosting sites, and e-mail blurs the lines between readership and authorship that previous generations of terrorists and sympathizers encountered with pamphlets, newspapers, and newsletters. This blurring possibly encourages people who interact in such forums to more easily see themselves as part of broader jihadist movements and not just casual readers or online spectators. They may eventually engage in more substantive activity—actual propagandizing, financial support, or joining a terrorist network.*

Certainly within the social media site, Twitter, we see individuals, if not directly engaged in physical or material support of IS or other groups, than highly involved in the dissemination of pro-jihadist propaganda embedded within pictures, video clips, comments and found in links to off-site content (Klausen 2015). While much of this propagandizing still involves the rather standard techniques noted previously – of exploiting grievances, demonizing targets and/or promoting a culture of martyrdom (Bloom 2011) – it also frequently entails efforts directly aimed at making jihad look appealing to younger audiences.

Aside from posting romanticized and/or hyper-masculine images of IS fighters to portray jihad as 'cool', pro-jihadist supporters employ another communication strategy now commonly found within and across various Internet subcultures: political jamming. Political jamming entails the deliberate alteration of representations of a logo, photo or meme in order to subvert its meaning for the audience and thus disrupt its political or commercial use – a form of what Lasn (1999) terms 'meme warfare'. Long used by counter-culture and anti-consumer groups to spread political and anti-consumer messages, 'culture jamming,' Frederick Jameson (1992: 409) describes jamming as a form of "cultural politics" that allows jammers to confront "the image society" by "undermining the image by way of image itself," thus imploding its logic and presenting the viewer with alternate, often ironic or satirical meaning. A classic example of this technique is the spoof of the famous Joe Camel cigarette ad, in which the cigarette smoking camel is renamed Joe Chemo and shown suffering from cancer as a result of his use of tobacco.

Political jamming differs from culture jamming in three key aspects. First, where culture jamming is directed at altering the behaviours of consumers, political jams are oriented towards changing individual and group attitudes towards public policy, spurring changes to government practices or regimes and/or influencing global social change (Cammaerts 2007). Second, political jamming is used by a wide array of individuals and groups, from the radical to the mainstream, and thus "cannot be coined as a counter-hegemonic practice per se" (ibid: 71). Indeed, with the accessibility of Photoshop and other editing software, and free use of meme generating software online, political jamming is today a standard feature of Internet discourse, routinely found and propagated across social media, created by anyone with the time, software and creativity to come

up with a clever play on a popular meme. Third, political jams are not necessarily progressive. They can entail calls for the maintenance of the status quo or support for reactionary policies, can be intolerant or racist towards minority or other groups, or attempt to incite hatred towards demonized others (ibid.).

As a political communication tool, jamming is particularly appealing to younger audiences. Not least among reasons for this is that most youth today live within a world in which information comes in small, highly digestible forms. The phenomenal rise of Twitter – with its famous 140 character limit – is one piece of evidence in support of this contention. Thus, a cartoon or altered photograph that conveys meaning is much more likely to incite interest than a book or other treatise on the same topic. Further, in today's digital media age, it is *de rigeur* for information to be presented in ways that excite audience interest, visually and rhetorically. The alternative is to risk losing one's audience. Political jams, with their subversive use of imagery and rhetoric retain, a counter-culture appeal (even when they're not) because are inherently transgressive. They ask their audience to laugh as their creators poke fun at a given person, group or idea. Thus, to the extent that they contain dark humour intended to bond a target audience while denigrating another, that they feed into the desire among disaffected youth – who variously create, consume, comment on and share these images – to be seen as cool and edgy among their peers. To the extent that some of these doctored images glorify political violence through the use of popular memes that were violent in their original context – Clint Eastwood's "go ahead, make my day" being a prime example – they present information in ways that are already familiar to many audience members and thus require little to no pre-knowledge in order to interpret the jammed image correctly.

Political jamming, mujahedeen style

Among social media and file sharing platforms used by Islamic radicals and their supporters, Twitter is seen to be among the most popular (Klausen 2015). The ability to communicate with network members through cellular technology – more easily available than 3G or wi-fi access – is only one of its perceived advantages (ibid.). Twitter also allows for easy uploading of images and embedded links to video (ibid.). My own research suggests another benefit: while Twitter suspends user accounts that violate its Terms of Service (ToS), they do not appear to engage in IP blocking or other measures that make rejoining difficult. Thus, individuals whose accounts are suspended re-join within hours and resume tweeting until reported again. To help suspended users reconnect, messages are tweeted across online communities.

> *"I was Suspended. This is My 4th acc. Please Follow, Retweet & Support Me."*
>
> *– post of a pro-Jihadi Twitter user, retweeted by another formerly suspended pro-Jihadi account.*

For each of these reasons, plus the issue of researcher ease of access, the project upon which the present study is based used Twitter as its primary research site.

The research project from which this data is derived consists of 3 inter-linked projects: a quantitative analysis of posting/tweeting patterns by males and females (from multiple pro-jihadist groups on Twitter), a network analysis of selected online Twitter-based groups (pro-IS, pro-AQ) and a qualitative study tracking and analyzing posting activities of approximately 50 Twitter accounts belonging to females [2] linked to IS Twitter networks and disseminating pro-IS content. For this third study, tweets produced were captured on a daily basis using N Capture (a text-based tool for use with NVIVO), twittonomy (a program to create Excel files and provide analytic support) and an Acrobat tool for converting webpages to pdf (thus allowing for the capture of photos, video link postings and text). When conducting daily reviews of tweets produced by the

accounts being followed, I routinely selected propagandistic images that were clear examples of pro-jihadist political jams. These were screen shot and saved. Collected images were then subjected to image content analysis, the results of which inform this paper.

This project has coincided with several recent key events. Among these was attack in France on the offices of Charlie Hebdo. The attack itself generated a significant volume of both satirical cartoons and doctored photos, as did the Unity march that followed. Among other examples, the march prompted the following political jam (figure 1), which foregrounded world leaders, such as the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the French President Francois Holland, now shown marching with genocidal dictators such as Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin in an obvious attempt to show a certain parity in political outlook and action. Additional political figures photoshopped into the picture include former Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi and Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian leader currently engaged in a conflict with IS and other groups. This image needs to be read in light of a series of similar political jams in which world leaders (sans additional figures) are shown to be carrying a banner reading "Je suis hypocrite" – a remark on the fact that the march was in support of democratic values, such as freedom of speech, when several of the countries represented by marchers had been routinely violating those same values and/or violating the rights of their Muslim citizens.

Figure 1.

U.S. foreign policy is another frequent target of pro-jihadist satire. The meme subverted in the jam below (figure 2) is from President Barak Obama's historic 2008 New Hampshire Primary speech in which he states that the slogan, 'yes we can,' embodies the spirit of the American people. In this reworking of this famous campaign piece of rhetoric, the spirit of the American people is represented as an imperialist force that kills children through drone strikes.

Figure 2.

Despite its earlier support of IS fighters against the Shia-backed government of Bashir al-Assad in Syria, Saudi Arabia's attempts at clamping down on IS activities within its own borders, coupled with its long-standing relationship with the U.S., make its leaders another target of pro-Jihadist political jams. In figure 3 below, titled 'Obama walking his dog', King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia is depicted as being, using the popular vernacular, Obama's 'bitch' in both literal and metaphorical senses of the word.

Figure 3.

Other jams take as their subject matter the fighting between U.S. and other forces against IS members and/or Western efforts against the war on terror more generally. Displays of American military might are denigrated through images that show vulnerability and/or weakness. In the example found below (figure 4), American personnel exhibiting a macho, military presence are linked to an image of dead military personnel being returned home in caskets, presumably after fighting IS members. It is worth noting that the captions that guide the viewer through the transition between one state (alive and tough) to another (dead) invoke typical teenage slang – a rhetorical strategy that, in this context, is intended to mimic the nonchalance of the cool teenager. 'Death? Whatevvvvver.'

Figure 4.

While political leaders and public policies are the subject matter of a number of IS political jams, others are directed at 'kafirs', those individuals who are deemed to be non-believers and thus the enemy of IS and Muslims more generally. The following jam draws on an image of a police officer ('Officer Pepper Spray') who used capsicum spray in a notorious incident involving protestors at the University of California Davis. Picking up on the irony of police 'keeping the peace' by casually inflicting pain on peaceful citizens, the image became a meme used in a variety of political jams, including by pro-jihadists. The image below (figure 5), when placed within a stream of invective against kafirs, suggests that casual violence against non-believers is not only acceptable, but potentially comical to audience members.

Figure 5.

Countering the 'cool' message

Some have suggested that the way to counter pro-jihadist messages is to discredit their 'brand' in the eyes of potential converts by portraying their activities "as inglorious and shameful" (Venhaus 2010). I disagree. Part of the appeal of any counter-culture movement is the fact that actions undertaken by their members *are* frowned upon by the larger mainstream society. Another significant component of the allure of belonging to a counter-culture group of this nature is that adherents can see themselves as non-conformists, fashioning new identities that are 'cool' and 'dangerous.' Indeed, attempts at discrediting IS or AQ violence by Western governments simply draw cries of hypocrisy from pro-jihadist propagandists. Other proposed solutions have included creating alternate websites promoting peace by moderate Islamic factions and/or former extremists (Cohen 2009) and adopting zero tolerance measures such as removing, censoring or blocking pro-jihadist accounts and websites (Stevens and Neumann 2009; Bergin, Osman, Ungerer and Yasin 2009). However, moderates are routinely denigrated as 'coconuts'[3] – making them 'uncool' – and accounts deleted on mainstream websites reappear under another name within hours. Extremist content is simply moved to other sites or posted to mainstream social media.

So, what can be done? In an article for the public policy think tank, the Hoover Institute, Jessica Stern (2012) reflected on the fact that radicalizing agents online are "increasingly adept at making jihad cool" and raised the question of whether it might "be possible to reduce the appeal of terrorist fads, perhaps by helping youth understand that these groups are not actually as cool as they might look, from the outside?" The answer to this is an unqualified yes. Indeed, the accessibility of many of these online milieus not only permits new opportunities for developing important insights into the phenomenon of jihadi cool and its role in facilitating online radicalization, it also provides means by which propagandist messages can be countered in ways that will resonate with intended audiences. One of the potential tools in the counter-terrorism arsenal is political jamming, the same device used by pro-jihadist factions.

The root of the political jam is subversion for a satirical purpose. It is intended to mock – that is, to make a particular individual, group, belief, action and/or ideology a subject of scornful laughter, and thus influence views on the desirability of aligning one's self with the target. As I have noted earlier, political jams require from their creators knowledge of popular culture, a sense of humour reflective of the audience one is addressing, some basic creativity and access to the Internet.

The use of political jamming to counter terrorist propaganda is not a hypothetical scenario, as recent events demonstrate. On January 20th, 2015, IS released a YouTube video of two Japanese hostages, Kenji Goto Jogo and Haruna Yukawa. Although the kidnapping and video were purportedly made to demand a $200 million ransom in retaliation for Japan's decision to financially support anti-IS efforts, the propaganda value of the video lie in its ability to strike fear in the Japanese public.

While many reacted with fear, within twelve hours Japanese Twitter users began responding in the form of political jams, using photoshopped images of the video to mock IS. This was followed by the creation of a hashtag – #ISISCrappyCollageGrandPrix – to encourage others to create their own anti-IS jams and thus continue using humour to subvert IS propaganda. The message of participating Japanese tweeters was simple: "You can kill some of us, but Japan is a peaceful and happy land, with fast Internet. So go to hell" (Twitter poster, 2015).

Many of the jams create by Japanese Twitter users drew on an image of the two men held hostage by a masked kidnapper. In the jam below (figure 6), this image is mocked by reworking the figure to be one of fun (a sushi eating contest) rather than fear (hostage-taking).

Figure 6.

The jam in figure 7, however, retains the menacing aspect, but reverses the figures so that it is now the Japanese hostages who threaten the IS hostage-taker. The knives, pointed forward towards the viewer,

adopt standard IS imagery in which knives pointed at an anonymous viewer indicate future threat ('we're coming for you'). The caption below the post reinforces the image of Japanese domination over the situation: "Japanese doesn't have feeling of strain."

Figure 7.

In figure 8 below, the creator significantly alters the intent of the original video message by having the IS figure now posing with the hostages in support of a message of world peace: "we are the world." As IS ideology promotes a view of community as being constituted only of 'believers' (the 'ummah'), such a message, coupled with a show of brotherhood towards 'kafir' [4] in the form of clasped shoulders, would be entirely offensive to IS supporters. Thus, this jam works as a highly ironic statement.

Figure 8.

Other Japanese jams were directed at the purported identity of the hooded figure. One of the most well-known IS-related figures is an individual known as Jihadi John. Jihadi John's notoriety comes as a result of his association with kidnappings of Western targets and his appearance in videos in which IS prisoners are depicted as being beheaded.[5] In figure, the fearsome image of Jihadi John morphs into the figure of Mike Myers' comic villain, Dr. Evil.

Figure 9.

In another jam, Jihadi John's omnipresent beheading knife is shown more prosaically slicing chicken in a

kebab shop (figure 10).

Figure 10.

While many across the globe were confused, upset or offended by the political jams featuring the hostages, within the first 24 hours, others were laughing at IS and the recasting of its fear-mongering video. In defense of the rogue Tweeters' actions, one user posted, "If you don't understand why Japanese tweeters are mocking ISIS threat, then ISIS has control of you. #NoFear." Others noted of the strategy that it demonstrated "resilience v. terrorism" and, said another user, was thus "rather brilliant." Echoing the sentiments of many other Twitter users, one poster tweeted: "Japan is winning the Internet with #ISISクソコラグランプリ which means something like "ISIS Crappy Collage Grand Prix" #nofear #日本人." Even Anonymous, who themselves have been known to strike fear in some individuals and groups, tweeted their enjoyment of the online battle: "HAHA #ISIS, the Japanese are STILL mocking you RT." Sensing they were losing some of their 'coolness,' IS propagandists responded by issuing comments about the impending death of their hostages to little effect on many Japanese Twitter users. As one commented: "Tomorrow will be sad but it will pass and #ISIS will still be a big joke. You can't break our spirit."

Rethinking strategy on the 'rhetorical war front': Some concluding remarks

> *Despite the expertise and sophistication of political communications and the exploitation of satellite television, the Internet, DVD technology and cellular communications in the West, al-Qaeda is beating us at our own game … They know how to forge, project and drive messages that strike a responsive chord (Farwell 2010: 145; underline mine).*

Although Farwell is commenting on the failure of Western attempts to counter al-Qaeda propaganda efforts, his remarks are equally salient in discussions of countering pro-IS radicalizing discourse (see also Sorenson 2014). This paper has attempted to shed some insights into at least one rhetorical device employed by IS propagandists – their use of political jamming – which has been unexamined by terrorism scholars in the West and unmatched by Western online counter-terrorist strategies.

How to explain the failure noted by Farwell and others? Stevens and Neumann (2009: 11) suggest that policy-makers and counter-terrorism experts simply do not understand the Internet and thus the nature of the problem: "Though everyone uses the Internet, most members of the public – including many policymakers and politicians – have only the most cursory idea of how it works." Generational and cultural gaps are a significant impediment that allow pro-IS propagandists, many of whom have grown up in the Internet age, to flourish in their work.

One key to understanding social discourse on the Internet is to understand young people frequently use social media as a site in which to develop a sense of themselves, as well as positive relationships to others, and that a fundamental aspect of this is the search for 'coolness.' Being 'cool' denotes a desirable insider status, someone to be admired or looked up to because of their unique qualities. Among earlier generations of youth, 'cool' was associated with counter-culture elements, its meaning "intrinsically anti-social, anti-family, pro-drug, anti-caring and most of all anti-authority" (Pountain and Robins 2000: 13). While modern consumer culture has co-opted some of that meaning to help product branding (Runyan, Noh and Mosier 2013), 'cool' not only still retains some of its counter-culture associations but more than ever demarcates the boundaries between insider and outsider status within social groups.

Satire – a key element of the political jams – also marks boundaries between social statuses. It marks a boundary between what is 'cool' and what is not. The purpose of satire is, after all, to use wit to attack an idea, group, individual or other target for the purpose of holding them up to public ridicule (Tang 2013). As was noted in a recent discussion of Chinese Internet satire, "Exposing others' shortcomings and stupidity in a clever way and making them a laughing stock gratifies the audience's sense of superiority," at the same time that it might offer others an alternate perspective on a given issue (ibid.: 484). Japanese Twitter users demonstrated the fact that it becomes increasingly difficult to see something as 'cool' when it is the target of public laughter. Even the subsequent beheading of one of the Japanese hostages – a standard piece of terror theatre intended to gain control of an audience through fear – failed to staunch changing attitudes across social media. "Terrorism is meant to be belittled," a poster tweeted from Manila, "#teamJapan".

George Orwell (1968: 284) once observed that "every joke is a tiny revolution." Within the context of countering online radicalization, the creative subversion of memes can provide excellent opportunities for sparking tiny counter-revolutions aimed at making jihad far less 'cool'. Thus, I would encourage future terrorism research aimed at improving our understanding of this phenomenon, both in terms of its present use and its untapped potential as a counter-terrorism tool. In relation to the latter, we need a better understanding of how audiences receive these messages. We also need a more accurate picture of who – by age, gender, ethnicity, among other demographic factors – are most likely to employ political humour in this context. In relation to the latter, this paper is intended to serve as a preliminary step in what will hopefully be the construction of a larger, more detailed analysis political jamming and its use within terrorist propaganda.

About the author: **Laura Huey** *is the author of several articles on issues related to policing, cyber-security and terrorism. She is currently conducting research (with Johnny Nhan, TCU) on the role of gender in online radicalizing milieus and exploring women's participation in the creation and dissemination of pro-jihadist propaganda. Other current research is in the areas of cyber-security (as a member of the SERENE-RISC network) and alternate forms of police reporting.*

References

Bergin, A., Osman, S., Ungerer, C and Yasin, N. 2009. 'Countering Internet Radicalisation in Southeast Asia.' Australian Strategic Policy Institute report. Available at: https://www.aspi.org.au/publications/special-report-issue-22-countering-Internet-radicalisation-in-southeast asia/9_22_46_AM_SR22_Countering_Internet_radicalisation.pdf.

Bjelopera, J. 2013. 'American Jihadist Terrorism: Combating a Complex Threat.' Congressional Research Service Report for the U.S. Congress. Available at: http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/R41416.pdf

Bloom, M. 2011. *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bloom, M. 2013. 'In Defense of Honor: Women and Terrorist Recruitment on the Internet.' *Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 4(1): 150-195.

Cammaerts, B. 2007. 'Jamming the Political: Beyond Counter-Hegemonic Practices.' *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 21 (1): 71-90.

CBS News (Denver). 2014. 'Media Forensics Experts Analyzing ISIS Video in Denver.' *CBS News Denver* online. Available at: http://denver.cbslocal.com/2014/09/03/media-forensics-experts-analyzing-isis-video/

Cohen, J. 2009. 'Diverting the Radicalization Track.' *Policy Review*, 154: 51-63.

Conway, M. 2012. 'From al-Zarqawi to al-Awlaki: The Emergence of the Internet as a New Form of Violent Radical Milieu.' *CTX: Combatting Terrorism Exchange*, 2(4): 12-22.

Farwell, J. 2010. 'Jihadi Video in the "War of Ideas."' *Survival*, 52(6): 127–150.

Horgan, J. 2008. 'From Profiles to *Pathways* and Roots to *Routes*: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism.' *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618(1): 80-94.

Jameson, F. 1992. *Postmodernism, or the Culture of Late Capital*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Klausen, J. 2015. 'Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38:1–22.

Lasn, K. 1999. *Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America*. New York: Eagle Brook.

Orwell, G. 1968. 'Funny, But Not Vulgar,' in S. Angus and I. Angus (eds.) *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*. London: Secker & Warburg.

Payne, K. 2009. 'Winning the Battle of Ideas: Propaganda, Ideology, and Terror.' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32:109–128.

Pountain, D. and Robins, D. 2000. *Cool Rules: Anatomy of an Attitude*. London: Reaktion Books.

Runyan, R., Noh, M. and Mosier, J. 2013. 'What is cool? Operationalizing the Construct in an Apparel Context.' *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 17(3): 322-340.

Sageman, M. 2008. 'The Next Generation of Terror.' *Foreign Policy*, 165: 36-42.

Sorenson, D. 2014. 'Confronting the "Islamic State" Priming Strategic Communications: Countering the Appeal of ISIS.' *Parameters*, 44(3): 25-36.

Stern, J. 2012. 'A Radical Idea.' Hoover Digest, 2012(1). Available online at: http://www.hoover.org/research/radical-idea

Stevens, T. and Neumann, P. 2009. Countering Online Radicalisation: A Strategy for Action. International

Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence Policy Report. Available at: *icsr.info/projects/the-challenge-of-online-radicalisation*

Tang, L. 2013. 'The Politics of Flies: Mocking News in Chinese Cyberspace.' *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 6(4): 482–496.

Venhaus, J. 2010. 'Why Youth Join Al-Qaeda.' Report of the U.S. Institute of Peace. Available at: www.usip.org.

Notes

[1] Lyrics from the rap video Blow by Blow by U.S. foreign fighter, Abu Mansoor al-Amriki. See: http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/video/american-jihadi-sings-blow-blow-10676504

[2] Initially, for the qualitative portion of this project, I tracked prolific pro-IS tweeters of both genders; however, this strategy was abandoned after several weeks when it became apparent that the volume generated by the male posters was simply too much to analyze given resource and time constraints.

[3] A term used to indicate that someone is seen as being 'brown' on the outside and 'white' on the inside.

[4] Unbelievers.

[5] There is some debate as to whether the actual beheadings take place off-camera and are then re-enacted for filming (CBS 2014).

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence
Journal of Terrorism Research

The Arab Awakening and US counterterrorism in the Greater Middle East: A Missed Opportunity

by Eugenio Lilli

Abstract

In 2011, the Arab Awakening offered an opportunity to the Obama administration to advance the US interest to counter terrorism in the Greater Middle East without compromising its commitment to the promotion of democracy. As of early 2015, however, with the exception of still-hopeful Tunisia, democracy has not made any significant progress in Middle Eastern countries. Additionally, old and new regional extremist groups have become increasingly active. How did the Obama administration miss the opportunity offered by the Arab Awakening? What actions could the United States take to reverse current unfavorable trends and advance US policies of counterterrorism and democratization in the region?

Keywords: Counterterrorism, Democracy Promotion, US Foreign Policy, Arab Awakening, The Middle East, Barack Obama

Introduction

Counterterrorism has long been a core US strategic interest in the Greater Middle East. [1] Policies of counterterrorism have sometimes conflicted with US ideal interests in the region, such as the promotion of democratic values. Highly controversial US counterterrorism practices after 9/11 are a case in point. In 2011, the Arab Awakening offered an opportunity to the Barack Obama administration to advance the US interest to counter terrorism without compromising its public commitment to democracy promotion. In fact, in 2011, popular movements across the Greater Middle East demanded reforms that were in line with US ideals and values. Meanwhile, the overwhelmingly peaceful nature of the protests seemed to have fatally discredited the extremists' argument that only violence could achieve meaningful change in the region. As of early 2015, however, with the exception of still-hopeful Tunisia, democracy has not made any significant progress in Middle Eastern countries. Additionally, old and new regional extremist groups have become increasingly active. This article analyzes how the Obama administration missed the opportunity offered by the Arab Awakening, and it suggests some actions that the United States could take to reverse current unfavorable trends and advance US policies of counterterrorism and democratization in the Greater Middle East.

Conflicting US national interests in the Greater Middle East

The pursuit of the national interest is a key concept in foreign policy. In 1996, a study conducted by foreign policy experts and former and prospective members of US administrations concluded that "national

interests are the fundamental building blocks in any discussion of foreign policy."(The Commission on America's National Interests, 1996, p. 13) Reinforcing this argument, academic Gideon Rose writes that a state's national interest in foreign policy consists of "the goals or preferences that guide the country's external behavior."(Rose, 1998, p. 152) Scholars and foreign policy practitioners alike generally acknowledge the strong connection that exists between the national interest and a state's foreign policy.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the specific identification of Rose's goals and preferences, the above general consensus weakens and opinions start to diverge significantly. In fact, as noted in a US Central Intelligence Agency study, "national interests are not absolutes."(Fulton T. Armstrong, 2002) Some national interests ostensibly enjoy universal support such as the defense of a country's territorial integrity from foreign attack or the protection of its citizens. Other national interests, instead, may be dependent on what the incumbent administration deems to represent the current most pressing concerns. For example, the Obama administration's perceived need in 2009 for a pronounced "pivot" of US foreign policy toward Asia. Moreover, national goals and preferences in foreign policy may be influenced by unexpected –or Black Swan- events that have the potential to markedly alter an administration's previous priorities. Tellingly, the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States suddenly elevated hitherto neglected Afghanistan to one of the top priorities in the foreign policy agenda of the George W. Bush administration.

The task of identifying a country's goals and preferences in foreign policy is made harder by the fact that the national interest commonly includes concerns extending beyond a single policy area. Scholar Samuel Huntington describes this aspect of the national interest as follows: "National interests usually combine security and material concerns, on the one hand, and moral and ethical concerns, on the other."(Huntington, 1997, p. 35) These general considerations on the concept of the national interest also apply to the specific case of the United States. Indeed, academic Joseph Nye Jr. maintains that, with regard to US foreign policy, "the national interest is simply the set of shared priorities regarding [US] relations with the rest of the world." Moreover, Nye explains that the US national interest "is broader than strategic interests […] The American people clearly think that their interests include certain values and their promotion abroad."(Nye, 1999) Drawing on Huntington's and Nye's insights, in this article we distinguish two major clusters of interests within the broader US national interest: strategic interests and ideal interests. On the one hand, US strategic interests include mainly security, geo-political, economic, and commercial concerns. On the other hand, US ideal interests generally refer to the promotion of national ideology, defined here as a coherent and organic system of beliefs, symbols, and values.

In their relations with the outside world, US administrations have continuously wrestled to find an acceptable balance between the protection of US strategic interests and the promotion of US ideal interests. Tensions among different US national interests have punctuated the history of the country. There is an extensive literature arguing that such tensions have been especially frequent, although not unique, in the US foreign policy toward the Greater Middle East. Former US Ambassador Mark Indyk and others contend that, when framing US Middle East policies, "every [US] president since Franklin Roosevelt has struck that balance in favor of the [strategic] national interest, downplaying the promotion of America's democratic values because of the region's strategic importance."(Indyk, Lieberthal, & O'Hanlon, 2012, p. 142) In a similar fashion, Middle East expert Kenneth Pollack holds that "in the Middle East, Washington set [the promotion of ideal interests] aside, both because it feared that their application to the Middle East would produce Arab States inimical to American interests and because we [the United States] always had immediate concerns in the region that required the cooperation of America's [autocratic] Arab allies."(Pollack, 2011, p. 8)

This article focuses its attention on the relationship between two particularly important US national interests in the Greater Middle East: the strategic interest to counter terrorism and the ideal interest to advance democratic values. Democracy promotion and counterterrorism are both core US national interests. They are consistently described as such in official documents issued by the US government, including in the Obama administration's National Security Strategy 2015.(Obama, 2015) Moreover, democracy promotion and counterterrorism in the Greater Middle East are longstanding US concerns. Arguably, the interest of the United States in advancing democratic values in the region started in the early 20th century when US President Woodrow Wilson announced his commitment to make the world "safe for democracy" and actively engaged in the post-WWI peace negotiations.(Wilson, 1917) The US interest in Middle Eastern terrorism, instead, became significant in the wake of the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, when a number of Palestinian groups radicalized and began to resort to terrorist tactics, including airplane hijackings, hostage takings, and bombings, to target US citizens and assets.(Naftali, 2004)

If we adopt a long-term view, the objectives of combating terrorism and advancing democratic values seem to converge. In fact, a popular argument maintains that democratic forms of government provide people with peaceful channels to express their grievances and achieve change, therefore reducing the appeal of resorting to violence and terrorist tactics. According to this view, the implementation of democratic reforms would eventually lead to less terrorism.(Bush, 2006) However, transitions to democratic forms of government need time to bear fruit, whereas, as Pollack points out, the United States is generally confronted by "immediate concerns" in the Greater Middle East that require a quick response. Consequently, US officials tend to adopt a short-term view on issues of Middle Eastern terrorism that could raise tensions between the objectives of countering terrorism and promoting democracy. These tensions include the competing needs of *realpolitik* versus the rule of law, security concerns versus requirements of due process, secrecy versus transparency, discretion versus accountability, and preference for unified direction versus pluralism.

Some counterterrorism practices employed by the United States in its post-9/11 Global War on Terror have proved especially at odds with the US stated objective of advancing democratic values abroad. First, there is the ongoing practice of indefinite detention of mostly Middle Eastern terrorist suspects at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. According to a senior UN human rights official, "the continuing indefinite incarceration of many of the detainees [in Guantanamo] amounts to arbitrary detention and is in clear breach of international law."(The World Post, 2013) Second, there were what then US Secretary of Defense Ronald Rumsfeld defined as "enhanced interrogation techniques". An Orwellian way to describe interrogation practices, such as waterboarding, sleep deprivation, and forced-feeding, that many authoritative sources, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, criticized as plain torture.(Lewis, 2004) Finally, there was a highly classified CIA program of extraordinary rendition and secret detention. We now know that the CIA program consisted in terrorist suspects being secretly flown outside the United States to be interrogated by foreign governments that used torture, or by the CIA itself in clandestine "black sites" using torture techniques.(Open Society Foundations, 2013) Although these practices clearly infringed the very values the United States claims to stand for, US officials deemed them necessary to disrupt terrorist networks and protect the nation against further attacks.

The Arab Awakening as a missed opportunity

Unexpectedly, in 2011, the Arab Awakening offered a unique opportunity to the Obama administration to advance the US strategic interest of countering terrorism without compromising the US ideal interest

of promoting democracy. In fact, in 2011, popular uprisings across the Greater Middle East forcefully demanded more political freedom, equal economic opportunities, greater accountability of their leaders, and less corrupted political systems. The protesters' demands were in line with the US ideal interest of supporting the spread of more democratic forms of government. Meanwhile, the overwhelmingly peaceful nature of the uprisings seemed to have fatally discredited the extremists' argument that only violence could achieve meaningful change in the region.

Immediately after the outbreak of the Arab Awakening, extremist groups tried to take credit for the unrest. Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, for example, claimed that the Awakening was a direct consequence of the 9/11 terrorist attacks a decade earlier.(Associated Press, 2011) Al Qaeda and other likeminded extremist groups depicted the objectives of the uprisings as in line with their rejection of the status quo in the Greater Middle East. Claims like al-Zawahiri's had no significant resonance among Middle Eastern public opinions. Despite their efforts, extremist groups had only a marginal, if any, role in the initial phases of the Arab Awakening. Indeed, political, economic, and social grievances, and not violent extremist rhetoric, were the primary reasons that had brought the protesters into the street. Egypt was a case in point: two weeks of peaceful popular protests had driven Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak out of office; a remarkable goal that extremists like al-Zawahiri had failed to achieve after decades of armed struggle. In 2011, there was reason to believe that the success of the Arab Awakening had the potential to simultaneously serve both the US ideal interest of advancing democratic values and the US strategic interest of fighting Middle Eastern terrorism.

However, despite the initial enthusiasm, the Arab Awakening has hardly been a success for democracy. Four years down the road, the popular uprisings have mostly failed to answer the protesters' demands. In the countries that experienced the full-blown Awakening in 2011, democratic values have not made any significant gain. In order to provide an up-to-date assessment of the democratic record of such countries, we primarily rely on the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (CRHRP) and the World Report (WR) issued respectively in 2014 by the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and in 2015 by the non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch.(Human Rights Watch, 2015; US Department of State, 2014)

As mentioned earlier, the Egyptian uprising led to the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak. Mubarak's removal in February 2011 was welcomed as a historic step that would allow Egypt to move toward a more democratic form of government. After a transitional period of military rule, power was peacefully transferred to a newly-elected parliament in early 2012. Egyptians elected a new president and approved a new constitution later in the same year. However, the policies adopted by the new Islamist president were perceived as sectarian and divisive, and, consequently, generated a strong domestic opposition. In response to growing tensions, the Egyptian armed forces staged a coup d'état in July 2013 that removed from power the newly-elected president. Since then, with the stated objectives of combating terrorism and restoring law and order in the country, a military-backed government has undertaken a systematic crackdown on the opposition. Restrictive measures have particularly targeted the Egyptian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. According to credible estimates, since the July coup, clashes involving state security forces and protesters have resulted in between 1,000 and 2,500 dead, more than 17,000 wounded, and between 16,000 and 19,000 arrests. The CRHRP and the WR highlight serious issues that still hinder Egypt's transition toward democracy: the excessive use of force by state security forces, including unlawful killings and torture; arbitrary arrests; the suppression of civil liberties, including societal and government restrictions on freedom of expression, press, and assembly; and impunity for state security forces.(Sharp, 2014)

In the immediate aftermath of the ouster of Egypt's President Mubarak, a major uprising broke out in Bahrain. Bahraini protesters mainly demanded reforms aimed at establishing a constitutional monarchy. The unrest escalated quickly, especially after several protesters were killed in clashes with state security forces. Moreover, the Bahraini government's half-hearted promises of reform failed to stop the opposition from staging increasingly large demonstrations. In March, when the Bahraini authorities seemed on the verge of losing control of the country, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) decided to send troops into Bahrain to shore up the embattled royal family. The GCC military intervention was followed by a harsh crackdown on dissent. Since then, the Bahraini government and the opposition have tried to reach a political solution to their differences through two national dialogues. Neither attempt (the first in July 2011 and the second from February to December 2013) was successful in stopping the continued low-intensity unrest in the country. So far, the government has enacted only modest reforms that have neither significantly diluted its authority nor addressed the demands of the opposition for a fairer distribution of political and economic opportunities. According to the CRHRP and WR, the most urgent democracy problems faced by Bahrain include: the continued discrimination against the Shiite population; the inability of Bahraini citizens to change their government peacefully; politically motivated arrests; the lack of consistent accountability for security officers accused of committing human rights violations; and restrictions on civil liberties.(Katzman, 2014)

In Yemen, a peaceful grassroots uprising demanding reforms and better living conditions progressively turned into an armed struggle for power among competing traditional elites. Only foreign diplomatic mediation temporarily stopped the country's seemingly inexorable descent into a state of all-out civil war. The GCC brokered an internationally-supported transition plan that called for Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh to resign while granting him, and his inner circle, immunity from prosecution. After months of continued fighting and political jostling, the Yemeni president eventually signed the GCC plan and stepped aside in November 2011. As part of the transition plan, Yemen engaged in a comprehensive national dialogue that lasted from March 2013 to January 2014. The so-called National Dialogue Conference ended with a blueprint for far-reaching reforms. However, agreement was elusive on a number of contentious and potentially destabilizing issues, such as a power-sharing agreement between North and South and the disarmament of non-state actors. Unresolved issues led to renewed violence. At the time of this writing, Yemen's very physical integrity is threatened by an armed confrontation among a diverse array of domestic and foreign actors including Yemeni government forces (supported by a coalition of Arab states), Saleh's loyalists, the Houthi insurgency (allegedly supported by Iran), and the extremist groups Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Moreover, arbitrary killings and other human rights abuses perpetrated by state and non-state groups; a weak central government; the lack of civilian oversight on state security forces; and widespread corruption at all levels of government, including a corrupt judicial system that is unable to ensure the rule of law, represent persistent obstacles to Yemen's process of democratization.(International Crisis Group, 2014)

Inspired by the unrest in the region, Libyan demonstrators took to the street to protest the authoritarian and corrupt rule of Colonel Muammar Qaddafi. Confronted by significant popular opposition, Libya's central institutions quickly crumbled. The anti-Qaddafi opposition, backed by defected troops, established control over a number of cities in the east. The Libyan regime announced its intention to crash the opposition with all the means at its disposal. Ostensibly to avoid the massacre of civilians in the opposition-held city of Benghazi, the United Nations Security Council authorized foreign military intervention in support of the anti-Qaddafi forces. The ensuing armed conflict lasted for months and ended only in October 2011 with the killing of Qaddafi himself. Since then, Libyan interim authorities have failed to form a stable government

and to assert uncontested control over much of Libya's territory. Tellingly, as of 2015, the country displays two opposing national assemblies both claiming to be the legitimate representative of the Libyan people. Additionally, Libya's eastern and western regions are plagued by continued fighting among heterogeneous coalitions of rival armed groups. The United Nations has reported the indiscriminate use of military weaponry, unlawful killings, abductions, and the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of people during the conflict. At present in Libya, the absence of a single legitimate political authority, coupled with a marked deteriorating security situation, makes the possibility of enacting meaningful democratic reforms very unlikely.(Blanchard, 2014)

In mid-March the Arab Awakening also reached hitherto quiet Syria. Like in other Middle Eastern countries experiencing turmoil in 2011, protesters in Syria called for more freedom and democracy, better living conditions, and an end to government's corruption and unaccountability. In response to peaceful demonstrations, the regime of President Bashar al-Assad carried out mass arrests and made extensive use of lethal force. So far, the uprising in Syria has not resulted in either regime change as in Egypt, Yemen, and Libya or in a national dialogue as in Bahrain. The Syrian uprising has instead plunged the country into a protracted state of civil war that has been fought along distinct sectarian and religious lines. Although the Syrian regime has lost control of large areas of the country, President Assad has not been toppled. Moreover, within the anti-government opposition, extremist groups with radical agendas have gained the upper hand. Both Assad supporters and opposition forces have been accused of committing human rights abuses, carrying out massacres, and engaging in torture. The current situation of instability, lawlessness, and violence in Syria do not allow for any serious discussion about democratic reforms.(Blanchard & others, 2014)

Tunisia represents the only major exception to the general democratic retrenchment occurring in the Greater Middle East. Contrary to the other "Arab Awakening" countries, in fact, Tunisia has so far avoided the traps of both armed conflict and authoritarian recrudescence. The Tunisian uprising was the first to hit the region and arguably inspired all the others. Despite relatively effective state services and strong economy, Tunisians complained about important limits to their freedom of expression, political participation, economic opportunities, and religious activism. Popular protests started in mid-December 2010 and in a few weeks led to the ouster of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. After Ben Ali's departure, Islamist and secular parties have competed for influence. Faced by political polarization and a stalled economy, and not without tensions and misunderstandings, the major parties among the Tunisian political spectrum have showed their willingness to compromise. In 2014, the country has adopted a new constitution, and has held relatively fair and peaceful legislative and presidential elections. The CRHRP and WR point out that Tunisia's transition to democracy is far for complete. Issues of state security forces' unaccountability and constraints on freedom of expression persist. Nevertheless, observers have acknowledged that Tunisians nowadays enjoy more civil and political liberties than they used to do in the past.(Arieff & Humud, 2014)

Tunisia aside, the Arab Awakening has so far failed to put the Greater Middle East on a sound path toward more democratic forms of government. As the most influential foreign power in the region, the United States is to some extent responsible for such a failure. This is not to say that the United States was in a position to determine its desired outcome of the uprisings. In fact, US overall influence over the events was constrained by both external and domestic factors, including the predominantly local nature of the Arab protests, the concerns of US regional allies (Israel and Saudi Arabia were particularly wary of revolutionary political change), and US fiscal problems. These constraints aside, the Obama administration still proved reluctant to side fully with the popular uprisings, therefore denying the protesters the international backing that could have increased their chances of success.

We distinguish the Obama administration's response to the 2011 uprisings into three distinct categories. In the first category, we group the US response to uprisings in countries where the United States had no significant national interests at stake, that is Tunisia. The second category lists the response to uprisings where the Obama administration faced a convergence between US ideal and strategic national interests, namely Libya and Syria. Finally, in the third category, we place the response to uprisings where US ideal interests conflicted with US strategic ones, specifically Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen.

Tunisia is a peripheral country in the Greater Middle East, both in terms of its geographic location and of its political, economic, and social influence. As a consequence, Tunisia was not a top-priority for US foreign policymakers. In spite of some level of military-to-military cooperation on issues of counterterrorism, the United States had not vital strategic interest in the bilateral relationship with the Tunisian government. When unrest broke out, the Obama administration expressed concern but announced that it was "not taking sides". (Clinton, 2011) As a matter of fact, the United States played no meaningful role during the popular uprising that led to the ouster of President Ben Ali. Although US policymakers have repeatedly described Tunisia as a key test case for democratic transitions in Middle Eastern states, the country remains of marginal importance for the United States and, as such, it has received relatively little political attention.

In Libya, the Obama administration confronted a foreign policy emergency where US ideal and strategic interests converged. US officials concluded that backing the Libyan uprising would serve the US ideal interests of spreading democratic values in the Greater Middle East, protecting civilians from the brutality of an oppressive regime, and avoiding a severe humanitarian crisis. Meanwhile, US endorsement of the anti-Qaddafi opposition would contribute to the protection of a number of US strategic interests: fostering transatlantic relations, justifying the role of NATO in the 21st century, preventing violence from spreading and destabilizing Libya's neighbors, and offering a public relations opportunity to rebut criticisms regarding the perceived US lack of support for the Arab Awakening. The US decision to decisively side with the Libyan opposition was also facilitated by the fact that, beyond some level of bilateral cooperation on counterterrorism and nonproliferation, the Obama administration had no fundamental national interest in keeping Colonel Qaddafi in power. However, US commitment to the success of the Libyan uprising ended soon after the military defeat of the Libyan regime. Deeply weary of embarking on yet another exercise of state building (especially after the recent costly experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan), the United States quickly disengaged from Libya, leaving the war-torn country plunging into a state of prolonged chaos.

At first glance, Syria also appeared to provide a case of convergence among different US national interests. In fact, the ideal interest of supporting protesters demanding more freedom, democracy, and better living conditions seemed compatible with the strategic interest of putting an end to an openly hostile regime. The Obama administration, therefore, proved initially keen to offer rhetorical support for the anti-Assad opposition and to exert economic and diplomatic pressure on the Syrian regime. With time, however, US officials became increasingly concerned about the growing influence of Islamist extremist groups within the ranks of the Syrian opposition. The US administration was caught between the understanding that the rule of President Assad had become untenable and serious concerns about the uncertainty of what would replace it. Consequently, the United States assumed a cautious policy of half-hearted support for the uprising that resulted in limited US military assistance to the Syrian armed opposition and rejections to repeated calls for direct US military intervention against Assad forces.

Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen presented the US administration with the difficult choice of either endorsing popular uprisings demanding democratic reforms or backing friendly Arab autocrats that had proved

instrumental to the advancement of core US strategic interests. Eventually, the Obama administration adopted the US traditional Middle East policy (described above by Indyk and Pollack) of downplaying the promotion of US ideal interests in favor of the protection of US strategic ones. Hence, concerns about the future of the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty led to the hesitation with which the Obama administration belatedly decided to espouse the Egyptian protesters' call for President Mubarak's immediate resignation. Likewise, the continuing strategic importance of stationing the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain limited the US administration's response to the Bahraini government's violent crackdown on the opposition mainly to expressions of mild criticism. Finally, US single-minded preoccupation with fighting Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula shaped the US response to unrest in Yemen where the strategic interest of maintaining counterterrorism cooperation with the local government dwarfed the ideal interest of promoting democratic values.

Ensuing controversial US decisions have only strengthened the perception that the United States is not seriously committed to the cause of Arab democracy. In the aftermath of the Arab Awakening, the Obama administration proved especially keen on reestablishing business-as-usual relations with new and old Arab regimes that had responded to popular protests with increased political repression and human rights abuses. US policy toward Egypt is a case in point. Primarily concerned with maintaining cordial relations with Egypt's military leaders, the Obama administration even refused to define the Egyptian military's forced removal of a democratically-elected president in 2013 as a coup d'état; a definition, that according to US law, would have required the suspension of US bilateral aid to the country. The fact that Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi was an Islamist formerly affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood was another important factor in the Obama administration's decision not to take a strong stand against the military coup. Influential forces both inside and outside the United States were deeply uncomfortable with the idea of Islamists ruling Egypt and, therefore, they saw no compelling reason to oppose the coup.(Esposito, 2013) Domestically, both Republicans and Democrats in the US Congress had repeatedly conveyed their skepticism about the Muslim Brotherhood's commitment to democracy. Internationally, US regional allies had also openly expressed their concerns. Israel, for example, feared that an Islamist-led Egyptian government would be more sympathetic toward the Palestinian Islamist organization Hamas and perhaps decide to loosen or terminate the blockade against the Gaza Strip. Saudi Arabia, and to a lesser extent the United Arab Emirates, worried that an empowered Muslim Brotherhood would damage their religious legitimacy by offering a model of Islamic law different from the Wahhabi tradition of an absolute monarchy. The combination of these internal and external pressures certainly influenced President Obama's response to the 2013 coup.

The resulting continued US close association with autocratic Arab regimes, and their repressive policies, has had the unwanted effect of increasing popular antipathy to the United States. Meanwhile, extremist organizations, like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, have proved ready to exploit the widely held perception that the United States and its regional allies have systematically worked to undermine the cause of Arab democracy as a propaganda tool to advance their radical agendas.

Implications for the United States

All that considered, the events of these last few years have the potential to severely damage US current and future counterterrorism efforts in the Greater Middle East. To begin with, the hitherto failure of the Arab Awakening to significantly improve the political, economic, and social conditions of affected Arab countries has left the region open to extremist groups ready to exploit unresolved grievances, including widespread

corruption, sectarian discrimination, high unemployment, and disregard for human rights. After that, the 2011 uprisings overwhelmingly started as peaceful protest movements. Because of the lack of meaningful success, disillusioned protesters may draw the dangerous conclusion that change in the Greater Middle East cannot be achieved by peaceful means; Arab protesters may buy into the extremists' narrative that resorting to violence is their only chance to ameliorate their lot in life. Additionally, anti-Americanism was a negligible aspect during the early phases of the Awakening. Indeed, Arab protesters were predominantly calling for reforms in line with traditional US values and ideals. However, the Obama administration's half-hearted support for the popular uprisings drew many criticisms, especially in the Greater Middle East, and it was deemed partly responsible for the eventual failure of the Arab Awakening to deliver meaningful change. In other words, the complex dynamics set in motion by the transformative events occurred since 2011 have sowed the seeds for future, wider, and possibly more anti-American, terrorist activity.

As of early 2015, clear signs of a renewed terrorist threat are already visible across the region. The proliferation of new and old extremist groups in almost every post-Arab Awakening country is hard to ignore. The Islamic State and the Nusra Front have undoubtedly emerged as two of the strongest actors involved in the Syrian civil war. Since the ouster of President Mubarak, the formation of Ansar Bayt al Maqdis has represented a persistent and challenging menace to Egypt's stability. Three distinct extremist groups, sharing the common name Ansar al Sharia, have stepped up their operations in Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen. In Yemen, AQAP remains perhaps the most dangerous of all Al Qaeda's franchises. Even in relatively-quieter Bahrain, radical opposition factions have become more organized, claiming responsibility for increasingly frequent violent actions. While these extremist groups primarily focus their attacks on local targets, US officials have identified them as credible threats to the United States or its allies, and to US national interests in the Greater Middle East.(Humud & others, 2014)

In order to stop, and possibly reverse, this negative trend, the United States needs to thoroughly reevaluate its Middle East policy to take into account widespread popular demands for change. US officials should adopt the long view while confronting the immediate terrorist threat. In particular, a primary aspect of US policy should be to address the domestic dynamics inside Middle Eastern states that are standing on the way of the kind of durable social and political peace critical to counter the extremists' narrative.

Accordingly, action in two policy-areas becomes of paramount importance.

First, the United States should identify innovative and effective ways to leverage US bilateral assistance to promote political, economic, and social reforms in the Greater Middle East. Special attention should be given to programs aimed at fostering individual freedoms, human development, and economic opportunity as essential tools against the radicalization of Middle Eastern populations. When applicable, conditionality clauses on US assistance should be enforced without exception to avoid damaging charges of hypocrisy and double standards.

Second, the United States should commit meaningful resources to support the development and empowerment of civil society. In fact, by providing frustrated Middle Eastern people with non-violent channels to find a satisfactory solution to their longstanding grievances, domestic civic groups can represent a peaceful alternative to terrorists' violence. Moreover, domestic civic groups can also help to spread those democratic values, such as pluralism and tolerance, badly required in the long-term fight against extremism.

About the author: **Eugenio Lilli** *obtained his PhD in 2015 at King's College London (KCL), War Studies Department. He is the founding chairperson of the KCL US Foreign Policy Research Group. His research focuses on the foreign relations of the United States and especially on the Barack Obama administration's foreign policy*

toward the region of the Greater Middle East. Eugenio has appeared on Al Jazeera's Inside Story, The Telegraph, and other national and local media outlets.

References

Arieff, A., & Humud, C. (2014). *Political Transition in Tunisia*. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf

Associated Press. (2011, September 13). Al-Qaida Leader Seeks Credit for Arab Spring. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/13/al-qaida-leader-arab-spring

Blanchard, C. M. (2014). *Libya: Transition and U.S. Policy 08/09/2014*. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33142.pdf

Blanchard, C. M., & others. (2014). *Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response 17/09/2014*. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33487.pdf

Bush, G. W. (2006, March 16). The National Security Strategy of the United States 2006. Retrieved from http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2006/

Clinton, H. (2011, January 12). Clinton Tackles Tunisia, Iran, Lebanon & Mideast Talks. *Al-Arabiya*. Retrieved from http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/01/12/133153.html

Esposito, J. (2013, July 25). Mubarak Redux: Egypt's Military Coup Unmasked. *Huffingtonpost*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-l-esposito/mubarak-redux-egypts-mili_b_3646135.html

Fulton T. Armstrong. (2002). Ways To Make Analysis Relevant But Not Prescriptive. *Studies In Intelligence*, *46*(3). Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol46no3/article05.html

Human Rights Watch. (2015). *World Report 2015*. Retrieved from http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/wr2015_web.pdf

Humud, C., & others. (2014). *Al Qaeda-Affiliated Groups: Middle East and Africa*. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43756.pdf

Huntington, S. P. (1997). The Erosion of American National Interest. *Foreign Affairs*, *76*(5).

Indyk, M. S., Lieberthal, K. G., & O'Hanlon, M. E. (2012). *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

International Crisis Group. (2014). *The Huthis: From Saada to Sanaa*. Retrieved from http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iran%20Gulf/Yemen/154-the-huthis-from-saada-to-sanaa.pdf

Katzman, K. (2014). *Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy 03/10/2014*. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/95-1013.pdf

Lewis, N. A. (2004, November 30). Red Cross Finds Detainee Abuse in Guantánamo. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/30/politics/30gitmo.html?scp=1&sq=Tantamount%20to%20torture&st=cse

Naftali, T. (2004). US Counterterrorism before Bin Laden. *International Journal*, *60*(1).

Nye, J. S. (1999). Redefining the National Interest. *Foreign Affairs*, *78*(4). Retrieved from http://www.

foreignaffairs.com/articles/55209/joseph-s-nye-jr/redefining-the-national-interest

Obama, B. (2015, February). The National Security Strategy of the United States 2015.

Open Society Foundations. (2013). *Globalizing Torture: CIA Secret Detention and Extraordinary Rendition*. Retrieved from http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/globalizing-torture-20120205.pdf

Pollack, K. M. (2011). Understanding the Arab Awakening. In *The Arab Awakening*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Rose, G. (1998). Review: Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. *World Politics*, *51*(1), 144–172.

Sharp, J. (2014). *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations 05/06/2014*. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf

The Commission on America's National Interests. (1996). America's National Interests. Retrieved from http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/americas_interests.pdf

The World Post. (2013, May 4). Navi Pillay, UN's Top Human Rights Official, Calls For Guantanamo Closing In Wake Of Hunger Strikes. *The World Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/05/navi-pillay-un-human-rights-guantanamo_n_3020494.html

US Department of State. (2014). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013*. Retrieved from http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=220348#wrapper

Wilson, W. (1917, April 2). Speech to Congress 02/04/1917. Retrieved from http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/usawardeclaration.htm

Note

[1] For the specific purpose of this article we use the term Greater Middle East to loosely refer to the region stretching east-to-west from Afghanistan to North Africa and north-to-south from the Levant to the Arabian Peninsula

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence
Journal of Terrorism Research

Fundamentalism and Terrorism

by Cassandra Rausch

Abstract

Citizens worldwide are becoming all too familiar with the accelerated frequency of terrorist attacks in the 21st century, particularly with those involving a religious underpinning. Why, though, have religiously-affiliated acts of terrorism become such a common occurrence? By examining how religious fundamentalism has accelerated and intensified terrorism within the modern world, scholars can focus on determining the "why". By historically defining terrorism and fundamentalism and then placing them within the context of current religio-political and socio-political discourse, one can observe the shift from nationalism into terrorism and therefore understanding the innate interconnectedness of fundamentalism and terrorism as a whole.

Keywords: religious fundamentalism, terrorism, religious terrorists, modern terrorism, religio-political discourse, socio-political discourse

Throughout the beginning of the 21st century, it is no surprise that terrorism has come to be a major concern worldwide. Due to the frequency and magnitude of violence, many scholars have and are trying to determine the sudden surge in activity. Since the Cold War has ended, there seems to be one driving factor behind the atrocities, and focus has shifted from nationalism to religious fundamentalism as the cause of terrorist acts. From the World Trade Center bombings in 1993 and their eventual destruction on September 11th, 2001, suicide attacks in Israel in Palestine, nerve gas in the Tokyo subway, and assassinations in India, Israel, and Algeria, religion has come to the forefront as motivation for the largest terrorist organizations in the modern world (Juergensmeyer, 2001).

In order to examine this phenomenon, one main question must be answered: How has religious fundamentalism accelerated terrorism in the modern world? To establish a framework to respond, one must first examine the definitions of fundamentalism and terrorism, as well as their historical ties. In addition, understanding the dynamics between religion, politics, and society become important to place the nature of the violence into the correct context. Finally, one must determine the shift from nationalistic violence to fundamentalism, and use this to explain how fundamentalism has become the root of modern terroristic acts.

To define terrorism is akin to attempting to define any human experience, if only in the fact that terrorism defines itself to each person differently. Socio-political realities, religious affiliation, and cultural identification play into an individual's definition, creating difficulties in expression within universally understood terms. In each instance of terrorism (regardless of definition) one might view an act as "terroristic" while another may not. If a hard and fast definition must be constructed, it should be simple and open to interpretation. We know the following: terrorist acts are violent (or at least inherently dangerous), typically involve more than one target, and are perpetrated to initiate change (whether societal, political, religious, or ideological).

Therefore, one may choose to define an incident as an act of terrorism if the violence or the threat of violence was used against more than one person in order to instigate change on a societal, political, religious, or ideological level.

Fundamentalism, however, is much easier to define. Simply put, it is an unwavering faith to a religious belief system, though some assert that the term 'fundamentalism' is another way of excusing 'normal' religion and isolating problems into a deviant form of the doctrine (Juergensmeyer, 2004). Though originally used to describe certain sects of Christianity, this strict adherence to theoretical doctrine has stretched to include all major world religions. Multiple terrorist acts have been committed by "followers" of other religions; specifically, due to current developments and acts committed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), this examination will focus on Islamic fundamentalism. Whether through the original political split inside of Islam or the eventual Shiite-Sunni split that has led to numerous conflicts, Islam has been in almost constant turmoil since its appearance, with fundamentalism and radicalization inside of its doctrine becoming a mitigating factor in most of the terrorist acts completed within the 21st century (White, 2012). With these definitions in mind, examining the historical background of both terrorism and fundamentalism will provide a context in which to place the influence of religious terrorism on politics and society.

Historical Background

The word 'terrorism' first originated during the French Revolution (1789-1799) and was used to describe the government; by 1848, it was used to describe violent revolutionaries (White, 2012). By the end of the 1800's and early 1900's, the meaning had again changed to describe the violent acts of several organized groups, such as labor organizations, anarchists, nationalistic groups, and ultra-nationalistic political organizations. Eventually, nationalism became the main motivation behind acts of terrorism; however, a clear shift had already begun as religion came to the forefront of terroristic reasoning.

According to Hirschmann (2000), five types of terrorism now exist: ideological, involving the desire for revolutionary changes within political or social structures; ethno-political, in which ethnic minorities long for their own state within an existing state or some degree of political and cultural autonomy; religious, where a desire to impose religion-based norms of conduct appears and can evolve into apocalyptic fanaticism; single issue, involving the extremist militancy of groups/individuals protesting a perceived grievance; and "chosen ones", who are mentally disturbed/deranged individuals with a certain mission or social philosophy who are not connected to a network (pg. 299). All things considered, one could make a justifiable argument that while all "types" of terrorism are equally valid in their need for examination, in light of recent events religious motivations stand in the forefront and require immediate consideration.

This shift has been attributed to increasing amounts of acts involving religious terrorism to political Islam, Christian fundamentalism, and Messianic Zionism (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004). As terrorist ideologies have become more religious, terroristic violence has become more indiscriminate and targets appear to be more geographically dispersed. In regards to fundamentalism, groups wishing to have their religion practiced purely are called fundamentalist, as are groups pushing for an overhaul of the national or global political system with a cultural connection to a religion (Emerson & Hartman, 2006). While first used to describe a conservative strain of Protestantism developed in the United States, the fundamentalist 'battle' was not so much with the secular state as it was between other Protestant people and organizations; however, other organizations and sects were attempting to modernize, with fundamentalists becoming militantly opposed (Emerson & Hartman, 2006).

While this conflict eventually died out, and fundamentalism relatively disappeared until the 1970's, some have stated that without modernization and secularization there would be no fundamentalism; when resurgence did occur in the 1970's, it appeared more politically active than before, and was beginning to be observed as part of most of the world's religions (Emerson & Hartman, 2006). Considering the shift that occurred, religious fundamentalism then came to been seen as an aggressive politicization of religion for the pursuit of nonreligious ends, being only a superficial form of terrorism or extremism; this definition fits more clearly with what fundamentalism has become in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Tibi, 1998).

When examining historical ties between terrorism and fundamentalism, one can look at the developed ideological and organizational requirements of modern fundamentalism from Emerson and Hartman (2006), which closely resemble the process of radicalization and indoctrination of an individual into a terrorist organization described by White (2012). Ideological requirements for modern fundamentalism include defense of tradition, selective choice in doctrine, dualistic morality, absolutism, and messianism (Emerson & Hartman, 2006). This clearly connects with the organizational requirements, including an elect/chosen membership, set boundaries for inclusion, "chosen" leaders, and behavioral requirements. White (2012) describes the process of radicalization as involving an alienated young man, who upon meeting other alienated young men forms a group. From there, the group gravitates towards religion, and attempt to outdo each other in their zeal for the cause. The religion then begins to be interpreted in militant terms- while most groups stop at this point, some continue development leading to a militant group that encounters a terrorist contact, and join the terrorists through a group decision (White, 2012). Keeping in mind these ties of organization, the religio-political and socio-political discourses regarding fundamentalism and terrorism can now be examined.

Religio-Political and Socio-Political Discourse

First, one must note that while most think of Islam and politics as synonymous, terrorist attacks are driven by Islamic extremists and political Islam stands separate from that extremism, though they are just as disillusioned by with the Western World (Ayoob, 2004). In fact, many Muslims become upset when their faith is portrayed in terms of violent terrorism, as the majority of the violence seen with Islamic fundamentalists should be attributed to the religio-political environment instead of the religion itself; in those states where religious freedom is allowed and/or encouraged, violence is rare and becomes limited to isolated incidents, as opposed to the violent religious groups that continue to emerge in countries where the state suppresses religious freedom or espouses one religion over another (Emerson & Hartman, 2006; White, 2012).

Specifically focusing on al Qaeda, some question the idea of the organization being fully religious, and instead define it as a violent political organization that attempts to hide behind Islam; while the doctrine of Islam is usually described as peaceful and tolerant by religious scholars, the basic mission of al Qaeda is to create a popular uprising that will destroy Western influence and reestablish the caliphate system (Hart, 2008, *in* White, 2012). Bin Laden, as the leader of al Qaeda, adopted the philosophies of Abdullah Azzam, who believed that Islam had been dominated by foreign powers for far too long; this was seen as an opportunity to wage a 'holy war' against the United States, the West, Israel, and Muslims who opposed jihadist theology (White 2012). After declaring war on the United States in 1996, bin Laden had his religious council issue two religious fatwas in 1998 in order to validate his opposition of the Western world; since that time, al Qaeda has completed many terrorist attacks on the world stage, though its capabilities to do so have been slightly diminished (Sageman, 2009, *in* White, 2012; White, 2012).

Radical religious movements based in cultures of violence have been found to contain three commonalities: rejection of compromises with liberal values and secular institutions, refusal to observe boundaries that secular society has set upon religion, and attempts to create a new form of religiosity that rejects what they regard as weak, modern substitutes for their religion's origin (Juergensmeyer, 2011). In the case of religious extremism, rules that cause members to conform in ways of behavior, violence, intolerance, and self-destruction to achieve the group's goals work to legitimize their interpretation of religious doctrine (Pech & Slade, 2006). Furthermore, these groups hide within cultural and religious shadows with a sense of justification, eschewing the political goals of social order and community, and vehemently oppose the dominant political power; from a 'terrorist' point of view, they are waging jihad, which legitimizes any action perpetuated against mankind, even if it is forbidden in the mainstream form of Islam (Pech & Slade, 2006). Therefore, one could argue that the need for religion sprung from treachery observed in societies around them, as the modern secular world caused them to feel victimized and abandonment of religion in such a world would mean a loss of their own individual identities; by fashioning a 'traditional' (fundamentalist) religion of their own making, they created an outlet to express the concerns they had not only with their religious/ethnic/national communities, but with their own personal selves (Juergensmeyer, 2001).

While 'religious terrorists' may have anti-modern goals and strive to return society to an idealized past therefore making them anti-democratic and anti-progressive, there is another viewpoint contending that terrorism can be seen as a socio-political phenomenon that difficult to define objectively and universally, being that it is largely context-based (Bhatia, 2009; Gunning & Jackson, 2011). When observing religious terrorism from their own political perspective, it may be possible that communities affected by poverty, underdevelopment, and fragility of state are breeding grounds for dissatisfaction, and lead to potential violence with the realization of extremism through acts of terrorism (Pech & Slade, 2006). Additionally, though this argument is focused on rise of religious fundamentalism and its acceleration of terrorism, the possibility exists that religion might not be the primary cause of this acceleration.

Furthermore, structural factors that have been known to be key drivers in political factors might have a huge influence in the Middle East, as it is a war-torn region with state repression, political exclusion, and horizontal inequality; a long transition of transnational non-state networks rooted in socio-religious structure then provides extensive funding opportunities for extremism (Gunning & Jackson, 2011). In addition, economic and social tensions experienced by large numbers of people were not religious, and instead were issues of social identity and participation; however, these secular ideological expressions of rebellion were replaced by ideological formations that are religious (Juergensmeyer, 2004). This replacement becomes evident through the shift from nationalism as the underpinnings of terrorism to religion as seen in modern times.

From Nationalism to Fundamentalism

Acts of murder on behalf of a moral code has traditionally been a political statement, and bringing religion into the field breaks the state's monopoly on this morally sanctioned killing (Juergensmeyer, 2001). This works to support the notion that nationalism has been replaced as the underpinnings of terrorism in recent times. As mentioned previously, the word 'terrorism' was originally ascribed to violent revolutionaries, political groups, and nationalistic groups- why, then, has the shift to religious reasoning occurred? This could be attributed to the decline of political and oppositional resistance in many modernized countries, most likely due to the loss of political capabilities; in the Western world, democratic societies have lessened the need for

political action, and the resurgence of religion plays a large part in the decline of nationalistic terrorism (Ross & Gurr, 1989). From a Marxist point of view, the modernization of society should cause a decline in religious identification; however, it seems that the opposite is true, and some even state that without modernization and secularization there would be no fundamentalism (Emerson & Hartman, 2006; White, 2012). A possible cause, at least in the context of Islamic fundamentalism, could be that religious authority can provide a ready-made replacement for secular authority, so the attempt becomes to challenge the legitimacy of the secular authority and gain support on the basis of religion (Juergensmeyer, 2001). This religiously motivated political shift works to further the goals of the terrorist extremists.

Furthermore, the link between religion and terrorism can be inferred from a statistical observation that 'religious terrorists' have been more violent than their secular counterparts in recent decades, causing a major shift from left-wing and anti-colonial violence towards religiously inspired violence in recent times (Gunning & Jackson, 2011). With an increasing presence of violent eschatology, a group believing it must wage war to purify the Earth before the return of a deity becomes a defining factor in the 'religious' terrorism of the modern day- for example, the idea of a holy jihad against the West by Islamic fundamentalists has become the driving force behind violent attacks in the past few decades (White, 2012). From 1980 onward, religious groups were responsible for ever-increasing violent conflicts in comparison to non-religious nationalist groups, allowing one to argue that the new 'religious' terrorism is due to the increasing prevalence of religion in the ideology of terrorist organizations, subsequently working to influence the increase of indiscriminate violence (Bergensen & Lizardo, 2004; Fox, 2004).

Fundamentalism and Terrorism

When looking at *how* fundamentalism has accelerated terrorism, one must consider the effect fundamentalism has had on modern day terrorism. To begin, many scholars claim that 'religious terrorists are more dangerous', and that with strong religious beliefs comes the increased likelihood of conflict, even going so far as to state that the term 'religious terrorism' insinuates an implicit relationship between religious ideas and violence (Emerson & Hartman, 2006; Enders & Sandler, 2000; Fox, 2004; Gunning & Jackson, 2011; Juergensmeyer, 2001; Pearce, 2005; White, 2012). Religious terrorism produces radical value systems, different methods of legitimation and justification, skewed morality, and subsequently may be a more lethal threat than that posed by traditional terrorists (Hoffman, 2006, *in* Gunning & Jackson, 2011). Development of a more symbolic nature of religion could bring about an emphasis on sacrifice and cosmic war as a means to achieve their specified end; in recent years, a terrorist incident is almost 17% more likely to result in death or injuries, with this increase in severity specifically attributed to the growth of religious terrorism (Enders & Sandler, 2000; Juergensmeyer, 2003). From a more historical perspective, the most basic reason for terrorism is to gain recognition or attention- the theatricality of modern terrorist attacks exemplifies this (Crenshaw, 1981). As the level of violence works to spread the publicity of the event, this direct combination working with religious motivation provides yet another reason why terrorism has been accelerated by fundamentalism.

Modern considerations of religious terrorism can be summed up very simply- current times have observed actions that become "terror for the sake of terror", i.e. acts that are intended to cause chaos and confusion, not to legitimize or push a political ideology (White, 2012). Though this assumption may or may not be correct, there have been events that could be perceived in this light. If one is to assume this idea is true, it could provide support the idea of religious terrorism being more deadly than 'traditional' terrorism, with the

assumed 'willingness' to kill larger numbers of people indiscriminately due to their religious perspective; for example, the World Trade Center assault had no obvious military or political goal, and could be considered a perverse performance of power intended to shock the world and draw people into their idea of a 'cosmic war' (Hoffman, 2006; Juergensmeyer, 2001). With an image of the perceived 'cosmic war', those engaged in the conflict have wildly different perspectives from other types of terrorism; by absolutizing the conflict and demonizing opponents, compromise becomes extremely difficult, as the fundamentalists hold out for the promise of total victory through divine intervention and strict adherence to these interpretations leads to violence in the minds of members (Juergensmeyer, 2001; Pech & Slade, 2006).

When regarding the lethality of religious terrorism, one must consider the prevalence of suicide tactics- with the terrorist knowing that they will die because of the act, the idea of self-sacrifice and great reward empower him/her to take more risks and be more destructive, as they are more likely to succeed (Wade & Reiter, 2007). Terrorist groups build new mythologies to justify their actions, and these most often include self-sacrifice or death, leading members to seek martyrdom and terror as their way of life and very existence becomes threatened by peace; this in itself could lead to increased violence, as the member committing the act of terror has no fear of repercussion from authorities (Stern, 2003). More support for an increase in violence with religious terrorism is found by the observation that the goals are not short-term, and the terrorists perpetuating these acts might not (and don't expect to) live to see their goal accomplished- their fight is for God (in whatever form), and the rewards are vast for those who aid in the struggle- in other words, by 'spiritualizing' violence, religion accelerates terrorism and gives it more power (Juergensmeyer 2001). Subsequently, religion brings new aspects to conflicts in several ways- by personalizing the conflict, rewarding those engaged (transcendently or otherwise), lack of mobilization directed only at social or political issues, organizational networks, a sense of moral justification for political encounters, and a justification of violence that challenges the state (Juergensmeyer 2004).

Conclusion

By looking at the definitions and historical ties of fundamentalism and terrorism, exploring the religio-political and socio-political discourse relating to Islamic fundamentalism, and examining the shift from nationalistic terrorism to religious terrorism, one can better understand the reasoning presented to argue that fundamentalism has, in fact, accelerated terrorism in the modern world. As the severity of attacks increase, scholars will continue to examine the why of the situation in order to understand the motive behind the violence and attempt to determine if any actions could intercept or stop the violence. However, there will always be conflict, especially with religion; historically, religious conflict has experienced its share of rise and fall through the centuries, and our current time is no different. The focus, then, shifts from understanding why religious terrorism has escalated and accelerated terrorism to figuring out how to properly prepare and respond to such attacks, as well as develop ways to prevent such attacks. Unfortunately, the reality of the situation stands to reason that there will be no end to the conflict and violence, nor terrorism itself. Many countries are still vastly underprepared to deal with a terrorist attack of even moderate destruction. Preparation and response must be the focus of both scholars and governments alike; once the proper precautions are in place, prevention may become the focal point of research.

About the author: **Cassandra Rausch**, *MS is currently a doctoral student in the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Louisville, Kentucky who focuses on bringing interdisciplinary perspectives into*

the discipline, particularly anthropological methods. While her main areas of research are policing and death investigation, she also examines issues regarding genocide, terrorism, and mass disasters. Through domestic and international conference presentations and journal publications, she hopes to enrich the literature regarding these topics and provide recommendations for new directions in the field.

References

Ayoob, M. (2004). Political Islam: Image and reality. *World Policy Journal*, 21(3), 1-14.

Ben-dor, G., & Pedahzur, A. (2004). The uniqueness of Islamic fundamentalism and the fourth wave of international terrorism. In A. Pedahzur & L. Veinberg (Eds.), *Religious fundamentalism and political extremism* (71-90). Portland, OR: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.

Bergensen, A.J., & Lizardo, O. (2004). International terrorism and the world-system. *Sociological Theory*, 22(1), 38-52.

Bhatia, A. (2009). The discourses of terrorism. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41, 279-289.

Crenshaw, M. (1981). The causes of terrorism. *Comparative Politics*, 13(4), 379-399.

Emerson, M.O., & Hartman, D. (2006). The rise of religious fundamentalism. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 32, 127-144.

Enders, W., & Sandler, T. (2000). Is transnational terrorism becoming more threatening? A time-series investigation. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 44(3), 307-332.

Fox, J. (2004). The rise of religious nationalism and conflict: Ethnic conflict and revolutionary wars, 1945-2001. *Journal of Peace Research*, 41(6), 715-731.

Gunning, J., & Jackson, R. (2011). What's so 'religious' about 'religious terrorism'? *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 4(3), 369-388.

Hirschmann, K. (2000). The changing face of terrorism. *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft,* (3), 299-310.

Juergensmeyer, M. (2001). Terror in the name of God. *Current History*, 100(649), 357-360.

Juergensmeyer, M. (2003). *Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence.* University of California Pr.

Juergensmeyer, M. (2004). Is religion the problem? *Hedgehod Review*, 6(1), 1-10.

Pearce, S. (2005). Religious rage: A quantitative analysis of the intensity of religious conflicts. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 17(3), 333-352.

Pech, R.J., & Slade, B.W. (2006). Religious fundamentalism and terrorism: Why do they do it and what do they want? *Foresight*, 8(1), 8-20.

Radojevic, K. (2002). Religion and terrorism. *Religija I Tolerancija*, 8(14), 239-252.

Ross, J.I., & Gurr, T.R. (1989). Why terrorism subsides: A comparative study of Canada and the United States. *Comparative Politics*, 21(4), 405-426.

Stern, J. (2003). *Terror in the name of god: Why religious militants kill*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Tibi, B. (1998). *The challenge of fundamentalism: Political Islam and the new world disorder*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Wade, S.J., & Reiter, D. (2007). Does democracy matter? Regime type and suicide terrorism. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 51(2), 329-348.

White, J.R. (2012). *Terrorism and homeland security* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence
Journal of Terrorism Research

Terrorism in Indonesia:

A Review on Rehabilitation and Deradicalization

by Zora A. Sukabdi

Abstract

In the context where terrorism is viewed as an act of crime based on ideology, rehabilitating offenders are significantly critical. This journal aims to identify terror activists' behavior transformation process, critical development areas needed in changing terrorism perpetrators' behavior, key elements in rehabilitation, criterions for successful rehabilitation, and parameters of effective deradicalization according to those who have disengaged from violence and criminal activities. Data were collected from forty three former terrorism perpetrators and religious activists inside and outside prisons using unstructured interviews, focused group discussions, and a list of questions in a questionnaire. The result shows that behavior transformation is possible and there are six dimensions of critical areas of development needed in rehabilitating terror activists in Indonesia. The result also indicates some inputs for successful rehabilitation and effective deradicalization.

Keywords: Terrorism, root causes, rehabilitation, disengagement, deradicalization, parameters

Introduction

Eleven years has passed since the Bali Bombing which claimed more than 200 lives. Indonesia received various awards in its efforts in combating acts of terrorism. Data from Indonesian National Police shows that more than 900 militants involved in acts of terrorism have been captured during the last decade, including charismatic leaders, ideologues, and action recruiters. Nevertheless, there are disturbing developments, namely various acts of terrorism other than bombings, such as mutilation of officers, attacks on places of worship (churches), the killing of priests, and various others, including the wave of anti-government movement by militant activists that are supported by the public through various mass organizations and religious groups. This indicates that acts of terrorism are no longer targeted upon a 'foreign enemy' (such as the United States, Jews, and their assets), but targeting more of 'domestic enemy' (such as members of other religions or the local government that support the United States and Jewish policy) (Moghadam, 2010).

According to the Action Theory, human behavior cannot be separated from the intention to perform the act. Behavior is also affected by culture, and one aspect of culture is belief in religion. It gives an overview of various acts of terrorism in Indonesia for the last 14 years which was performed on behalf of religion. It is understood that acts of terrorism performed by jihadist groups, such as *Jamaah Islamiyah* (JI) and Indonesian Islamic State (NII), become a form of religious activity (*amaliyah*) because, unlike regular acts of crime, they are based on religious values and teachings. Thus charismatic leaders such as Abu Bakar Baasyir and Oman Abdurrahman never admitted that the acts performed by activists are considered acts of terrorism

or crime (Putra & Sukabdi, 2013). This issue has posed difficulty for social intervention practitioners and officers at Correctional Institutions in handling inmates of this type of cases, namely due to their unique nature, vast networks, and being different to other criminal cases that are based on certain ideological motive.

This research aims to study critical areas in changing terrorism offenders' behaviors used as parameters of effective deradicalization and give input to a successful rehabilitation program for inmates charged with terrorism cases. As the discussion about rehabilitating terrorism offenders will always be linked to the motivation of terrorism, the research will review first the root causes and motives of terrorism in Indonesia in several studies.

Roots and Motives of Terrorism in Indonesia

The studies about the root causes and motives of religious terrorism describe wide-ranging findings and acknowledge no single answer. A number of studies reveal root causes of terrorism such as collective understanding of Quran verses and as-Sunnah (Putra & Sukabdi, 2013), rationalization (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2009; Post, 2007; Lia & Hegghammer, 2004; Sanadjian, 2006; Wolf & Frankel, 2007), low belief in establishing Islam peacefully with high rationalization of violent attack (Putra & Sukabdi, 2014), exclusion (Toffler, 2006), certain social situations perceived (Love, 2009; Post *et al.*, 2003; Post, 2007), and relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970; Rose, 1982; Runciman, 1966; Walker & Smith, 2001). Many studies indicate that the terrorism based on religious ideology engages religious people (Moghaddam, 2006, 2008, 2009; Bandura, 1999, 2004; Kruglanski & Fishman, 2009) and strongly relate to religious fundamentalism (Pech & Slade, 2006; Taylor & Horgan, 2001). As Horgan (2008) describes, there are steps of people's involvement in terrorism, which consists of a complex process comprising of the following three phases: (1) joining the terrorist group, (2) staying within the terrorist group, and (3) exiting, quitting, or disengaging from the terrorist group whether followed by a process of de-radicalization or not. Some scholars suggest that what moti¬vates terrorists varies according to the level and role in a terrorist organization or network (Victoroff, 2005; Englehart-Kurzman, 2006). Accordingly, leaders or inner-circle members in a terrorist group or network may have different motives, targets and strate¬gies from those of rank-file members or field perpetrators.

In general, two psychological approaches are often used to predict the root of acts of terrorism, namely 'syndrome approach' and 'instrumental approach'. Syndrome approach views acts of terrorism as a manifestation of a specific psychological construct that can be identified, such as specific personality type, social background, ideology, and so forth. Whereas instrumental approach views acts of terrorism as a mean to achieve an objective (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2009). The second approach relies on a cognitive process called 'moral calculation' which is subjective for the individual, which tries to test whether a way or method will reap more benefits than losses in order to achieve the desired outcome. In relation with this, the phenomenon of focalism arise, namely an increase of subjective attention toward an objective by ignoring other objectives. For example, the desire of perpetrators of terrorism to free their nation from tyranny or defend their religion can defeat his attention to other desires, such as protecting the innocent or fostering religious harmony. The perpetrators of these acts thought that only violence will be able to help them in achieving their objective and capturing the attention of parties which are the target of the attack as soon as possible (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2009).

Proving the instrumental approach to terrorism cases in Indonesia, Ali Imron (2007) as a perpetrator of the Bali bombing describes in his book the underlying reasons for his action: (1) discontent with the

current government, (2) widespread damages, namely the damage of creed (belief in one Almighty God) and thought, and damage of morality, (3) the expectation of allowing *jihad fi sabilillah* (physical war), (4) performing *jihad* obligation, and (5) retaliation against the infidels. Ali Imron revealed that Israel has performed inhumane act toward Palestinians, and also non-Muslims toward Muslims. He expressed this issue as the foundation for his group to retaliate toward those parties which they consider to be hostile to and fight against Islam. Ali Ghufron and Amrozi, other perpetrators of the Bali bombing, also described in a documentary movie, *Prison and Paradise* (2010), perceived disturbing conditions hence their action were chosen as an instrument.

> *The Bali bombing is my own initiative and Ima'am Samudra … which underlies … obviously there are many… it may be necessary to tell the people… I may have told the story…, that the current society is already…, damage.., damage in every level and aspect of their life. Thus…, we concluded that the defect.., is not damage by itself. In addition to the belief in Allah's destiny…, there exist…, the masterminds. The initiators are headquartered in the United States. That is clear… in the United States and also in Israel, that in the United States it exist through one organization called 'suhub yahud'… which they call 'suhub yahud'…, where this suhud yahud was established in the second half of the nineteenth century with the purpose to create a new world order… Thus, in essence.., verily.., if viewed from their program…, as I said previously through secularism first…, secularization. We are unconscious that through this secularization.., people will abandon their religion. The Hindu will abandon their Hinduism, the Muslims will abandon Islam, and the Christian will abandon their Christianity. Later on…, all religion will only leave its name. If all… religion.., leave its name…, then they will easily control us… This society which has been damaged, can only be faced through small preaching, with this…, by providing advice. It is also emphasized, but it is not enough.., because there must be someone to perform the jihad. Hence… This is the background of the Bali bombing… to be clear… We do not act without a basis, it has been thought through every aspects, both the affect and the verses… it is all complete… God knows everything (Ali Ghufron in Prison and Paradise, 2010).*

> *Yeah.., that was my expectation.., how Islam can be can prosper. That is why I did this [bombing]. It does not mean that when Islam prosper then Hindus…, people, is then wipe away. Not like that. But when Islam prosper… It is clearly a good life. As a consideration, look at the current condition of Indonesia, the salary of police is one million, each parliament people is thirty five million… Well… clearly it will result in destruction of morality. Why moral destruction? Because people no longer holds on to clear rules…, that is how it end…, in the end all sorts of ways are made halal [eligible] because of their moral are corrupt. Well, that [bombing] was the only program, we want to correct it beside our own morality. How can other people think like this? (Amrozi in Prison and Paradise, 2010)*

A study in Indonesia by Mufid (2011) points out three roles of radical religious activists that later will link to motives of terrorism: (1) ideologues (9.1 percent), who creates ideas and concepts, (2) middle management or organizers (10 percent), those who are classified into strategist/technocrat, recruiter, trainer/dispatcher, supplier/armorer, and (3) followers (80.9 percent), categorized into foot soldier/action perpetrator, technician, researcher/surveyor/errand runner, transporter, and sympathizer/fellow traveler. According to the findings of this research there are a number of factors that motivate individuals to be involved in terror¬ist acts in Indonesia. The factors can be classified into six motives: (1) religious-ideological, that is to establish

ideals of religion-based government or society (the establish¬ment of *dawlah Islamiyah* or the implementation of *shari'ah*) where violent or terrorist acts are considered as legitimate means to achieve these ideals, (2) solidarity-driven, that is to express empathy or help fellow believers, especially when they are threatened or become victims in a conflict situation, (3) revenge-seeking, that is to join in terrorist acts as an at¬tempt to retaliate against the enemies for losses (lives or property) experienced by perpetrators or their family, (4) sep¬aratist, that is to achieve a political goal of establishing a sep¬arate state, (5) mob mentality, that is to spontaneously participate in violent or terrorist acts without having any clear reasons, other than to follow others in such acts, and (6) situational, that is to be involved in terrorist acts by forced.

Related to the association of roles and motives, Mufid (2011) explains that religious-ideological motives appear in all roles or layers. Solidarity-driven is shown in the organizers and followers. Moreover, revenge-seeking motives, mob mentality, and separatist motives are seen in the followers. Lastly, situational motive is seen in the leaders and followers. The finding shows that religious-ideological motives are found to be the predominant reason that motivates all kinds of perpetrators in Indonesia to participate in terrorist acts. Table 1 describes the roles and motives of terrorism offenders in Indonesia. As for the cause of the acts of terrorism, Mufid (2011) also describes that cases in Indonesia present causes which are collected in the classification as follows: 1. Structural cause such as demographic imbalance, globalization, modernization, social inequality, and social class; 2. Conductive cause such as communication media, transportation technology, and security weaknesses; 3. Impetus, namely personal cause which occurred in the individual level such as sense of mourning or sadness; and 4. Precipitating cause such as provocative events, political volatility, and incidents. Therefore, terrorism in Indonesia is seen to be a cultural issue instead of simply security issue.

Table 1
Roles and Motives of Terrorism Activists in Indonesia

		Roles (in Percentage)		
		Leader	**Organizer**	**Follower**
Motives	Ideological-religious	80	81.8	37.1
	Communal solidarity	0	18.2	22.5
	Revenge-seeking	0	0	13.5
	Mob mentality	0	0	15.7
	Situational	20	0	9
	Separatist	0	0	2.2
		100	100	100

Note: n for each group are respectively 10 (leader), 11 (organizer or middle management), and 89 (follower)

Source: Mufid (2011)

In relation to the impression of justifying any means which was touched upon in the 'instrumental approach' discussion, Muslim clerics or scholars of Indonesia firmly emphasized what is called as 'principle of distinction' in Islamic war ethics, namely the separation between combat soldiers and civilians (Shihab, 2008). This principle, clearly meant to protect civilians hence the target of the attack in battle is only the military target and object. Civilian refers to women, children, *asif* (servant), elderly, spiritual leaders, and prisoners of war. Moreover, Muslim clerics and scholars also state that Islam prohibits the destruction of

environment such as cutting down trees, burning homes, damaging plants, and torturing animals. They also mention six requirements and war ethics in Islam which differentiate it from terrorism, namely: 1. clear and honorable objectives; 2. against the fighting forces, not civilians; 3. stopped if the opposition has surrender and choose peace; 4. protecting prisoners of war and treating them humanely; 5. maintaining environment by not killing animals without reason, burning trees, destroying crops, polluting water and well, destroying houses/buildings; and 6. maintaining religious freedom for religionists and clergies by not hurting them. According to these clerics, based on these requirements and ethics, acts of terrorism by the perpetrators which kills and other violent acts with the intention of establishing Islamic sharia, establishing an Islamic State, and making Islam as a guide to life for all Indonesian people (Putra & Sukabdi, 2013) cannot be justified and cannot become a proof of justifying any means or a form of rationalization (Muluk, Sumaktoyo, & Ruth, 2013). 'Rationalization', is illustrated as an individual act which explains a controversial behavior by using rational and logical arguments to cover up the real reason for the behavior, or a condition when an individual act defensively and tries to explain the action with ways that are acceptable to other people or appear logical (Wagner, 2008; Niolon, 1999; Philips, 1994; Maddox, 2006; Freud, 1991; Kaplan, Sadock, & Grebb, 1994; Green, 1982; Sterne, 1976; Fenichel, 1946; Fenichel, 1999; Berne, 1976; Freud, 1937).

Rehabilitation of Terrorism Perpetrators in Indonesia

Reviewing the findings related to motives and causes of terrorism, one can conclude that rehabilitating terrorism perpetrators is complex work and a multilayered concept. It should cover individual assessments, parameters of effectiveness, and systematic plans. As a mean to reestablish capacity and human function in society, rehabilitation is always linked to an effort to restore to a prior good condition (Maki & Riggar, 2004). Rehabilitation of terrorism perpetrators in Indonesia is defined to be:

> *"All type of efforts, through cooperation of various entities, whether in social, psychology, education, economic, culture, human resources, or other related fields, into a continuous process, which aims to rehabilitate terrorism inmates so they are able to be back in society as a holistic individual both mentally, emotionally, economically, and socially, so as to achieve self-sufficiency, productive, and useful to the state and society" (The National Anti-Terror Agency, 2013, p. 7).*

As a holistic approach, it focuses on character building and developing better mentality in order to have a more peaceful state of mind and favorable attitude to successfully contribute to society. Even though many people are skeptical about rehabilitating this ideology-based type of terrorism perpetrator, Rambo's (1993) theory about religion conversion proves that humans can experience ideology or mindsets adjustment. Moreover, Rambo (1993) explains that those who experience ideology conversion have undergone seven following crucial steps: (1) context, (2) crisis, (3) quest, (4) encounter, (5) interaction, (6) commitment, (7) consequences. The process has been tested in 300 more participants who experience change of belief or ideology alteration which lead to behavior transformation. Hence, mind adjustment and behavior transformation are possible. As Putra & Sukabdi (2014) argue, two types of intervention are proposed to meet effective transformation process among religious fundamentalists: peripheral routes and central routes. The first focuses on applying positive psychology in developing quality of life (e.g. education, socioeconomic, etc.) and increasing internal locus of control, while the second focuses on ideology and careful interpretations of sacred texts with the assistance of respected clerics using sets of two-way conversations.

Since the revelation of extensive terrorist cells of Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) the Indonesian practitioners including government has launched various soft approaches to rehabilitate terrorism perpetrators (Istiqomah, 2011).

The soft approach attracts more concern and attention, and is further supported by all components as a cultural strategy, is believed to be more effective than harsh-oppressive style. It is also involving converted JI members who have renounced extreme ideology to influence their fellows to abandon violence, leave their radicalism, and focus more on socio economic improvement (socio-economical *jihad*). Many practitioners call this as 'disengagement' or 'deradicalization'. As Hwang (in Villarosa & Hwang, 2011) identifies, the following common drivers toward disengagement occur within Indonesian terror activists: (1) pronounced disillusionment with bombing and other factors (roles, mindsets, ideology); (2) development of relationship with those outside the jihadi circles; (3) change of priorities; (4) law enforcement soft approaches; and (5) cost benefit analysis.

In term of deradicalization, Istiqomah's (2011) study describes that in performing deradicalization in prisons, the practitioners in Indonesia provide trust, moral involvement, incentives, and getting in touch with the detainee's families is part of the main strategy. The most famous success story proving the effectiveness of this approach is that of Nasir Abas, a former Afghan militant who trained the Bali bombers. After his 2004 release from prison, he has been involved in the police's deradicalization program and helped to track down and arrested several of his former companions. Nasir Abbas has travelled to several Indonesian prisons to visit his former colleagues serving imprisonment for terrorist offences and convinced those to stop violence. Nonetheless, the methods in this soft approach are not smoothly accepted. There are many criticisms along with their implementation. The critiques get their eligible proof by the case of Abdullah Sonata who was convicted on terrorism-related charges in 2006. Within the umbrella of deradicalization, Sonata received furloughs to attend lawn parties and incentives from the police who paid hospital bills when his wife gave birth. Immediately after his 2009 release on good behaviour, he returned to his group and was involved in launching terror strikes to kill the President and other high-profile targets (Istiqomah, 2011).

Based on these recent findings, a further study to identify a behavior transformation, critical areas of development in rehabilitating terrorism perpetrators, elements and criteria of successful rehabilitation, and parameters of effective deradicalization in soft-cultural approach is needed. The study will collect opinions from those who are viewed to be successful in changing their behaviors, meaning those who have disengaged from violence and criminal activities. Regarding this, the major outstanding questions to address in this study are: How the Indonesian Islamic terror activists' behavior changes through the transformation process? What are the critical area(s) of development needed for Indonesian Islamic terror activists to develop constructive behavior and human function in society? What are the key elements in rehabilitating Indonesian Islamic terror activists? What is the criteria of successful rehabilitation for inmates charged with a terrorism case? And what are the parameters of effective deradicalization in a soft approach as a solution in handling terrorism?

Methods

Participants

A total of 43 men between the age of 25 and 61 (mean: 41) participated in this research. The participants were JI members and its affiliates used to declare Abu Bakar Baashir as their leader before they were arrested. Thirty one participants were prisoners, eight had been released, two were found in a court of law not to have supported the terrorist actions committed by their fellow group members, and the last two were Malaysian ISA (Internal Security Act) ex-prisoners (post released). The prisoners were located in two different prisons

on Java Island, Indonesia, who were serving from three years in prison to a life sentence. These participants came from a different level of involvement in terror actions and social hierarchy in their groups' structures, which was from a technical low-ranked role in the group to high-ranked commander. The participants were recommended by many entities such as prison authorities, national police, media journalists, and civil society components because of their achievement in transforming own behaviors and disengaging from violence and criminal activities.

Procedure and Material

Data was collected through a series of semi-structured Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews during community engagements, gatherings, and visits to prisons, and questionnaire about training needs in three years. The FGDs and interviews were held informally during visits and gatherings when the participants decided to share their opinions, experiences, and stories without note taking or recording, due to sensitivity of issues discussed. The approximately two-hour FGDs were conducted to probe and discuss regarding behavior transformation process, rehabilitation, deradicalization, re-integration to community, and critical areas needed for Indonesian Islamic terror activists to develop constructive behavior and human function in society. FGDs and interviews were performed by an educational psychologist as a prison authorities' consultant who had direct contacts with the participants, several times per year in various locations inside and outside prison prior to the interviews.

Each FGD and interview session was conducted in traditional Islamic custom as being performed in common Islamic communities in order to build rapport and trust between participants and the researcher. It did not use formal language as some of participants used Arabic terms in explaining. Some questions were listed to give directions for FGD sessions and interviews as seen in Form 1. Nonetheless, the FGD and interview questions were not strictly applied in every FGD and interview session due to sensitivity of some issues discussed. Consequently, some topics were removed or not explored such as transformation process, while some other unanticipated topics were raised such as the failure of deradicalization by government or civil society. Further, the participants were given opportunity to raise their own ideas and opinions during these unstructured FGD and interview sessions. Overall during the discussions, the inmates were quite open in answering questions. After FGDs and interviews, the researcher put down some notes regarding the important ideas, concepts, criterions, critical development areas, elements in rehabilitation, and even steps brought by participants to answer the research questions.

Form 1
List of questions in FGDs and interviews

No	Questions
1	*How was your personal behavior transformation process? What was the trigger?*
2	*What are the critical area(s) of development needed for you and your friends at prisons?*
3	*Based on your experience in joining any program after you were arrested or identified by national police, which part that you think is successful in changing your life and the way you see the world? Why?*
4	*Do you have any input for improvement of rehabilitation inmates charged with terrorism case?*
5	*What do you think to be key elements in rehabilitating Indonesian Islamic terror activists?*
6	*What do you think the criterions of successful rehabilitation for inmates charged with terrorism case?*
7	*What do you think to be parameters of effective deradicalization?*

A list of questions in a simple anonymous questionnaire about training needs also became a tool (Form 2) in collecting data in a prison (29 inmates). Similar to FGDs and interviews, some points of questions were left blank by some participants without any clear explanation.

Form 2

Training Needs Form

1. Please list things needed for your development

2. Please list your interests as inputs to any program held at prisons

3. Do you have any input for improvement of rehabilitation inmates charged with terrorism case?

Analysis

This study used qualitative thematic analysis on participants' answers, in training, need questionnaire and note taking after conversations in each FGD and interview session. These themes included: behavior transformation process, critical areas of development in rehabilitation, key elements in rehabilitation, criterion for successful rehabilitation, and parameters of effective deradicalization in soft approach. Moreover, quantitative analysis is also performed to identify the frequency of terms and themes highlighted by participants. Data were tabulated in matrices and combined to formulate general guidelines in rehabilitating Indonesian terrorism activists. In defining general aspects for critical development areas in rehabilitation, expert judgment was used to categorize developmental areas generated by participants. Further, in analyzing behavior transformation process, Rambo's (1993) theory about ideological transformation process was taken into account.

Result

Behavior transformation process

Some quotes by participants describe behavior transformation process of terror actors:

> *"The government tries to change us, change our spirit of jihad, using the deradicalization program, they actually don't understand us and how to improve us" (H, A participant in an FGD).*
>
> *"The brothers have actually changed a lot, we all have changed our thoughts, but not because of the Anti-Terror Agency, but a life process, we looked at the reality" (A, A participant in an FGD).*
>
> *"Changing the jihad spirit is difficult, but changing the behavior by focusing on economic jihad, now, this is important. Still a jihad, but if before it was a physical jihad using arms, now it is an economic jihad, because our children and wives need a living and we don't want to remain jobless like this. What we need now is jobs and being occupied, so we will be disengaged from violence." (U, A participant in an interview).*
>
> *"Changing our heart and love for Allah and jihad is impossible, but changing our behavior so we stop bombing is possible, in fact we can" (K, A participant in an FGD).*

Results show that participants recognize two types of behavior transformation, which are natural and designed by counterterrorism practitioners. According to most participants in FGDs and interviews, the first type of transformation is relatively more favorable and sustainable than the ones designed by government entities or civil society.

> *"There are brothers that have changed since they received the program from the government or foundations, it is enough to create break ups in the movement, those who join the program are despised or excommunicated by the group, there are some that are threatened to be killed, but there are those that change because of life process, maybe they realize that this way of living is not effective, that Indonesia is not a place for jihad but a place for da'wa (education)." (U, A participant in an FGD).*

> *"If violence is used to change the brothers let alone the use of torture, it will not matter Ma'am, instead they will be more spirited to perform physical jihad. They just pretend that they've change as fiqh al waqi (war strategy), but they will have their revenge later. Instead, those brothers who consistently change are those who found their own self-enlightenment, those who are not steered by anyone, they themselves want to change, because they also see the reality." (A, A participant in an interview).*

All participants admit that they experienced behavior transformation process from pro-violence to non-violence. The turning points of the behavior transformation process happened when they were being arrested (70% of participants), finding their kin (e.g. family, friend, significant other) being hunted and arrested by law enforcement (90%), seeing bombing victims (23%), disappointed toward leaders (16%), interacting with law enforcement people with a good attitude (19%), reading inspiring the Islamic book about *jihad* with the soft method by reputable charismatic *ima'am* (cleric) (2%), and understanding the contexts of *daar al harb* (state of war) and *daar as salam* (state of peace) (98%) as seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Triggering Factors in Behavior Transformation of Indonesian Religious Terror Activists

No	Triggering Factors in Behavior Transformation of Religious Terror Activists	Number of Participants from Mixed Categories	%
1	Understanding contexts of *daar al harb* (state of war) and *daar as salam* (state of peace)	42	97
2	Finding their kin (e.g. family, friend, significant other) being hunt and arrested by law enforcement	39	91
3	Being arrested	30	67
4	Meeting bombing victims	10	23
5	Interacting with law enforcement people with good attitude	8	19
6	Disappointed toward leaders	7	16
7	Reading inspiring Islamic book about *jihad* with soft method by reputable charismatic *imam* (cleric)	1	2

The study shows that ideology modification which involves mental adjustment, moral calculation, and changes in choosing strategies to achieve goals is possible. A participant outside prison expresses that he experiences the following sequence of phases in behavior transformation: (1) context in which they believed that physical *jihad* was relevant in Indonesia, (2) sudden interaction with law enforcement during their

arrest, thus creating shock, (3) sudden commitment to follow law and government regulation to avoid maximum sentence, (4) crisis in which he questioned all his strategies to establish Islamic state and review other alternative strategies, (5) questioning if the old strategy of applying physical *jihad* in Indonesia was appropriate, (6) encountering, in which he performed mental adjustment and modified his strategy to be accepted by majority of Muslims in Indonesia, and (7) gaining consequences in which he received group pressures and rewards from society or law enforcement. Whilst, another participant in prison explains that he experiences another sequence: (1) context in which he lived in special Islamic community where so many JI members became his significant others, (2) questioning whether doing over-camouflages in serial of observations before terror actions were necessary, (3) interaction with law enforcement when captured, (4) crisis, when he saw his brothers were arrested under miserable circumstances, (5) encountering himself that he should change his behaviors and cooperate with police since Indonesia is not in a state of war, (6) commitment to transform own behavior to be more constructive and to refuse violence, and (7) negative consequences he received from his group members and pro-violence religious activists and positive rewards from bombing victims. The other forty-one participants cannot define the detailed process as many of them request to forget the crisis which happened in the past and choose to move forward without being reminded of their past behaviors.

> *"I've changed now. Before I still wanted to get my revenge when the deradicalization program was done at the orphanage, but since meeting the bombing victims at the Wisma Makara Universitas Indonesia, I realize that I have to change my way of struggle." (S, A participant in an FGD).*

> *"After getting married I went to Afghanistan, we fought against Russia. I left my wife … The turning point is when I became a "DPO" (wanted by police), I was on the run for 4 years ma'am, when I was detected by Special Detachment 88, I was shocked, but then I say that the officers were kind, there was a professor that gave me his trust, … and during adzan I saw the police break for prayer, I who didn't want to open my mouth at first, is willing to open my mouth and want to assist the police with the deradicalization program. But while assisting I was still personally confused … I questioned everything. I even still want to stab X (his friend) which I consider as thoghut. But then I personally got my answers, without anyone steering me ma'am. My friends and I now receive threats from our comrades that don't like our decision of helping with the deradicalization program … Sometimes we felt threatened." (H, A participant in an FGD).*

> *"I was born in a religious environment. You know who my brothers are … The Bali bombing was pretty funny, before the bombing the driver was learning to drive …But I had an inner conflict then … because the camouflage is excessive, we had to paint our hair, that is not Islamic, it's over-camouflage if I say so … The moment that change me is when I was finally caught and then seeing my brother tied like that, it pains me to see it. I was so sad. There was a sort of crisis in my soul, after that I thought that my comrades and I had took a wrong step, wrong strategy, so finally I want to help the police. Once I commit, I'm committed. I'm not the type of person that goes back and forth when I say something. I am consistent, even when I am called infidels by my comrades. But every time I see a bombing victim, it breaks my heart, I feel concerned and regretted the action of me and my comrades." (A, A participant in an interview).*

All participants agree that sincerity and generosity by others including law enforcement, civil society members, and practitioners becomes the key factors in changing the behavior of terror actors, therefore these are required in designing behavior shaping and transformation process.

"If people what to change the brothers they must understand how the brothers are, what is important to them is sincerity. Like Mr X (one of the head of Special Detachment 88), he is a good person, sincere, and immerses in the life of the brothers so we all respect him" (K, A participant in an FGD).

"If they hold deradicalization program just to get points, take credits, or to fulfill a requirement, then it is difficult...There's no will then." (T, A participant in an FGD).

Critical areas of development needed in rehabilitation

The matrices of critical areas of development needed in rehabilitating Indonesian terror activists indicate that four major aspects are crucial in transforming behaviors of activists. Table 3 illustrates critical areas of development suggested by participants.

Table 3
Critical areas of development needed in rehabilitating religious terror activists

No	Dimensions	Critical Areas of Development	Number of Participants from Mixed Categories
1	Social skills	a. Showing positive attitude to others	11
		b. Acceptance	10
		c. Capability to work with heteregenous people (inclusiveness)	8
		d. Social adjustment skills	10
		e. Understanding basic social ethics and norms	10
2	Personal skills	a. Empathy toward others	11
		b. Critical thinking	10
		c. Open-mindedness	8
		d. Self-introspection (admiting self mistakes)	1
		e. Compassion toward others and natural environment	5
		f. Self-empowerment	38
		g. Stress tolerance	3
		h. Assertiveness (ability to express aspiration in ways that are socially acceptable or non-anarchist)	10
		i. Mental independence (ability to make decision without control from the group)	2
		j. Self-confidence	3
		k. Self-endurance to express positive behavior	3
		l. Self-control from anarchic encouragements	5
		m. Ability to forgive	3
		n. Persistence	4
		o. Self-regulation in tedious condition	2
3	Vocational skills	a. Entrepreneurial skills	37
		b. Specific skills that support economic independence	35
		c. Economic skills	15
		d. Basic marketing skill	13
4	Spiritual maturity	a. Showing wisdom as in the fundamental philosophy of Islam	3
		b. Maintaining balance between vertical relationship with God and horizontal relationship with other human beings	5
		c. Ability to manifest own belief into positive behaviors toward others	7
		d. Inspiring others to promote harmony in society	4
5	Domestic skills	a. Ability to raise a family	3
		b. Ability to prevent family from anarchist behavior	4
		c. Ability to educate family by showing positive role model	1
6	Contextual insight	a. Ability to differentiate context or condition of Indonesia with other countries or areas in conflicts	6
		b. Understanding history of religions and ideology in Indonesia	2
		c. Understanding Indonesian culture and society	4
		d. Citizenship (understanding state constitution, regulation, and laws)	2

According to six participants from mixed categories, personal development for terror activists in rehabilitation can be performed individually or by grouping them according to their interests and levels of hierarchy in group, therefore initial needs assessment is needed. Specifically at the individual level, needs analysis for every participant requires survey and focused analysis of every individual's profile (tailor-made assessment).

> *"It's not possible, the brothers cannot be all counseled in the same way. We are all different. Some have talent as mechanic, some like livestock, some like to cook, some like workshop. It is ridiculous that all brothers are ask to be waiters or cooks, it does not match their talent, it is a waste of money" (E, A participant in an FGD).*
>
> *"There are some people that are suitable joining Mr Y's (one of the trainer) training but there are many that are not suitable. Because not all of the brothers want to be an entrepreneur. It is ridiculous that Mr Y is the one that is continued to be called" (N, A participant in an FGD).*
>
> *"We really fit in with calligraphy training here, but every prison is different. We are interested in calligraphy and marketing" (T, A participant in an FGD).*
>
> *"The Anti-terror agencies sometimes just don't understand, the brothers are grouped together to join the same training. When in fact people are different, and we have all kinds of background, some understand Islam, some are leaders, some are junior, so we cannot be mixed ..." (P, A participant in an FGD).*
>
> *"Each counseling must be different, there must be a survey first, it must be observe first. Each person has a special case. I myself need capital to build a cooperative. The santri (Islamic student) need development in their economic and data entry ability in the modern cooperative system. Nyantrek Ma'am, religious study while comprehending economy and how to take care of the family finances" (U, A participant in an interview).*

Survey and need analysis of the development participants, according to 80% of participants from mixed categories, need to be conducted prior to the implementation of the development program to identify motives and roles of inmates in the act of terrorism. This is for conducting proper type of therapy (e.g. method, material, and approach) so that the development programs will achieve effective results in changing behavior of rejecting violence. Initial assessments should include matters such as personality profile, kinship profile, education background, knowledge about religious teachings, and socio-economic condition and status. It should also be performed by experienced terrorism practitioners.

> *"Rather than wasting money and energy, it is better if the needs of the brothers are assessed first.. counseling and training can actually become a waste of time and cost. Especially when there is a brother with talent in automotive but asked to cook or become a restaurant waiter… of course he doesn't want to?? It must be studied very carefully, ma'am.." (H, A participant in an interview).*

Key elements in rehabilitation

When asked about important points as basic principles in rehabilitating terror activists, 93% of participants explain about the importance of facilitators' knowledge about religion teachings. Moreover, empowerment of participants becomes another key element in rehabilitation. the other nineteen key elements in rehabilitation are humbleness of counterterrorism practitioners, humanism, positive intention in performing rehabilitation, sustainable long-term technique, cultural approach, collaborative work among entities, empathy, intensive

handling, sincerity, wittiness, patience, commitment, realism, consistency, respect, structured, integrity, wisdom, and creativity as presented in Table 4.

> *"The Anti-terror people must understand Islam.. if not then it is difficult.." (J, A participant in an FGD).*
>
> *"Frankly, if we are idle and jobless we become curious of what our brothers are doing in Syria. That's why we need to be occupied, must be busy, if not then we will start thinking of negative things…" (S, A participant in an FGD).*
>
> *"I like Mr S (one of the anti-terror practitioners).. he is humble and treats us like a human, humanist… even if he is non-Islam but he is a good person, humble, unpretentious, and friendly… not arrogant" (J, A participant in an interview).*
>
> *"That's the thing, there is no coordination here.. So the brothers that have changed and repented must be sent to employment agencies, it needs coordination between agencies… so they may be accommodated in good hands and in a sustainable program.. not just counseling for 3 days or a year and then left just like that.." (S, A participant in an FGD).*

Table 4
Key elements in rehabilitating terror activists

No.	Key Elements in Rehabilitation	Number of Participants from Mixed Categories	%
1	Knowledge about religion teachings	41	95
2	Empowerment	40	93
3	Humbleness	34	79
4	Humanism	33	77
5	Positive intention (transparency)	30	70
6	Sustainable long-term technique	27	63
7	Cultural approach	19	44
8	Collaborative work	11	26
9	Empathy	10	23
10	Intensive handling	9	21
11	Sincerity	7	16
12	Sharpness (wittiness and intelligence)	5	12
13	Patience	4	9
14	Commitment	3	7
15	Realism	3	7
16	Consistency	3	7
17	Respect	3	7
18	Phases (Structured)	3	7
19	Integrity	2	5
20	Wisdom	1	2
21	Creativity	1	2

When discussing about proper steps in rehabilitation, three participants outside prison in several FGDs explain that rehabilitation should cover the following steps: (1) Preparation stage, including setting up objectives of rehabilitation, survey and data collection, information analysis and verification, initial assessment and need analysis, detail arrangements of rehabilitation, risk analysis and management,

coordination with relevant parties, preparing inmates or rehabilitation participants, and preparing trainers or resource persons; (2) Implementation stage, including general development activities (e.g. character building, basic economic skill, self-empowerment) and specific development activities (e.g. religion teachings, carpenter skills, anger management skills); (3) Follow-up stage, which includes continuous counseling, *silaturrahmi* (discussions or dialogues), evaluation of the success of the rehabilitation, getting feedbacks for improvements, and community engagements or services. According to these participants, targets of the follow-up stage are inmates who support ethics and social norms, show positive attitude, and show readiness to rejoin with the broader community. It aims to maintain any improvement that has been achieved by inmates or former terror activists. Furthermore, the purpose of this last stage is to solidify rehabilitation results of inmates, evaluating whether they can truly adjust themselves in the community, and see whether the community want to accept their presence.

> *"In our opinion… there must be a survey first, and then observe, what is their need, how to develop them, study them first, the condition of the brothers is all different.. then train them according to their preference and talent.. then there should be a continuation such as continued accompaniment, don't just leave, it is useless…" (C, A participant in an FGD).*

> *"Follow up is necessary… because we can learn from it, and we see, how is the attitude of this brother, it is good for the Anti-Terror Agency so no money is wasted… also to see if this brother can reintegrate with the society in his village … it is a pity if he is stigmatized, difficult to progress" (T, A participant in an interview).*

Criterions for successful rehabilitation

When discussing about criterions of successful rehabilitation during interviews and FGDs, most participants indicate that generally rehabilitation of terror activists is considered successful when participants of rehabilitation can transform their behaviors into more positive way and can reject violence. Participants also explain that there is no difference between criteria of successful rehabilitation inside and outside prison

> *"Counseling of terror inmates is different than other inmates, we are jihadist… different than other inmates… we are the people that strive toward monotheism, establishing the religion of Allah.. so it is not arbitrary… if they want to counsel me, then just point me in a positive direction, such as economic jihad… and rejecting violence.. that's how… don't try to change our spirit of monotheism or jihad… but change for example, our view of Indonesia as a war field, into a field of syiar and missionary endeavor… there are lots to be develop.. such as establishing cooperative in Islamic boarding school or school area… educate the brothers so they care about others, good non-Muslim… as well as understanding the surrounding environment …" (U, A participant in an FGD).*

> *"These brothers still need continuous counseling… the same for both of those in the prison as well as outside.. need to be accompanied and educated continuously.. ther are ummah (Islamic people) …" (T, A participant in an FGD).*

Specifically, in terms of rehabilitation outcomes, participants from mixed categories explain that successful rehabilitation can transform its participants so they are (1) able to re-integrate with broader community (74% participants); (2) accepted by society or not stigmatized (9%); (3) restored to previous condition before joining terrorism activities (21%); (4) able to have new life skills derived from rehabilitation process (42%); (5) able to admit their past mistakes (19%); (6) able to become self-critical (7%); (7) able to understand

context of Indonesia (77%); (8) able to understand fiqh ul-waqi' (mental calculation) (16%); (9) able to accept Indonesian local wisdom (12%); and (10) able to start a new life (7%). Moreover, in terms of objectives, 40 participants from mixed categories state that successful rehabilitation should emphasize good will or virtues instead of any political interest.

In term of procedures, five participants in serial FGDs explain that successful rehabilitation should allow two-way positive dialogue in which source persons of rehabilitation show willingness to listen and respect to rehabilitation participants' opinions and ideas. It should also allow feedback from all participants. According to them, one-way type of dialogue and oppressive type of methods such as intimidation, pressure, or threats, will bring a negative impact to the rehabilitation process and potentially will lead to hatred and implosive anger or acts of revenge in the future. Further, in terms of material, modules of rehabilitation can be diverse depending on participants' interests and needs, yet it must be in line with Islamic philosophy and principles.

> *"The visit to Nusa Kambangan did not succeed… instead the rejection of the program after the visit increased… because it is a one way dialog, the brothers don't want to hear that…?" (J, A participant in an FGD).*
>
> *"What is important is those dialogues are two ways.." (A, A participant in an interview).*
>
> *"Well, I heard that in Nusa Kambangan the ustad sat above, dictating (the brothers) in his talk, so the brothers walk out… now inviting the brothers to a dialogue is difficult, because they still remember being dictated to.. it should have been according to Islam .. like Rasul's dialog is two ways … not acting like a teacher… I'm also hesitant if I listen to a person but the person does not want to hear what I say… " (H, A participant in an interview).*

Parameters of effective deradicalization in soft approach

In discussing about parameters of effective deradicalization in the soft approach to handle terrorism in Indonesia, most of participants (95% participants from mixed categories) describes their skepticism towards any change in religious activists' ideology which tries to establish *tauhid* (fundament of Islamic teachings), perform *jihad* (struggle), build *ima'amah* (global Islamic leadership), and apply *shari'ah* (Islamic law). In participants' opinions, these four concepts are unchangeable in all jihadists' mind.

> *"Talking about parameters, it is impossible to change our goals, we will continue monotheism and jihad, what can be done is to make the brothers pro anti-violence" (J, A participant in an FGD).*
>
> *"Deradicalization is a waste if the goal is to make the brothers to lose their faith again or letting go of tauhid, jihad, khilafah, and sharia" (G, A participant in an interview).*

When reviewing present-day practice of deradicalization in the country, 90% participants from mixed categories consider that most deradicalizations designed with political motives are not quite effective. The programs need a number of improvements as they are conducted in a short period of time, less supported by knowledgeable resources, and viewed as 'hit-and-run' projects. Moreover, all participants explain that most religious terror activists find the term 'deradicalization' irritating as it contains labeling, thus no jihadist want to join openly when it is socialized.

> *"I experience this change because of listening and seeing to the situation, not because of the Anti-Terror Agency deradicalization program. In fact I want to protest the people that created the deradical-*

ization program if the intention is promotion, politics, or just running the program, but no quality" (G, A participant in an interview)

"In my opinion, the word 'deradicalization' is not good… the brothers become adverse to those programs… I joined the deradicalization program but where's the result? I'm like this (out of the prison) not because of deradicalization, but because of my own thought, now my target is to go to school" (U, A participant in an interview).

According to five participants outside prison, at least three things can be achieved through deradicalization: to change jihadists' view about the context of Indonesia which is in a state of peace, to educate jihadists to be more self-critical, and to have courage to say "No" to violence. Further, five participants outside prison in a series of FGDs describe a range of parameters of effective deradicalization from the most feasible to the most difficult to achieve: (1) openness; (2) critical thinking; (3) a sense of contexts of *daar al harb* (state of war) and *daar as salam* (state of peace); (4) empathy to terrorism victims; (5) disengagement from violence; (6) self-empowerment; (7) continuous learning; (8) adjustment to broader society; (9) social re-integration; (10) mental independence (e.g. avoiding blunt obedience); (11) tolerance to outgroup; (12) good relationship with heterogeneous members of society; (13) understanding local wisdom; (14) citizenship; (15) bravery against group pressure; (16) promoting anti-violence messages publicly; (17) endurance in promoting anti-violence messages to society; and (18) inspiring youth to become change agents in promoting anti-violence messages in the country. In their opinions, achieving openness to people outside jihadi group is not easy yet it is still possible. On the contrary, inspiring youth to become change agents in promoting anti-violence messages in mass or online media or forums is the most difficult although some of former terror activists have achieved this stage.

"My suggestion is the deradicalization is use to transform the jihadists' view about the context of Indonesia that is an arena of dakwah or education, then invite the brothers to be self-critical and have the courage to say "No" to violence" (R, A participant in an FGD).

"Our experience is that it is easier to open up to people outside the jihadi circle, even if it is somewhat difficult… but at least it is still possible… then thinking critically of what is taught by our imam, learn of the surroundings, is Indonesia in daar al harb or daar as salam, learn the context and understand the difference. After that have the heart or concern for the bombing victims, they are also Muslim, then disengagement from violence. We need empowerment, so we can move on and learn new things. Because we need adjustment to broader society after release from prison. Deradicalization is good if it is successful in performing social re-integration… Now our brothers are learning to be independent, so stop to intermittently ask the teacher, we no longer have a teacher.. it used to be Ustadz Abu… when we were still in JI…" (N, A participant in an FGD).

"After we are able to establish a new life and especially during this period of presidential election we try to be tolerant … to other group and try to foster relationship with heterogeneous members of society… we feel local wisdom as Indonesian is useful ma'am.. learning tolerance… we learn to become good citizen and courageous when there is group pressure … What is most difficult is to appear before the public … I'm not brave to do it now, but I support things or programs promoting anti-violence messages. We are willing to help the young generation and educate them to become change agents in promoting anti-violence messages in the country" (A, A participant in an FGD).

"What is achieved by X is difficult, he has the courage to speak in a youth forum to become a change agent in promoting anti-violence messages, but careful from riya (self-glorification) because this is being shot by the media…becoming an artist, a celebrity..." (F, A participant in an FGD).

Discussion

This study has identified five major findings concerning terror activists' behavior transformation process in Indonesia, critical areas of development needed in changing terrorism perpetrators' behaviors, key elements in rehabilitation, criterions for successful rehabilitation, and parameters of effective deradicalization. The study is important as it provides former terror activists' points of view regarding the success of rehabilitation and deradicalization based on their first hand experiences in disengaging from violence and criminal activities. The study provides points of suggestions for future improvement for practitioners in rehabilitating terrorism perpetrators.

Regarding behavior transformation process, the research indicates that the process of mind adjustment may vary at the individual level yet follows a general pattern of ideology modification brought on by Rambo (1993). The pattern involves seven variables which are background context, interaction, question, crisis, encounter, commitment, and consequences. Furthermore, the study describes that interaction with outgroup or even perceived enemy can create shocks and potentially lead to crisis or self-questioning. In this point, a behavior transformation may begin or be initiated. Further, commitment can lead to pleasant or undesirable consequences. The findings need further research on whether negative consequences when carrying out behavior transformation can ever lead or correlate with any regression including recidivism, and whether unpleasant consequences such as group intimidations or threats can improve coping mechanism and personal capacity in disengaging the self from violence.

Triggering factors which act as crucial turning points of terror activists in changing their behaviors and strategies are revealed in this research. The finding supports Hwang and Villarosa's (2011) study about disengagement process that includes de-legitimizing violence, countering the message that justifies violence (by important interlocutors who can appeal to the potential recruits), and providing positive constructive alternatives. As Hwang in Hwang and Villarosa (2011) elaborates, former terror actors in Indonesia went through various disengagement processes: (a) migrated from active to non-active role; (b) migrated from jihad centric to *dakwah* centric role; and (c) migrated from supporting terror action to *dakwah* centric or non-active role.

Regarding critical areas of development, the findings of this research show that there are six dimensions of critical areas needed in rehabilitating inmates charged with terrorism case: contextual insights, vocational skills, spiritual maturity, personal skills, social skills, and domestic skills. The lists of critical areas such as showing positive attitude to others, acceptance, capable of working with heteregenous people, social adjustment skills, understanding basic social ethics and norms, empathy toward others, critical thinking, open mindedness, self-introspection (admiting self mistakes), compassion toward others and natural environment, inspiring others to promote harmony, showing wisdom as in the fundamental philosophy of Islam, being positive role model for family, critical thinking, and so forth, support a number of studies that explain the root causes and motives of terrorism which are linked to various variables such as rationalization (Wolf & Frankel, 2007; Putra & Sukabdi, 2014; Kruglanski & Fishman, 2009; Post, 2007; Lia & Hegghammer, 2004; Sanadjian, 2006), understanding of Quranic verses and as-Sunnah (Putra & Sukabdi, 2013), belief

in establishing Islam peacefully (Putra & Sukabdi, 2014), and exclusion (Toffler, 2006). Moreover, further research is needed to figure out critical areas of development needed for each layer of activists or level of criminal involvement in order to provide further explanations.

The study reveals key elements, which were explained by former terror activists, as contributors to rehabilitation. The key elements include humanism, positive intention (transparency), sustainable long-term technique, cultural approach, collaborative work, empathy, intensive handling, sincerity, sharpness (intelligence), patience, commitment, realism, consistency, respect, phases (structured), and integrity. These elements can be set as basic principles in the soft approach to terrorism perpetrators to answer the dilemma presented by Istiqomah (2011) about the issue of terrorism activists' decisive behaviors.

Regarding criterions of successful rehabilitation, the research shows that successful rehabilitation requires some qualities such as community re-integration, less stigmatization, restoration to the previous condition, skills improvement, self-introspection, self-criticism, context understanding, better mental calculation, accepting local wisdom, and mental progress. These findings supports Putra & Sukabdi's (2014) suggestion about the use of 'peripheral route' in disengagement which focuses on applying positive psychology in developing quality of life such as level of education and socioeconomic and in increasing internal locus of control (for locus of control, see Rotter, 1954). Moreover, the findings in this research are based on former terror activists' points of view which tend to support 'inclusiveness' in rehabilitation. The method allows terror activists to meet heterogeneous people and to mix with other types of inmates at prisons. In relation to this matter, further research from different points of view are recommended to assess the effectiveness of inclusiveness versus exclusiveness in treating various terrorism inmates in Indonesia due to the rise of cases of terrorism recruitment at prisons.

Regarding parameters of effective deradicalization as a central route focusing on counter-ideology based on careful interpretations of verses of sacred texts (Putra & Sukabdi, 2014), the study found skepticism towards any change in religious activists' ideology that links to *tauhid* (fundament of Islamic teachings), *jihad* (struggle), *ima'amah* (global Islamic leadership), and *sharia* (Islamic law). Hence, any attempt to change terror activists' belief that connects with these concepts will potentially meet complications. The findings of this study emphasize the sense of context (*daar al harb* versus *daar as salam*) as a critical variable or 'entry point' to facilitate behavior modification, thus it is recommended to be included in any attempt of central route. Lastly, there is also a finding concerning the controversy of the term 'deradicalization'. Further research concerning a broader view related to the terminology need to be explored in order to give more inputs for implementation of deradicalization by researchers and practitioners.

About the author: **ZORA A. SUKABDI** *is a psychologist from University of Indonesia and currently is a Phd Candidate at Swinburne University of Technology, Australia. She has extensive expertise in rehabilitation at prisons in Indonesia, and also contributes in formulating the National Guidelines of Re-education and Re-integration. She is currently acting as the Head of Re-Education and Re-Integration Department in Indonesian Institute for Society Empowerment (INSEP) and the Director and Founder of Global Center of Well-Being (GeoWB), Indonesia. She received Allison Sudrajat Prize for her dedication in humanitarian activities in 2014. Her research interests include Psychology of Terrorism, Radicalism, Positive Psychology, Organizational Psychology, Community Policing, Peacekeeping, Social Reconciliation, Forensic Psychology, Wellbeing, Criminal Studies, Capacity Building, and Human Resources.*

References

Amrozi. (2010). Prison and Paradise. Documentary Film. Dubai: Dubai Film Festival.

Bandura, A. (1999). Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhuminities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 3*, 193-209.

Bandura, A. (2004). The role of selective moral disengagement in terrorism and counterterrorism. In F. M. Moghaddam, & A. J. Marsella (Eds.), *Understanding terrorism: psychological roots, consequences, and interventions* (pp. 121-150). Washingto DC: APA Press.

Berne, E. (1976). *A Layman's Guide to Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis*. Middlesex.

Cerry, K. (2014). What Is Rationalization?–Defense Mechanisms. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/ss/defensemech_9.htm

Fenichel, O. (1946). *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*. London: Routledge.

Fenichel, O. (1999). *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*. London: Routledge.

Freud, A. (1937). *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*. London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis.

Freud, S. (1991). *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Ghufron, Ali. (2010). Prison and Paradise. Documentary Film. Dubai: Dubai Film Festival.

Green, P. (1974). *Juvenal: The Sixteen Satires*. Middlesex: Penguin.

Horgan, J. (2008). From Profiles To Pathways and Roots To Routes: Perspective From Psychology On Radicalization Into Terrorism. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 618*(80), 80-94.

Imron, A. (2007). *Ali Imron, Sang Pengebom*. Jakarta: Penerbit Republika.

Istiqomah, M. (2011). *Deradicalization Program in Indonesian Prisons: Reformation on The Correctional Institution*. Malang, East Java: University of Brawijaya.

Kaplan, H. I., Sadock, B. J., Grebb, J. A., & Kaplan, H. I. (1994). *Kaplan and Sadock's Synopsis of Psychiatry: Behavorial Sciences, Clinical Psychiatry*. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins.

Kruglanski, A. W., & Fishman, S. (2009). The Psychology of Terrorism: "Syndrome" Versus "Tool" Perspectives. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *18*(2), 192-215.

Kurzman, C & Engelhart, N. (2006, 31. October), *Welcome To World Peace, the Christian Science Monitor*, Localized 13. March 2014, on www.csmonitor.com/2006/0830/p09s02-coop.html.

Lia, B., & Hegghammer, T. (2004). Jihadi strategic studies: The alleged al qaida policy study preceding the Madrid bombings. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 27, 355-375

Love, K. (2009). *From deprivation to detonation: Identity, political deprivation, and homegrown terrorism in the United Kingdom.* Unpublished Master's thesis. Washington, D.C: Georgetown University,

Maddox, B. (2007). *Freud's Wizard: Ernest Jones and the Transformation of Psychoanalysis*. London, MA: Da Capo Press.

McDowell, R. (2010, June 24). Indonesia's deradicalization program under fire. *HighBeam Research*. Retrieved from http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1A1-D9GHPRVG0.html

Moghaddam, F. M. (2006). *From The Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come To Destoy.* Connecticut & London: Praeger Security International.

Moghaddam, F. M. (2008). *How Globalization Spurs Terrorism: The Lopsided Benefits of "One World" And Why That Fuels Violence.* Wesport: Praeger Security International.

Moghaddam, F. M. (2009). Omniculturalism: Policy Solutions to Fundamentalism In The Era of Fractured Globalization. *Culture & Psychology, 15*(3), 337-347.

Mufid, A. S., Sarwono, S. W., Syafii, M., Baedowi, A., Karnavian, T., Zarkasih, M., . . . Padmo, A. (2011). *Research on Motivation and Root Causes of Terrorism*. Jakarta: Indonesian Institute for Society Empowerment.

Muluk, H., & Sumaktoyo, N. G., Ruth, D.M. (2013) Jihad as justification: National-survey evidence of belief in violent jihad as a mediating factor for sacred violence among Muslims in Indonesia. *Asian journal of Social Psychology.* doi: 10.1111/ajsp.12002

Niolon, R. (2011, April 8). Defenses. Retrieved from http://www.psychpage.com/learning/defenses.html

Pech, R. J., & Slade, B. W. (2006). Religious fundamentalism and terrorism: Why do they it and what do they want? *Foresight: The Journal of Future Studies, Strategic Thinking and Policy, 8*, 8-20.

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. (2004). *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Phillips, A. (1994). *On Flirtation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Post, J. M., Sprinzak, E., & Denny, L. M. (2003).The terrorists in their own words: Interviews with 35 incarcerated Middle Eastern terrorists. *Terrorism and Political Violence,* 15, 171-184.

Putra, I. E., & Sukabdi, Z. A. (2013). Basic concepts and reasons behind the emergence of religious terror activities in Indonesia: An inside view. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 16, 83-91 doi: 10.111/ajsp.12001.

Putra, I. E., & Sukabdi, Z. A. (2014). Can Islamic fundamentalism relate to nonviolent support? The role of certain conditions in moderating the effect of Islamic fundamentalism on supporting acts of terrorism. *Peace and Conflict, 20*, 583-589.

Riggar, T. F., & Maki, D. R. (Eds.). (2004). *The Handbook of Rehabilitation Counseling*. New York: Springer Publishing.

Rose, J. D. (1982). *Outbreaks, the sociology of collective behavior*. New York: New York Free Press.

Rotter, J.B. (1954). Social learning and clinical psychology . NY: Prentice-Hall.

Runciman, W. G. (1966). *Relative deprivation and social justice: a study of attitudes to social inequality in twentieth-century England*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Sanadjian, M. (2006). Fear, terror and the new global economy of salvation: Global excess and 'suicide' bombing in London. *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, 12, 701-725.

Shihab, M. Q. (2008). *Kekerasan Atas Nama Agama: Meluruskan Kesalahpahaman Seputar Konsep Perang dan Jihad dalam Islam*. Jakarta: Pusat Studi Al-Quran.

Sterne, L. (1967). *Tristram Shandy*. Middlesex: Penguin.

Taylor, M., & Horgan, J. (2001). The psychological and behavioral bases of Islamic fundamentalism. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 13* (4), 37-71.

The National Anti-Terror Agency. (2013). *National Rehabilitation Guidelines for Terrorism Perpetrators and Families* Volume 1. Jakarta: The National Anti-Terror Agency.

Toffler, A. (2006). The confusion bombs. In: P. Katona, M.D. Intriligator & J. P. Sullivan, eds. *Countering terrorism and WMD,* xi-xxv. London and New York: Routledge.

Victoroff, J. I. (2009). *Psychology of Terrorism: Classic and Contemporary Insights*. New York: Psychology Press.

Victoroff, Jeff. (2005). The Mind Of The Terrorist: A Review And Critique Of Psychological Approaches. *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 49, 3-42.

Walker, I., & Smith, H. J. (2001). *Relative Deprivation: Specification, Development and Integration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wolf, Y., & Frankel, O. (2007). Terrorism: Toward an overarched account and prevention with a special reference to pendulum interplay between both parties. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 12, 259-279.

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence
Journal of Terrorism Research

Confronting Islamic Jihadist Movements

by M Afzal Upal

Abstract

This paper argues that in order to win the long-term fight against Islamic Jihadist movements, we must confront their ideological foundations and provide the majority of Muslims with an alternative narrative that satisfies their social identity needs for a positive esteem. By analysing social identity dynamics of Western-Muslim interactions, this paper presents some novel ideas that can lead to the creation of such a narrative.

Keywords: counter-terrorism, master narratives, counter-narratives, countering violent extremism (CVE)

Introduction

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, violent extremism originating from the Islamic world has been a concern for Western policy makers. Although their primary interest has been to prevent immediate attacks against the West and its allies, understanding the root causes of Islamic extremism and countering the ideological infrastructure of Jihad have become increasingly important to Western decision makers and researchers. Recent terrorist attacks by ISIS sympathizers in Canada, the US, the UK, Australia, and France have demonstrated the limits of a narrowly-focussed prevention strategy. Formulating an effective, broad counter-offensive that can compete against the Jihadi narrative in the war of ideas and strengthen the forces of moderate Islam has remained a challenge because of the lack of a credible alternative narrative. This article carries out a social identity theoretic analysis of Western-Islamic interactions to better understand these challenges and suggests some promising ideas for the development of an alternative narrative.

History

Islamic nations and the West have a millennia-long history of intellectual conflict and violent warfare. Crusades and colonialism are just two particularly well known milestones along this road littered with such monuments. The Muslim-Christian dialogue of conflict began within a few years after the birth of Islam—the 'newer' religion. In 636 CE, just a short fourteen years after Prophet Muhammad's death, Judeo-Christian Jerusalem succumbed to Islam's expanding influence. Within the short span of a few years all the major Christian centres of the Middle East (including Antioch, Damascus, Alexandria, and Carthage) had come under Islamic rule. There were repeated Muslim attacks against the headquarters of the Eastern Christian Church–Constantinople (which finally capitulated in 1453). Pope Gregory declared the first Crusade as a counter offensive against Muslims in 996. For the next three hundred years, the two civilizations militarily fought against each other in a broad front extending from Spain in the west to Syria in the east. As a result of the 500 year-long expansion of Islam and the resulting meteoric rise in Muslim fortunes, the Islamic myth of invincibility became widespread—especially among Muslims. "If you faithfully follow Allah and his path,

Allah will make you victorious" became a firmly embedded as a part of Muslim identity (Akyol 2011).

The fatal blow against the Muslim expansion came from an unexpected quarter. The Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century were so ferocious that they broke through the Islamic narrative of invincibility. This was the first time the Muslims were forced to ask the question of what went wrong (Lewis 2003). What reduced this cognitive dissonance (Festinger and Schachter 1964) for most Muslims was not a revision of the belief in God's promise of victory. Instead, as the 13th century cleric Ibn-e-Tamiyya explained, Allah had taken victory away from Muslims because they had stopped following Islam faithfully enough. The only way to restore the glory of the golden era of Islam was to go back to faithfully following Islamic tenets, in particular Jihad, argued Ibn-e-Tamiyya and others.

While the Mongol rulers themselves eventually converted to Islam, and the Ottoman Empire had some success in reuniting Muslims under one empire and making further inroads into Eastern Europe, Islamic communities never regained the degree of cultural and material dominance over the Christian West that they enjoyed in the 11th and 12th centuries. The myriad reasons for this include the rise of science, reason, and free thinking in Europe and its relative decline in the Islamic countries. The final insult from a Muslim perspective came with the military defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the disbanding of the Caliphate, and the colonial occupation of Muslim countries throughout Middle East, North Africa, and South and East Asia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Faced with this degradation, Muslims once again turned inward and asked themselves "what went wrong." And once again, by far the most dominant answer provided was to echo Ibn-e-Tamiyya's 13th century observation. "Because we stopped following Islam faithfully enough" was the answer by the South Asian scholar Abul-ala-Moudoodi and by Egyptians Syed Qutb and Hasan Al-Banna (Akyol 2011). A recent survey reveals that there is a widely-held opinion by Muslims around the world that they should adhere to the tenets of Islam more closely (PewForum 2012).

A legacy of this long history of mutual adversity is that Western countries are seen as hostile to Islam by Muslims around the world (Figure 1). When asked to identify the greatest danger to their nation, Indonesians, Pakistanis, and Malaysians chose United States as the biggest danger to their survival (PewForum 2012). A separate 2014 Pew Global Survey found that while, "…a global median of 65% voice an affirmative opinion about America...This includes a median of 74% in Africa, 66% in Western Europe, 66% in Asia, 65% in Latin America, but just 30% in the Middle East" (PewGlobalSurvey 2014). The lowest ratings for the US were found in the Islamic world. Table 1 shows the US favourability ratings for Islamic countries surveyed by Pew.

	Americans	Europeans
Palestinian Territories	73	69
Turkey	72	70
Pakistan	72	69
Egypt	63	70
Lebanon	59	49
Jordan	58	62
Israel	47	37
Indonesia	42	35

Figure 1: Median percentage of Muslims who perceive the Americans and Europeans as hostile to the Muslims according to a 2011 Pew Global Survey.

Andrew Kohut, directory of the Pew Research Center for People and the Press, argues that "the most serious problem facing the United States is its very poor public image in the Muslim world, especially in the Middle East/Conflict Area." (el-Nawawy 2006) In order to positively change this image, the US government launched a series of multimillion dollar programmes designed to, "improve America's image in the Middle East and win the hearts and minds of the Arab people." (el-Nawawy 2006) This included launching of Radio Sawa and Alhurra Television to broadcast in Arabic. A study by el-Nawawy (2006) found that listening to the US-sponsored networks not only failed to improve Arab perceptions of the US foreign policy, but actually had the opposite effect. People's attitudes towards US foreign policy actually worsened since they started listening to Radio Sawa and watching Alhurra TV. The failure of such efforts may be due to an inability of the US programme architects to appreciate the challenges of influencing members of a target audience that considers the US to be an adversarial group seeking to corrupt their culture.

	1999/ 2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Turkey	52	30	15	30	23	12	9	12	14	17	10	15	21	19
Egypt						30	21	22	27	17	20	19	16	10
Jordan		25	1	5	21	15	20	19	25	21	13	12	14	12
Lebanon		36	27		42		47	51	55	52	49	48	47	41
Palestine			0				13		15		18		16	30
Tunisia												45	42	42
Israeli Arabs														46
Bangladesh														76
Indonesia					38	30	29	37	63	59	54		61	59
Malaysia							27						55	51 (among Muslims 40%)
Pakistan	23	10		21	23	27	15	19	16	17	12	12	11	14
Morocco							15							
Senegal													81	74

Table 1: Pew Global Attitudes Survey US Favourability Ratings in the Muslim Countries.

Social Psychology of Outgroup Influences

Social identity theory (SIT) is one of the most well developed social psychological models of group interactions including intergroup violence. (Tajfel and Turner 1985, Tajfel and Turner 1986) According to SIT, group members engage in violent collective action against an outgroup if they believe that doing so will enhance their group's status and lower the outgroup's status. In addition to violent collective action against an outgroup, groups also use seemingly non-violent strategies such as *social creativity* which allow them to reshape their shared beliefs so that the ingroup's status looks better when compared to the outgroup. (Hogg and Vaughan 2002) One of the social creativity strategies is to reinterpret the dimensions of comparison between groups. Ingroup members can elevate the importance of positive ingroup characteristics and downgrade those dimensions on which an outgroup looks better (van Knippenberg 1978, Mummendey and Schreiber 1984). This can sometimes produce counterintuitive and unexpected results. For instance, in comparison with dominant white Americans, African- and Latino-American status looks lower when status is computed using the dimensions of wealth and educational achievements. Some social psychologists (e.g., (Powell 2011)) argue that black ghetto culture shifts dimensions of comparison to street toughness and physical prowess because these dimensions of comparison make Black Americans from the ghetto look better relative to White Americans.

> *Frustrated by a social order in which ascendancy was thwarted, marginalized primarily African- and Latino-American communities invented their own alternative system in which their ruggedly countercultural personas are privileged. Encoded in its narratives, apparel, embellishments, and actual physiology, the hip-hop subculture manifests rejection of the dominant culture's systematized mores, norms, institutions, and legitimacy.… devalued traits such as misogyny, hypermasculinity, and children out-of-wedlock are all imbued with in-group social value. (p. 462) (Powell 2011)*

Social psychologists, such as (Taylor 2002), argue that such redefinitions are necessary to allow members of a stigmatized group to maintain a positive self-esteem which is needed for their mental well-being. Social

psychologists also contrast social creativity (largely viewing it as positive) with violent collective action against an outgroup (largely viewing it as negative). However, cultural scientists studying strategies used by minorities to cope with their marginalization have observed that social creativity strategies often work hand in glove with violent collective action. A study of the Black American social movements by Powell (2011) shows that social creativity strategies that result in development and propagation of myths of Black ghetto males as hypermasculine tough-guys who fearlessly confront an oppressive and unjust police can also result in an increase in collective violence against the police. Powell (2011) argues that an unchallenged glorification of perceived in-group strengths can result in intense expressions of outgroup hatred such as the 1992 Ice-T hit song "Cop Killer."

A similar dynamic can be seen at work among Muslim social and religious movements. Many of these movements have their roots in the anti-colonial struggle by Muslim societies against their Western occupiers. During the colonial period, dominance of the West in material wealth and military technology became hard to deny even for the most chauvinist Muslims. Most of the creative Muslims thinkers including Sunni (Abul-ala-Moudoodi, Jalal-ul-Din Afghani, Syed Qutb, and Hasan Al-Banna), Shia (Imam Khomeini & Sheikh Hasan Nasrallah), and heterodox (such as Mirza Ghulam Ahmad) found Muslims receptive to their social identity redefinition attempts. They argued that spirituality and family values count for more than material wealth and individual freedom and that while the West has material wealth and individual freedom, Muslims have spiritual wealth and strong family bonds. (Funk and Said 2004) As a result of at least a century of persistent redefinition efforts by Muslims social identity entrepreneurs (Haslam, Reicher et al. 2005, Upal 2005), in most of the Muslim world, Westerners are perceived to be irreligious and too focused on their pursuit of individual desires at the expense of their family's needs. Thus a 2011 Pew Global survey found that when Muslims were asked about their perceptions of the Westerners, they listed selfish, violent, greedy, and immoral as their most common perceptions. (PewGlobalAttitudesProject 2011)

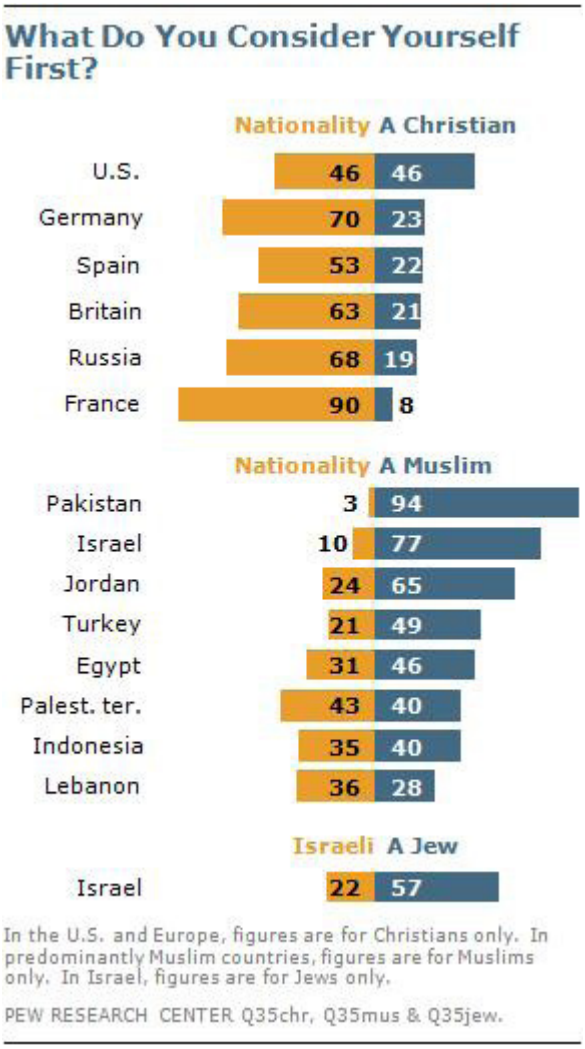

Figure 2: In the US & Europe the figures are for Christians only while in remaining countries they are for Muslims only.

So-called 'Good Muslims', on the other hand, are perceived to be highly religious and family oriented. A 2001 British Home Office Citizenship Survey found that for British Muslims, family is the most important factor followed by religion while for British Christians, religion ranked seventh. (Choudhury 2007) When asked by Pew whether they consider themselves Muslim or British first, 81% of British Muslims picked Muslim while only 7% picked British. (Choudhury 2007) A 2011 Pew Global Survey found that unlike Christians who consider themselves as French (90%), Germans (70%), Russians (68%), British (63%), Spanish (53%), and Americans (46%) first, most Muslims around the world consider themselves to be Muslims first (Figure 2). Thus instead of comparing themselves with the West on per-capita income or individual rights, they compare themselves with the West on the degree of devotion to their religion and culture and on the strength of their social ties with family and friends.

The United States has spent considerable resources in efforts to promote a more positive image in the Middle East through funding the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), and other programs (Sharp 2006). However, Middle Easterners appear to be less than impressed by US efforts. In fact the situation seems to be getting worse. The 2011 Pew Survey found that global Muslim perceptions of American and European hostility had actually increased since 2006, "with the percentage

describing Americans as hostile rising 11 percentage points in Turkey and Pakistan, six points in Egypt, and five in Jordan… The view that Europeans are hostile has become more common since 2006 in Turkey (+13 percent), Jordan (+11 percent), Egypt (+7 percent), and Pakistan (+7 percent)." (PewGlobalAttitudesProject 2011)

In order to arrest these negative developments, we need to better understand how creative myths painstakingly weaved by social identity entrepreneurs, are contributing to the growth of anti-Western Jihadism among Muslims around the world. Just as we saw earlier with the *social creativity st*rategy that resulted in a redefinition of African- and Latino-American males, the intense focus on the dimension of religiosity among Muslims has resulted in being a devout Muslims as the only acceptable way to be a good person. It is in this atmosphere that Jihadists find easy recruits. Far from providing Muslims an alternative to religious extremism and violence, socially creative ideologies actually prepare the fertile ground where radicalisation and Jihadism can flourish.

While social creativity is often seen from the perspective of an underprivileged minority group as the group's valiant struggle to construct a positive self-image (Galinsky, Hugenberg et al. 2003), it can also be seen from the perspective of the majority group as remoulding core social identity beliefs of a minority group. For example, by collectively stereotyping African-Americans as brutes and Jezebels, White Americans have been able to influence African-Americans to redefine their core social identity beliefs in what it means to be a good African-American (Powell 2011). This suggests that by understanding the social identity dynamics, a dominant group can affect core social identity beliefs of a marginalized group. This is contrary to the argument often offered as definitive conclusion by some social scientists that it is not possible for the West to positively affect core social identity beliefs of Muslims and that only other Muslims can engage in the battle of ideas against jihadists. It suggests that the West can actually play an active role in positively affecting the social identity beliefs of Muslims.

Why Does the Jihadi Message Resonate With Some Muslims

The jihadi message has been successful in motivating some Muslims to join a radical cause because it is a natural extension of the dominant narrative in the Islamic world. It follows the *arcing pattern* (Figure 3) that many successful messages of social change possess. (Upal, Packer et al. 2011) Arcing narratives acknowledge that a group is currently not doing well, remind the group of its glorious past, and promise that making a change to group's shared beliefs will restore that glory in the future. A series of studies have found that such narrative structure is more persuasive than other structures especially on those group members that identify strongly with the group and are especially resistant to most social change messages. (Upal, Packer et al. 2011)

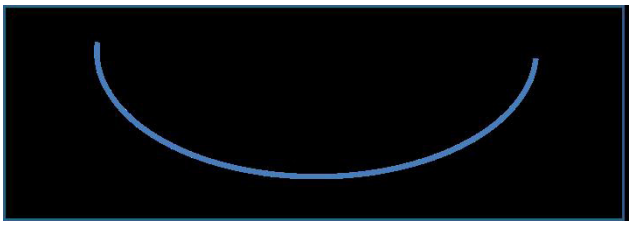

Figure 3: Arcing pattern of glorious-past–inglorious-present–glorious future that successfully overcomes a group's natural resistance to messages of change.

The key tenets of the Islamist narrative created and propagated by creative Islamic thinkers are as follows.

1. The world was a terrible place before Islam especially for the vulnerable such as women and orphans.
2. The arrival of Islam ushered in a golden era of human rights, prosperity, and happiness for all. The first Muslims strictly adhered to the tenets of Islam and were therefore rewarded by Allah with victory after victory over non-Muslims. This era lasted till the end of fourth Islamic caliphate.
3. After the era of strict compliance, Muslims moved away from Islam. As they did, Allah started taking away his blessings. While there were several valiant attempts to slow down societal degradation (e.g., Umar II), they were largely unsuccessful and the decay continued unabated. The low-point of Islam occurred when crusading colonial powers occupied Muslim lands. Those powers now control Muslims through oppressive puppet regimes who make decisions that favour the West.
4. Those who support the West and its puppet regimes in Muslims countries are not Muslims but apostates. Apostates who actively plot against Muslims deserve to be punished with death.
5. The only way to regain the lost Glory of Islam and to ensure a fulfilment of God's promise to Muslims of a final victory of Islam is to go back to strictly complying with tenets of Islam.
6. Consequently, the doctrine, institution, and culture of Jihad needs to be reconstituted to ensure a final victory of Islam.

As discussed earlier, the roots of the above narrative go back to the 13th century and, at this point, it is so deeply embedded that a broad spectrum of Muslims regardless of their sectarian, social class, or political backgrounds generally agree with most of the above propositions (PewForum 2012, Moaddel 2014). These include members of heterodox movements such as Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at (Upal 2005), who disagree with 4 and 6 but agree with all of the remaining propositions. Thus the Jihadist message which affirms the above propositions only adds the proposition that "our organization is best suited to lead to the final victory of Islam." The Jihadi Proposition resonates with most Muslims around the world despite their regional differences. This is because the Jihadist message is *minimally counterintuitive* for most Muslims and thus best suited to attract the target audience's attention and yet be sensible enough to be accepted by them (Upal 2014). A series of studies by Upal and colleagues (Upal 2014) found that people better remember those ideas that violate a small number of their expectations as compared to either ideas that do not violate any of their expectations or ideas that violate a large number of their expectations.

Countering the Narrative of International Jihadi Movement

While an increasing number of scholars and decision makers alike are beginning to recognize the need to counter the narrative of international Jihadi movement, the efforts to date have not been informed by a deep

analysis of the social identity dynamics of Islamic societies. Most of our ad-hoc counter-narrative efforts on both social and traditional mass media focus on pointing out logical absurdities of Jihadist worldview (e.g., "so DAESH wants to build a future, well is beheading a future you want, or someone controlling details of your diet and dress?") but do not offer a well thought out comprehensive alternative narrative that can provide answers to the various issues facing Muslims around the world. Some argue that the task of defining and propagating a counter-narrative is best left to Muslims moderates. However, far from challenging the dominant Islamic narrative, most Muslim moderates currently being supported by the West, actually affirm most tenets of the dominant Islamist narrative while offering small modifications to 4 and 6. The problem is that without challenging the beliefs that define what it means to be a good Muslim, suggestions by moderate Muslims that military Jihad is forbidden simply make them bad Muslims in the eyes of their fellow Muslims. Unfortunately, this loss of credibility means that such messages have little effect on its intended audience even though the messages themselves may sound great to the Western powers that fund or make them.

Another attraction of the Jihadist narrative is that it is comprehensive. It explains everything from the reason for the creation of the universe ("man was created to worship God") to why Muslim nations are so subservient to the dominance of the West ("because we've stopped following Islam") to what a good Muslim needs to do in the next five minutes ("worship God so that we can regain our past glory"). The moderate message, on the other hand, is limited to pointing out isolated passages from the Qur'an or Hadith that ask Muslims to be tolerant of others. Is it any wonder, then, that the moderates are so badly losing the war of ideas both among the Muslim youth in the West and among Muslims in Muslim countries? Washington Post Columnist Fareed Zakaria recently noted that, "no matter what the U.S. has done, Islamic radicalism has been on the rise for two decades." (Zakaria 2015) A 2006 Environics Institute Poll found that 73% of Canadian Muslims said that Toronto 18 attacks, if carried out would not have been justified. However, those between the ages of 18 to 29 were significantly more likely than older respondents to say that such attacks would have been justified. (Environics-Research-Group 2006)

A roundtable of counter-terrorism experts jointly organized by Hedayah (the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)) and the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism concluded that the Jihadist narrative is successful because it, "is easy to understand, adaptable, and has a strong emotional and religious appeal… Al-Qaeda's narrative also provides a clear solution (violence against the "enemy" to achieve its aims) to a real or perceived problem, which is often lacking in current counter-narratives." (Hedayah 2014). Noticing the lack of a comprehensive alternative narrative, the experts argued that, "there is currently no sustainable or long-lasting effort to create and coordinate counter-narratives" and advocated the need to develop "attractive alternative narratives" to counter the Jihadist worldview. The problem is that as a result of efforts by Muslim revivalist movements (recounted above) Muslim identity has come to be defined in terms of one's blind devotion to religious doctrine and respect for opinions of older extended family members. This means that any Muslim who advocates individual rights or tolerance of others automatically comes to be considered a 'bad' Muslim or, even worse, a Western puppet and a traitor.

A Effective Alternative Narrative of Islam

What is needed today is an alternative narrative that is as comprehensive as the dominant Islamic narrative. We need a counter-narrative effort that doesn't just defensively challenge small fringe elements of the dominant Islamic narrative but also offers Muslims around the world an attractive alternative. Our counter-narrative must satisfy their social psychological needs for positive self-esteem by telling them how they are

better than others, yet undermine the need to violently confront those they consider their outgroups. It satisfactorily answers the "what went wrong" question and offers Muslims a non-violent course of action that they can follow to overcome their lower socioeconomic and political status. We also need strategies that allow the West to play an active role in hindering the growth of violent Jihadism.

While this is a challenging task, a focussed effort *can* succeed in developing such a narrative. Over the last century there have been numerous social movements in various parts of the Islamic world that have successfully challenged the traditional Islamic narrative. For varying periods of time such movements succeeded in making their narrative as the dominant view in their part of the world. This includes, for instance, the socialist movements in various Arab and non-Arab countries. The socialist movements sought to use social creativity by arguing that the reason for Muslim decline was to be found in Western Capitalist oppression of the poor (Ismael 2009). They argued that Islam's message at its core is about egalitarianism and equality. They traced the roots of their movement back to the prophet Muhammad who (along with his family) lived a life of poverty. Whenever he was given any gifts, he would promptly distribute them amongst the poor. His most prominent companions and successors, Abu-Bakr and Umar, instituted state support for the poor, guaranteeing a minimum living standard for all. When this started to change during the tenure of the third successor, Uthman, another companion of the prophet, Ab-Dhar al-Ghifari, protested against the accumulation of wealth by Uthman and his family (Esposito 1995). Islamic socialists argued that West believes in capitalism and inequality among people while egalitarianism and social welfare are Muslim values. Islamic socialism became the dominant narrative in many Muslim countries in the 1970s including Libya, Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt.

While more work is needed to identify critical features of Islamic Socialism and other social movements that have defeated Islamism, one can see several reasons why it had some success. The socialists realized that in order for their ideology to succeed, they had to adopt the arcing narrative pattern used by the dominant Islamic narrative. They also had to get Muslims to believe that Islamic socialism went all the back to the start of their religion and was responsible for their glorious past (Paracha 2013). During the cold war, the West fought against the socialist narratives around the world. In Islamic countries this often meant supporting Islamists (e.g., the West supported the Islamists militarily in their civil war against the communists in Afghanistan). Unfortunately, Western anti-socialism efforts succeeded a little too well in the Islamic world because in wiping out the Islamic socialist narrative, they left the Islamic narrative as the dominant thought in much of the Muslim world.

The first step of a Research and Design effort to develop an alternative course of action must be to study the historical social movements that offered alternatives to the Islamist narrative and had some success in replacing it. We need to understand how these efforts were able to succeed and what needs to be done to replicate that success today. The second step of such an effort is to look at comprehensive alternative narratives that are being proposed currently by Islamic social identity entrepreneurs (Upal 2015) to identify the narratives that have the best chance of gaining widespread following and eliminating the threat of terrorism against the West. There are several such narratives in existence including those proposed by Muslim scientists such as the first Muslim scientist to win a Nobel Prize Dr. Abdus Salam. (Salam 1989) Muslim scientists argue that while Qur'an does emphasize worship, it also repeatedly exhorts its readers to think (e.g., Can't you see how the earth is laid flat? Can't you see how the moon and sun obey their orbits so perfectly?). In fact thinking and reflecting is one of the most frequently-mentioned commands in the Qur'an. Similarly, a much more plausible reason for the decline of the Islamic civilization is the decline of free thought, and its accompanying scientific and technological output. A successful counter-narrative should

make it clear that if Muslims want to regain the glory of their early years, then they must educate themselves in modern science and technology. The benefit of this alternative narrative is that it also facilitates an active role for the West. For instance, Western governments can acknowledge the huge role that Islam played in the renaissance of science in Europe. This will, in turn, allow the Muslims to claim free-thinking and science as inherent strengths of the Islamic civilization.

Once we develop a scientifically-informed comprehensive alternative narrative, we must work with our Western allies as well as governments and community leaders in Muslim countries to propagate it as widely as possible. Just like the efforts to fight communism took decades, the fight against the international Jihadist movement will also take decades. However, selecting the most effective counter-narrative will ensure that the Jihadist narrative is slowly eroded over time.

Conclusion

If we are serious about fighting the international Jihadi movement, we have to counter the ideologies and narratives that support this movement. Without countering the underlying ideological basis of Jihadism, our counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization efforts will continue to fail. We must develop a research and fact-based approach to develop a comprehensive alternative narrative thereby countering this growing threat to our security.

About the author: **Dr. M Afzal Upal** *is President of Al-Razi Centre. A cognitive scientist of religion with expertise in the Islamic social and religious movements, he has published more than 75 articles on cognitive science of religion, new religious movements, and cognition and culture. He was chair of the First International Workshop on Cognition and Culture, the 14th Annual Conference of the North American Association for Computational, Social, and Organizational Sciences and the AAAI-06 Workshop on Cognitive Modeling and Agent-based Social Simulation.*

Bibliography

Akyol, M. (2011). *Islam Without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty*. New York, NY, W. W. Norton & Company.

Choudhury, T. (2007). The Role of Muslim Identity Politics in Radicalisation. London, UK, Department for Communities and Local Government.

el-Nawawy, M. (2006). "US Public diplomacy in the Arab world: The news credibility of Radio Sawa and Television Alhurra in five countries." *Global Media and Commuication* **2**(2): 185-205.

Environics-Research-Group (2006). Focus Canada: The Pulse of Canadian Public Opinion. Ottawa, ON, Envrionics Research Group.

Esposito, J. (1995). Socialism and Islam. *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*. Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press.

Festinger, L. and H. Schachter (1964). *When Prophecy Fails*. New York, Harper Torch Books.

Funk, N. C. and A. A. Said (2004). "Islam and the West: Narratives of conflict and transformation." *International Journal of Peace Studies* 9(1): 1-28.

Galinsky, A. D., et al. (2003). "The reappropriation of stigmatizing labels: Implications for social identity." *Identity Issues in Group- Research on Managing Group and Teams* 5: 221-256.

Haslam, A., et al. (2005). "Social identity and the dynamics of leadership: Leaders and followers as collaborative agents in the transformation of social reality." *Leadership Quarterly* 16: 547-568.

Hedayah (2014). Developing Effective Counter-Narrative Frameworks for Countering Violent Extremism. Hague, Hedayah: The International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism & The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism at The Hague.

Hogg, M. A. and G. M. Vaughan (2002). *Social Psychology*. London, UK, Prentice Hall.

Ismael, T. Y. (2009). *The Communist Movement in the Arab World*. New York, NY, Routledge.

Lewis, B. (2003). *What went wrong? The clash between Islam and modernity in the Middle East*. New York, Harper Perennial.

Moaddel, M. (2014). Modalities of National Sovereignty: Territorial Nationalism versus Islamic Fundamentalism in Muslim-Majority Countries. Ann Arbor, Michigan, Population Studies Center, University of Michigan

Mummendey, A. and H. J. Schreiber (1984). ""Different" just means "better": Some onvious and some hidden pathways to in-group favouritism." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 23: 363-368.

Paracha, N. F. (2013). Islamic Socialism: A history from left to right. *Dawn*. Karachi, Pakistan, Dawn.

PewForum (2012). Religious Beliefs and Practices.

PewGlobalAttitudesProject (2011). Muslim-Western Tensions Persist. Washington, DC, Pew Research.

PewGlobalSurvey (2014). Global Opposition to US Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America's Image.

Powell, V. (2011). "A Social identity framework of American hip-hop cultural performance." *Social Identities* 17(4): 459-476.

Salam, A. (1989). *Ideals and Realities: Selected Essays of Abdus Salam.* Singapore, World Scientific Publishing Company.

Sharp, J. M. (2006). US Democracy Promotion Policy in the Middle East: The Islamist Dilemma. *CRS Report for Congress,* CRS.

Tajfel, H. and T. J. Turner (1985). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *Psychology of intergroup relations.* S. Worchel and W. Austin. Chicago, Nelson-Hall.

Tajfel, H. and T. J. Turner (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. S. Worchel and L. W. Austin. Chicago, IL, Nelson Hall.

Taylor, D. (2002). *The Quest for Identity: From Minority Groups to Generation Xers* New York, NY, Praeger.

Upal, M. A. (2005). "Towards A Cognitive Science of New Religious Movements." *Cognition and Culture* 5(2): 214-239.

Upal, M. A. (2014). "Three Practical Lessons from the Science of Influence Operations Message Design." *Canadian Military Journal* 14(2): 53-58.

Upal, M. A. (2015). A Framework for Agent-based Social Simulations of Social Identity Dynamics. *Conflict and Comlexity: Understanding Complex Systems*. P. von Fellman. Berlin, Springer Verlag.

Upal, M. A., et al. (2011). Investigating the Dynamics of Identity Formation, and Narrative Information Comprehension: Final Report Defence Research & Development Canada.

van Knippenberg, D. (1978). Status differences, comparative relevance, and intergroup differentiation. *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. H. Tajfel. London, Academic Press**:** 171-199.

Zakaria, F. (2015). US Intrevention is not the answer. *Washington Post.* Washington, DC, Washington Post.

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence
Journal of Terrorism Research

Inciting Criminal Violence:

An Examination of Al Qaida's Persuasive Devices in the Digital World

by Julia E. Wright and Michael Bachmann

Abstract

The study examines the application of the post-World War II U.S. Armed Forces propaganda analysis methods as a valid framework for the analysis of modern extremist social media. Using Jihadist and Islamic extremist, Al Qaida core, affiliate and associate (AQAA), digital media products, the framework examines persuasive devices used to attempt to appeal to potential recruits and ultimately incite them to violence. The findings of the content analysis extend previous examinations and provide a unique lens in which to view the appeals used in messaging to encourage potential violent actors in civil society. The examination categorizes tools of persuasion with the aim to validate the applicability of a historical framework in exploring modern messaging, informing future counter-narratives, and providing law enforcement cues in the analysis and determination of ongoing threats in their respective jurisdictions.

Keywords: Al Qaida, AQAA, Islamic extremist, terrorist organizations, Internet use, recruiting tactics, communications, content analysis

When two pressure cooker bombs exploded, tragically ripping through the crowds of the 2013 Boston Marathon, few realized online extremist propaganda served as the instructive source and inspiration for the attack (Durante, 2013). At first glance, the attack, which used a homemade pressure cooker explosive device, appeared to have been inspired by the article "[how to] Make a bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom," published under the nom de plume of 'The AQ [al Qaeda] Chef' in the summer 2010 edition of Inspire, an online magazine created by Samir Kahn, a media-savvy young Saudi-American radical Islamist. Khan published in colloquial English using mocking editorials, such as "…A Cold Diss," (Khan, 2011) designed to appeal to the heart of young, and yet unknown, radicalizing Americans. The goal of his sometimes humorous, often sarcastic, but always religiously and politically extreme magazine was and is, to incite the reader to violence. Khan died in a drone strike in Yemen in 2011, before America would witness the impact of his deadly, destructive work. Yet his self-proclaimed 'open source jihad' (Richards, 2013) survived in the global commons of the Internet and continues to provide motive, method and encouragement for violent crimes such as the one on the streets of Boston (Zelin, 2011).

The nature of the ongoing global war of ideas places local level law enforcement in the front line of a complex and networked conflict. In today's war, words tweeted from Africa could incite to violence an anonymous actor in a jurisdiction thousands of miles away from the message's origination. Equally, a small poster printed from the Internet and hung in a local bodega may look beautiful and peaceful with flowers and bright

colors, but could actually be an embraced call to violent jihad and glorification as a "martyr." The ability to independently transmit these images and narratives to a like-minded global community empowers individual actors and has resulted in unprecedented abilities to virtually recruit 'true believers' as proxy actors or foot soldiers in an Islamic extremist movement. Often, language barriers and cultural divides make much of online extremist content difficult for local law enforcement to understand, much less assess as a potential threat to their jurisdictions and communities. In this way, research into the divination of the meaning of rhetoric by navigating the murky latent and manifest content (Berg & Lune, 2011, p. 343) of extremist products for methods of radicalization is essential in refining approaches to countering violent extremism.

This study uses a content analysis to examine a sampling of violent extremist organizations' digital products [1] in order to determine if a framework used by the U.S. Armed Forces for propaganda analysis in World War II to counter nation-state propaganda is applicable in analyzing the messaging of a modern amorphous enemy. Unlike the seminal work of Ramsey (2013) in analyzing the disparity between online and offline activities and consumption patterns of online content, this examination is limited to examining appeals used by AQAA and localized jihadists or Islamist organizations in addressing audiences they seek to radicalize. The findings of this content analysis extend the analyses of previous examinations and provide a unique lens in which to view the persuasive appeals used in messaging designed to encourage potential violent actors in civil society.

Background

The United States describes a terrorist organization as a foreign organization that engages in terrorist activity as "defined in section 212 (a)(3)(B) of the INA (8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(3)(B)), or terrorism, as defined in section 140(d)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989 (22 U.S.C. § 2656f(d)(2))" (Department of State, 2012). The nature of a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) is an organization that threatens the security of United States, its defenses, people, interests or relations (Department of State, 2012). U.S. Code 18 Part I, Chapter 41 § 875 further addresses the topic of interstate communications and communicating a threat as it relates to commerce. The legalities of terrorism under U.S. Code and the laws of other free nations may not be applicable in the global digital commons, making it extremely difficult to constrain violent rhetoric threatening a nation state, or community. Within the borders of the U.S., the First Amendment to the Constitution ensures free speech, and with that, a legal right to participate in a wide variety of questionable rhetoric.

The limitations of free speech have been widely debated. The lines between fair political or ideological discourse, hate speech and incitement to violence or 'fighting words' can be blurry. For example, in an Al Qaida article for *Inspire* magazine, Samir Khan wrote "I knew that I had to stay under the guidelines of the laws regarding freedom of speech, but at the same time, I knew the real truth wouldn't be able to reach the masses unless and until I was above the law" (Kelly, 2011). While Khan was never "above the law," he sought refuge outside of the United States' constitutionally-based rule of law in the sharia law system used in Yemen. Some researchers in communications find that any attempt to limit freedom of speech with regards to jihadist propaganda would serve only to reinforce a perception of "victimhood" or grievance used by Islamist organizations to garner a sense of outrage from the Muslim community. This concept is buoyed by Western media which often presents the actions of violent extremist organizations as 'evil' in turn, thereby creating an 'us-versus-them' or a 'believer-versus-nonbeliever' scenario. The jihadist narrative often constructs an appeal that provides an obvious choice between accepting the humiliation of their faith or taking action and rising

to the occasion to become a community 'hero' or martyr. Action under this construct becomes an irresistible choice for some (Richards, 2013).

The use of propaganda or the communication of ideas to bring about a change has evolved along with the shift from nation-state warfare to asymmetric threats from amorphous organizations. Violence or Propaganda of The Deed, (POTD), formerly existed through an act, or acts, of violence that sought to incite "excessive force" by a nation state thereby causing the state itself to lose legitimacy (Bolt, 2012). In the past decade or more, groups and individuals employed POTD violence as a strategic communication tool bent on mobilizing groups and individuals to violent action against 'state targets,' individuals, or iconic structures that represent nation-states (Bolt, 2012). Today's amorphous enemy employs POTD internationally through dispersed leadership and lone actors. AQAA and other amorphous groups then have the ability to flatten their organization and carry out their "virtual jihad" even where nation-states have all but eliminated existing structures.

The availability of the Internet created a forum for "virtual jihad" discourse on which AQAA relies on for recruitment and radicalization. As such, AQAA depends on individuals inspired to jihad rather than 'organizationally led' jihad (Jenkins, 2013). In this way, individuals do not require membership or physical residence of a nation-state, but belong to an online community of 'believers' inspired by digitally disseminated rhetoric and affiliated only through an ideological appeal. In 1998, the executive director of the Emergency Response & Research Institute (ERRI), Clark Staten, testified before a U.S. Senate subcommittee that "even small terrorist groups are now using the Internet to broadcast their message and misdirect/misinform the general population in multiple nations simultaneously" (Denning, 2000, p.1). In addition to his testimony, he provided the subcommittee copies of Internet messaging which contained "anti-American and anti-Israeli propaganda and threats, including a widely distributed extremist call for jihad (holy war) against America and Great Britain" (Denning, 2013, p.14). While the Internet provides a forum for discourse in the global commons, Staten's testimony presaged the dangers and powerful impact of unfettered access to a global audience—a rostrum from which any individual with a computer has a voice that can achieve global reach. In the case of Al Qaida and other terrorist organizations, their voice includes the ability to communicate valid and ideational threats against America along with opportunities to make contact with like-minded thinkers, radicalize readers, and recruit new members. Simply put, the Internet provides terrorist organizations the ability to "communicate, collaborate and convince" (von Behr, 2013, p.6). Further, the ability of the Internet to disseminate images globally allows extremists to appeal to the emotions of members of societies and cultures including memories of grievance, whether real or perceived, as deeply-rooted ideological identities (Bolt, 2012).

Von Behr's 2013 case study, "Radicalization in the Digital Era," demonstrated that the Internet increases an individual's opportunities to be radicalized and serves to enhance the ability to locate others with similar extremist beliefs. The study examined Internet usage in the radicalization process of 15 terrorists and extremists in the United Kingdom (U.K.).The sample consisted of five extremists and 10 U.K.-convicted terror cases. The examination found that the Internet did not increase the pace of radicalization, nor did it replace individual contacts with extremist recruiters (von Behr, 2013, p. xii). The use of words and images to incite others to violence, however, is far from new. The Internet merely provides convenience of access and immediacy to information sought.

Methods

A content analysis was conducted to identify what persuasive devices were employed in extremist digital media products, thereby testing the validity of a historical U.S. Army framework for analyzing propaganda found in today's violent rhetoric. The U.S. Army framework was based on the original seven basic propaganda devices identified in the work of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) established in 1937. Their work was rooted in the concern that audiences new to mass communications were unfamiliar with propaganda and critical thinking processes and therefore vulnerable to "extremist propagandists" (Sproule, 2001).

The quantitative component in this assessment permits a determination of the frequency of psychological appeals, sentiments, or moral codes called upon in an attempt to spur violence. The analysis utilized 206 digital media messages drawn from across 63 identifiable factions of Al Qaeda core, affiliates, and/or associates or adherents (AQAA) included in the Combatting Terrorism Center Militant (CTC) Imagery Project collection at West Point (Department of the Army, 2013). The Imagery Project drew original Arabic language source material in and provides translation, originator, and an analysis of symbols. The 206 messages were originally disseminated via messaging boards, online forums, websites, or otherwise digitally transmitted across computer-mediated communication networks. While it is difficult to determine the date of creation of messages on the Internet where they can exist an indeterminable amount of time through re-tweets and re-postings or taken down and effectively erased, the messages examined appeared to have been originally created and posted between 2009 and 2012. The CTC's sampling represents AQAA's use of "images to further financial, material, and ideological support for violence" (Militant Imagery Project, 2013). The CTC dataset is cross-referenced by group identification, affiliation regions of operations, source, language, and the date the image was drawn from the Internet. For purposes of this study, the imagery selection was narrowed to those images described as jihadist groups affiliated with AQ core/central, affiliates and associates, and localized jihadist movements from across the available spectrum of digital media. While the CTC's dataset is a small sampling of available extremist messaging, it provides an overarching glimpse at the array of approaches and appeals utilized by a wide cross section of jihadist extremist groups. To validate the CTC data set, twelve samples were randomly drawn from the collection. Independent translators [2] provided "double blind" translations of the original media products. The resulting translations minimally varied in word choice from the original CTC translations, and offered nearly identical meaning, thus supporting the accuracy and integrity of the translated data set. The analysis employed standardized operational definitions used by U.S. Armed Forces engaged in examining Cold War and World War II enemy propaganda. As such, the term "persuasive device" for purposes of this study refers to any of ten common frameworks used in propaganda: "selective issues, case-making, simplification, name calling, glittering generalities, testimonial, plain folks, band wagon, insinuation, stalling" (Department of the Army, 1950, p. 8). While the operational definitions were previously used in analyzing propaganda employed in nation-state conflicts, the commonality with today's narratives employed in amorphous campaigns lies in the requirement of the movement to appeal to an individual and to incite that individual to identify with and support a cause. Indeed, "man's thoughts and actions are compensatory substitutes for desires which he has been obliged to suppress" (Bernays, 1928, p. 9). As such, examination of the appeal for action exposes the base motivation behind individuals' desire to act, whether within a nation-state for revolution, nation-state versus nation-state, or an ideological movement against a culture. The U. S. Department of the Army's methodology provides the construct for such an examination.

When utilizing the "selective issues" framework, the creator of a message evidences their concept of what

is of concern, or is of issue for the audience. In "case making" or "card stacking" the author or artist draws upon what appears to be a logically built argument to give validity to their cause. "Simplification" reduces complicated issues to easily discernible clear-cut choices between extremes. "Name calling" uses hate to incite the audience and in some cases dehumanize the target. "Glittering generalities" ties the message to a virtuous quality such as dignity, righteousness, or honor. "Testimonial" employs endorsement by a respected party. Using "plain folks" appeal seeks acceptance through language or concepts that are common or "of the people." "Band wagon" appeals are commonly used through the psychology that "everybody is doing it" and can result in a mob mentality. "Insinuation" does not necessarily use facts, but instead employs suspicion to confirm pre-conceived notions or to plant distrust. Finally, in "stalling" a propagandist will ignore an issue negative to his cause or mention it only occasionally until it doesn't matter anymore. He/she may also talk about a myriad of other facts in order to make unfavorable evidence seem unimportant (Department of the Army, 1950).

The 206 media products included English translations of the original Arabic language products. Additionally, the communications included an imagery analysis by cultural subject matter experts who analyzed the latent and manifest textual and artistic evidence for meaning. The descriptions included contextual meanings of symbols, colors, phrases, slogans, religious texts and references. This derivative study then examined those interpretations to determine each sample's overarching appeal or narrative theme used to incite the intended audience to action. The latent and manifest content device was then coded by two independent coders into categories along the three dimensions of organization, overarching theme, and type of persuasive devise. Differences in coding results were brought to the attention of a panel consisting of three other researchers and included once a consensus was reached.

Results and Analysis

Table 1 shows the breakdown of analyzed media types. Website banners and logos from Al Qaida core, as well as its affiliates, and associates, comprised 76.8 percent of the 206 samples. The remainder of the content from these organization included video or audio files, online magazines, posted text files, or imagery posted to forums.

Table 1: Breakdown of analyzed digital media types

Medium	N[1]	%
Logos / Website banners	162	76.8
Videos / Audio files	25	11.8
Forums	10	4.7
Online magazines	10	4.7
Posted files / Text files	4	1.9

1 The total population size of digital media products is N=206. Some communications involved more than 1 media type resulting in a total of 211 listings.

Each of the samples invariably included more than one theme or message. As such, each theme was noted and tallied. As a result ten overall themes emerged. The predominant overarching theme was a blatant call to violence or "jihad," appearing in 163 samples. For purposes of inquiry, "jihad" refers to any call to religiously inspired revolt or violence outside of the rule of civil or nation-state law. The call to violence was frequently accomplished in latent imagery through the darkened silhouette of a horse and rider carrying a black battle flag with the text of the "shahada," the Islamic testimony of faith, and Mohammed's seal (Department of the Army, 2013). In a related theme, there were 107 instances, or 23 percent of latent and manifest content in which the samples thematically glorified the concept of martyrdom. The imagery of glorification included pictures of individuals perceived as martyrs by Al Qaida, their affiliates and associates, floating in clouds, as heavenly images, or in tranquil scenes with rays of light and/or expressed quotes from the Qur'an endorsing and glorifying their behavior.

Table 2: Overarching themes used by Al Qaida, Affiliates and Associates in Internet postings

Theme	N[1]	%
Call to violence (Jihad)	163	34.5
Glory of Martyrdom	107	22.6
Global Aims / Caliphate	69	14.6
Vengeance / Counter to perceived current and historical crusade	32	6.8
Cooperation between Islamic sects	30	6.3
Nationalism	27	5.7
Anti nation state or other religion	20	4.2
Religious Superiority (between Islamic sects)	15	3.2
Good vs. Evil	9	1.9
Zakat	1	0.2

1 The total population size of digital media products is N=206. All applicable themes are listed for each communication resulting in 473 identifiable themes or appeals.

Themes

The collection provided 69 instances, or 15percent of content presenting the aims of achieving a global Islamic caliphate. Further, 32 instances (7 percent) evidenced vengeance as a thematic. In some cases, the communication pointed to the crusades and/or other perceived ongoing persecutions of Islam derived from current social or political contexts.

In six percent of the collected data or 27 instances, the thematic concept of nationalism, loyalty to a nation-state, or the need for a nation-state was evidenced. One organization, for example, posted a logo with a green flag background declaring themselves to be "Dawlat Filastin al-slamiyya-Wilayat Ghaza, or the Islamic State of Palestine-Gaza Province" (Department of the Army, 2013). Conversely, four percent of messages, or 20 instances, presented anti-nation-state and/or negativity toward any religion outside of Islam as a thematic. These instances predominantly included anti-American images such as burning U.S. flags, anti-Israel statements, or latent and manifest content expressing hatred of the Jewish people. In one instance, an AQ affiliate presented anti-Russian themes along with the theme of vengeance for perceived abuses in Chechnya.

In another roughly six percent or 30 instances, the messages presented the need for cooperation between Islamic sects to achieve their aims. In three percent or 15 instances, the theme was the superiority of one Islamic sect over another. These instances predominately highlighted Shiite and Sunni differences. In a separate tact, the data evidenced a basic archetypal theme of good versus evil. This theme was employed in a scant two percent or nine instances, with text or slogans referring to non-Islamic people as "evil doers" (Department of the Army, 2013).

Finally, in a single message, Al Shabab couched the theme of anti-"infidels" with the theme of "zakat," or charitable giving. The imagery depicts Al Shabab members distributing goods. Charity, as a theme, was a single aberration in the sampling.

Persuasive Devices

After each message was coded for single or multiple persuasive devises, the frequency for each device was calculated by product and percent of total. The percentage values had a relatively wide range from two percent to 36 percent with clear preferences for some devices over others (Table 3). Most frequently (in 36 percent of the messages), the creators of the digital imagery employed the use of transfer or testimonial. Testimonials were given by leaders of Al Qaida such as images and quotes from Osama Bin Laden, or implied through the images of "martyrs." Also included were quotes from the Qur'an in order to imply religious credibility of the movement or organization.

Table 3: Persuasive devices used by Al Qaida, its Affiliates and Associates on the Internet

Persuasive Devices	N[1]	%
Transfer or testimonial	147	36.5
Simplification	89	22.1
Glittering generalities	64	15.9
Selecting issues	31	7.7
Band wagon	30	7.4
Name calling	17	4.2
Plain folks	11	2.7
Card stacking	8	2.0
Insinuation	6	1.5
Stalling	0	0.0

1 The total population size of digital media products is N=206. All utilized devices are listed for each communication resulting in 403 identifiable persuasion devices.

In 22 percent of the communications, the extremist actors employed simplification as a tactic of persuasion. For example, in a forum banner produced by Dawat al-Iraq al-Islamiyya or the Islamic State of Iraq, also known as Al Qaida Iraq (AQI), the actor manifested the conditions in Iraq in the slogan "the beginning of the end." In addition, the banner includes an image of Osama Bin Laden with his finger pointing upwards—a gesture often given when Muslims recite the shahada or testimony of faith. The use of the image attempts to persuade the viewer by simplifying their cause to a choice of faith, with tacit endorsement of the organization as a religious edict. While images in communication have been present since man first scrawled figures on cave walls (Müller-Brockmann, 1971), modern social media has now made them powerfully ubiquitous (McComiskey, 2004). Today's social media rhetoric incorporates a concentration of iconic images, graphics and text in a "blurred and fluid informatics realm" (Stafford, 1996, page #). The meaning of images therefore must be considered in the analysis of "optical rhetoric" (Stafford, year, page #).

Another example of simplification was evidenced in the Internet forum banner of the Indonesian jihadist group Jama'a Islamiyya (JI). The banner presents the theme of cooperation across Islamic groups with an image similar to the Iwo Jima memorial. In the image, militants are raising the Palestinian flag. The caption simply states "We All Gaza" (Department of the Army, 2013).

Sixteen percent of messages or 64 products employed the use of glittering generalities as a persuasive device.

The use of glittering generalities provides authenticity to a message by linking the objective to a culturally accepted virtue. The most common appeal found in the samples was that of 'holiness' latently expressed in images of the Qur'an, the Dome of the Rock, and other sites and objects held as holy by the Muslim people. In another example, Usama Abdallah Kassir posted a banner under the name of "Zubeiddah1417" (Department of the Army, 2013). Among other devices, Kassir appealed in glittering generalities to a Muslim sense of "pride, honor and paternal responsibility" (Department of the Army, 2013).

The technique of persuasion through selecting issues was found in eight percent of the samples or 31 products. In one instance, the posted image included a picture of a detainee being abused at Abu Ghraib prison.

A band wagon device persuades by drawing on human emotion to follow a crowd without skepticism (Miller, 1937). A common example is "Everybody's doing it." The band wagon device was employed in seven percent or 30 products. In manifest textual content, collective pronoun equivalents to "we" were used to establish a commonality with the reader/viewer. In in another sample, a video posted by the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) from Uzbekistan depicted a children's violent extremist indoctrination course. Images of the "graduating class of young fighters [lit. lion cubs] of Uzbek…who fight alongside [lit. hand in hand] the mujahidin of the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan…" (Militant Imagery Project, 2013) creates a perception that a crowd "by sheer number" must be right (Department of the Army, 1950, p.9.)

Simple name calling was evidenced in four percent of samples or 17 products. The names translated from the original Arabic language included "evil doers," "infidels," "tyrants," a derogatory use of "polytheists," and "servant of the cross." In one sample, the Saudi regime, criticized for Saudi Arabian-U.S. relations, was referred to as "the Kingdom of Hypocrisy."

In a scant three percent of messages or 11 products was persuasive appeal known as "plain folks" evidenced. In one sample Ayman Al-Zawahiri was depicted as being of the tribes and generations suggesting that he was simply one of the viewer's kind. Other content included images of the desert, suggesting a common, simple and ancient shared history, or the use of commonly used expressions.

Two percent of samples or eight products used case making or card stacking as a device. One sample appealed to the popular concept that the U.S. and other Western nations are engaged in a war of greed and a quest for oil in the Middle East. Latent content expressed this with images of foreign money and U.S. dollars, as well as manifest suggestions that westerners can be bribed. It furthers evidence of materialism in an attempt to illustrate the Western world as greedy. Another sample included a series of quotes from the Qur'an to build a case for the reader to come to the conclusion that embarking on a jihad is a logical and righteous decision.

In addition, only six messages (two percent) employed the use of insinuation as a persuasive device. No evidence of insinuation was found in the textual manifest content; however, the choice of colors and other symbols, such as fire, shades of red, smoke, and dripping blood were employed to incriminate the U.S. and place the culpability for suffering on the West.

No evidence of stalling was found in any of the samples. Stalling, however, may include the avoidance of issues. Determining a negative could not be assessed in the scope or method of this examination. Zero evidence of stalling suggests that it is not a persuasive device employed by Al Qaida, their associates, or affiliates.

Discussion, Limitations, and Conclusion

The presented analysis of persuasive devices seeks to further the understanding of propaganda tactics employed by some of the most dangerous terrorist organizations in their utilization of Internet technology for recruitment purposes. While the organizations examined are widely geographically dispersed across continents, they are inextricably linked through their promotion of Islamic extremism. The desire to promote the concept of jihad locally or globally suggests that the all groups primarily identify themselves as Muslim, and only secondarily as a member of a nation-state or other culture.

The analysis is based on the Combatting Terrorism Center Militant Imagery Project collection at West Point, a United States' Department of Defense reviewed and sanitised dataset. The violent extremist organization's imagery and narrative was found to primarily include traditional Islamic symbols, suggesting an attempt to appeal to people of the Islamic faith as a legitimate Qur'an-based movement and call to action. Imagery examined included quotes from the Qur'an and images of ancient mosques. Imagery also included drawings or photos of religious "martyrs" or the Shahada black horse and rider believed by many to be carried by Mohammed. These symbols of "jihad" portray to the intended audience that violence is a religious duty in a perceived defense of Islam. This is a clear call to choose between a radical and violent perception of faith, or a complete condemnation and rejection by the 'faithful.' The postings of Al Qaida offer no middle road, leaving Muslim adherents in a false conundrum to choose the religion of their birth and culture or risk the label of traitor to all they know. This false dichotomy takes on an entendre of blackmail in a polarized world. Such a choice may bring about faster and more enthusiastic responses, adding to the urgency of the choice in the constructed crisis (Bernays, 1928). In the constructed choice between faithfulness to Islam and 'haram' (sinfulness or 'forbidden'), the archetypal choice is the perceived 'good versus evil.' The targeted audience knows that any perceived rejection of Islam by a Muslim can bring not only cultural opprobrium but the punishment of death.

Additionally, when examining the significance of this study, it is important to note some unavoidable limitations of the dataset in professional public discourse. While the Combatting Terrorism Center Militant Imagery Project collection at West Point presents the most comprehensive collection of translated communications available to the public, its content is, by necessity, censored. Noticeably omitted from the collection are graphic images of violence, such as videos of beheadings, which are circulated widely throughout social media. While this is not a criticism, as the Combatting Terrorism Center obviously seeks to reduce the proliferation of violent images and their attendant influence, this systematic omission precludes one important persuasion tactic from the present findings—the use of graphic depictions of violence. Like the proverbial car wreck that rivets the attention of other drivers, graphic violence draws attention to their movement, and contains a perceived narrative of traditional religious values carried out through customary Islamic perceptions of justice.

A second, minor limitation arises from the examination of only AQAA or local violent extremist-generated products. This narrow look eliminates the influences of popular media messaging in regard to violent extremist issues. A wider scope in future studies could examine the context of popular media's impact on societal and individual perceptions or behaviors. Furthermore, future studies could compare and contrast the persuasion devices utilized by other violent extremist organizations, movements, coups, or insurrections. A wider lens examining other calls to violence could yield evidence of similar, alternate, or related patterns of persuasion. Lastly, this study of influence products does not take into account the ratio of latent and manifest content that could be affected by literacy rates of the targeted audience. A future comparison of literacy rates

to radicalized martyrs may find significance in a number of illiterate actionable martyrs.

Despite limitations, the study found that the rubric of persuasive devises rooted in the work of the IPA, and operationalized by the U.S. Army to examine violent rhetoric, is as valid today in analyzing social media as it was before the creation of the digital commons. The study found that with the exception of the "stalling" technique, the examined samples could be categorized and analyzed through the historical framework. "Stalling," which attempts to marginalize an issue while flooding "new ones to distract" (Department of the Army, 1950, p.10) was not found in any samples drawn from modern extremist social media. Interestingly, "stalling" was not included in the original seven common propaganda devices offered by the IPA. The U.S. Army publication added 'stalling' to the framework and found many examples in World War II nation-state propaganda.

It has been long understood that the 'the pen is mightier than the sword…' (Lytton, 1839, 2.2.), the digital pen of the 21st century promises to be the mightiest yet. This fact is far from lost on those who wield the scimitar in today's violent clashes of culture and ideology. Unfortunately, the violence summoned on the Internet does not remain purely in the virtual world. Instead extremists violently manifest in communities in the jurisdictions of local law enforcement officials, such as the streets of Boston.

While federal law enforcement and whole-of-government approaches pursue the perpetrators of terror, it is the local police who are left to react on the scene. Within the U.S., empowering local law enforcement with information to recognize emerging threats to their communities, coupled with enhanced cross-agency intelligence assistance, could assist in preventing attacks. But ultimately, international problems are local problems. Expanding access and collaboration with international organizations such as Interpol and pushing needed information to the front lines of analysis and prevention could enhance understanding, build partnerships, and ultimately secure communities.

About the authors

Julia E. Wright *is a defense contractor with American Protection Service supporting the industrial security department at Lockheed Martin's Fort Worth Aeronautical Division. Ms. Wright is a graduate of the College of Criminal Justice, Texas Christian University where she augmented her studies with an emphasis in defense studies. Her independent research focuses on federal efforts in combating terrorism inclusive of military partnership and whole of Government approaches to law enforcement as it relates to international security and the nexus of recruitment strategies, international crime and subsequent manifested violence.*

Michael Bachmann *is Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Texas Christian University. He received his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Central Florida in 2008 and his M.A. in Social Sciences from University of Mannheim, Germany in 2004. Dr. Bachmann specializes in the investigation of computer and high tech crimes. His research focuses primarily on the social dimensions behind technology-driven crimes. He is the author of several book chapters and journal articles on cyber-crime and cyber-criminals.*

References

Arquilla, J. & Ronfeldt, D. (2001). *Networks and netwars: The future of terror, crime, and militancy*. Retrieved March 25, 2014 from the RAND Corporation web site: http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/

MR1382

ASTM F2575-14 Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation. (2014, January 1). Retrieved ASTM International website February 15, 2014, from www.astm.org

Behr, I.V., Redding, A., Edwards C. & Gribbon, L. (2013). *Radicalization in the digital era: The use of the Internet in 15 cases of terrorism and extremism*. Retrieved March 3, 2014 from the RAND Corporation web site::://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR453

Berg, B. L. & Lune, H. (2011). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. (8th ed). Harlow, UK: Pearson.

Bernays, E. (1928). *Propaganda* (1st ed., p. 9). New York: New York: Routledge.

Bolt, N. (2012). *The violent image: Insurgent propaganda and the new revolutionaries*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bulwer-Lytton, E. (1896). The William Warren edition of standard plays, Richelieu Boston: Walter H. Baker & Co. Retrieved from February 12, 2014 from https://archive.org/details/richelieuorcons04lyttgoog

Denning, D. (2000). Cyberterrorism: The logic bomb versus the truck bomb. *Global Dialogue, 4*(2). Retrieved February 12, 2014, from http://www.worlddialogue.org/print.php?id=111

Denning, D. (2001). *Activism, hacktivism, and cyberterrorism: The Internet as a tool for influencing foreign policy*. Retrieved March 3, 2014 from the RAND Corporation website: http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1382/MR1382.ch8.

Department of the Army. (1950). *Special Text no. 21 Propaganda Analysis* (301.152A). Fort Riley: The Army General School.

Department of State. (2012). *Foreign terrorist organizations*. Retrieved from http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm

Durante, T. (2013, April 23). *Investigators discover Boston bombs were detonated by a remote control as suspect admits he learned to build the devices from al Qaeda propaganda magazine*. Retrieved from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2313782/Dzhokhar-Tsarnaev-Boston-Marathon-bomber-admits-learned-build-bomb-Inspire-magazine.html

Jenkins, B. (2011). Is Al Qaeda's Internet strategy working? *Rand Corporation CT-371*. Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2011/RAND_CT371.pdf

Jackson, B., Baker, A., Chalk, J., Cragin, P., Parachini, K., & Trujillo, J. (2005). *Aptitude for destruction*. Retrieved from the Rand Corporation website http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG331.html

Kelly, S. (2011, September 30). Samir Khan: Proud to be an American traitor. Retrieved April 5, 2014, from http://www.cnn.com/2011/09/30/world/meast/analysis-yemen-samir-khan/index.html

Khan, S. (2011). *Inspire* magazine. (5th ed.) Retrieved from http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/al-qaeda-grab-piece-arab-revolutions/story?id=13257087

McComiskey, B. (2004). Visual rhetoric and the new public discourse. *JAC: A Journal of Rhetoric, Culture & Politics, 254*(1), 187-206. Retrieved March 8, 2014, from http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublication?journalCode=jac

Militant Imagery Project. (2013, December 30). Retrieved April 15, 2014, from http://www.ctc.usma.edu/programs-resources/militant-imagery-project

Miller, C. (1937). *Propaganda analysis*. New York: Institute for Propaganda Analysis.

Müller-Brockmann, J. (1971) *A history of visual communication*. Trans. D.Q. Stephenson, New York: Hastings.

Ramsey, G. (2013). *Jihadi Culture on the World Wide Web: New directions in terrorism studies*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Richards, B. (2013, May 20). *Inspire magazine and the open source jihad*. Retrieved from http://theconversation.com/inspire-magazine-and-the-rise-of-open-source-jihad-14013

Sproule, J. (2001). Authorship and origins of the seven propaganda devices: A research note.

Rhetoric and Public Affairs, 4(1), 135-143. Retrieved March 16, 2014

Stafford, B. (1996). *Good looking: Essays on the virtue of images.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Von Behr, I., Reding, A., Edwards, C., & Gribbon, L. (2013). *Radicalisation in the digital era.* Retrieved from the Rand Corporation website January 20, 2014 from http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR453.html

Zelin, A. (2011, September 30). *American jihadi*. Retrieved from http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/09/30/samir_khan_dead_inspire_magazine?page=0,1

Notes

[1] Samples drawn were attributed to or claimed by the following organizations media products: Al Qaeda, including affiliates such as Al Qaeda Central or AQC; Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, which publishes "Al Shamikha" for women, and Al Qaeda Yemen's "Sada al-Malahim" or "Echo of Battle" magazine; Al Qaeda Iraq or AQI; Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb or AQIM ; AQ Palestine; and "al-Malahim" which is also simply known as AQ's "Media Production Company; Coalition of Intifada Youth to Liberate Palestine; Dawlat al-Iraq al-Islamiyyah; Dawlat Filastin al-slamiyya; The Egyptian Islamic Jihad; Fath al-Islam or "Conquest of Islam"; The Global Islamic Media Front; Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat; Hamas 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam brigade; Harakat al-Mujahidin; Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade; Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan; Isittihad al-Jihad or Union of Islamic Jihad of Uzbekistan; Jund Ansar Allah; Jama'a Islamiyya; Jama'at Ansar al-Sunna; Jaysh al-Mujahidin; Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna; "Prisoner of Joy"; Jaysh-e Muhamma; Jama 'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad;Jundallah or People's Resistance Movement of Iran; Jund Ansar Allah; Jhangvi Group; Jama 'at al Da 'wa Pakistan/ Lashkar-e Taiba; Majmu at al-Sarim al-Maslul al-Baridiyya; Moro Islamic Liberation Front; Mu'assasat al-Ma'sada al-l'lamiyya; Muntadayat al-Firdaws al-Jihadiyya; Muntadayat bi-smi al-Iman; Nukhbat al-l'lam al-Jihadi or "Jihadi Media Elite"; Palestinian Islamic Jihad; Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood or Abdallah 'Assam'; Palestinian Islamic Jihad; Riyad al Salihin or Chechen Martyrs Brigade; Sawt al-Jihad which is also known as Sawt al-Mujahidin; Shabakat al-Jihad al Alami; Shabakat sham al-Ikhabariyya; Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan; Taliban Ansar Al-Mujahidin Network; Tanzim al Tajdid al-Islami; Tanzim Fath al-Islam also known as "Fatah"; and Tehrik-I Taliban Pakistan – Swat.

[2] Independent translators were native speakers of the language in which the samples were published, certified by the American Translators Association, and utilized the Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation published by ASTM International for consistency.

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence
Journal of Terrorism Research

Off With Their Heads:

The Islamic State and Civilian Beheadings

by Steven T. Zech and Zane M. Kelly

Abstract

This commentary evaluates the use of beheadings by the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. We place beheadings in a broader historical context and draw from academic research in terrorism studies and the social sciences to explain why the Islamic State has adopted such brutal tactics. We outline the strategic logic of beheading and evaluate explanations related to symbolic politics, culture, and organizational dynamics. We conclude with a discussion about the future of Islamic State violence.

Keywords: Islamic State, beheading, terrorism, violence, Iraq, Syria

Introduction

Counter-normative violence, especially beheading, has emerged as a key component of the Islamic State (IS) strategy in Iraq and Syria and has served to distinguish its "brand" of violence from others in the global jihadi struggle for hearts and minds. IS uses extreme violence as a goad against Western powers, as a means to achieve territorial gains, and as a method to internally sanction and socialize its members. After overtaking the Syrian 17th division outside Raqqa, IS displayed soldiers' decapitated bodies and mounted more than fifty severed heads on fence posts. The group reportedly displayed crucified criminals in public spaces ("The Islamic State" 2014). IS exerts social control through strict surveillance and administers harsh punishments for offenses deemed contrary to Sharia law that governs life under the new caliphate. In addition to beheadings and crucifixions, they have perpetrated acts of torture, sexual violence, mutilation, and mass slaughter. In February 2015 IS provoked further global outrage when it killed Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh by burning him alive. Later that month the Islamic State beheaded 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians on a Libyan beach. This especially ugly repertoire is not merely the work of a few sociopaths, it serves to advance calculated tactical, strategic, and organizational goals.

In 2014 IS rose from being one of many factions vying for power in Syria and Iraq to the forefront of violent struggle in the region.[1] This past year the movement cut ties with al-Qaeda and swept aside large contingents of Syrian and Iraqi security forces before declaring the creation of an Islamic caliphate stretching from Northern Syria deep into Iraq. During its push into Iraq, IS captured sophisticated military hardware, accumulated substantial financial resources, and increased local and international support as IS gained credibility through military victories and greater territorial control. The Islamic State attained further notoriety when it released a gruesome video showing the beheading of American journalist James Foley. Four subsequent beheadings shocked and outraged audiences across the globe when IS murdered Steven Sotloff,

David Haines, Alan Henning, and Abdul-Rahman (Peter) Kassig. All five victims were held in prolonged captivity and each death was accompanied by a grisly, widely disseminated video. In each of the videos a hooded figure, and often the victim, cite foreign aggression as the motivation for these actions. IS has both warned the West about intervention and demanded the cessation of foreign bombing campaigns while attempting to goad the US into putting boots on the ground.

In the wake of these murders a great deal of attention has focused on the Islamic State's tactics and a cursory look at recent media reveals any number of explanations ranging from geo-strategic aspirations to violent cultural mores. Although local acts of violence receive less international media attention than those against foreign journalists and aid workers, IS uses extreme acts of torture and execution with greater frequency against Syrian and Iraqi state security forces, rival insurgent organizations and rebel groups, as well as the civilian population.

IS expansion has generated mass displacement and a humanitarian crisis in Syria and Iraq. Amnesty International reports that IS has killed or adducted hundreds, possibly thousands, in non-Arab and non-Sunni Muslim communities. More than 800,000 civilians have fled areas under IS control since June 2014, and the group is accused of ethnic cleansing "on a historic scale" as they systematically eliminate ethnic and religious minorities (Amnesty International 2014). In light of widespread media attention focused on the Islamic State's use of beheadings, what factors explain the movement's choice of such brutal tactics? What does research in terrorism studies and the social sciences say about this form of violence? We provide some brief context and explain how extreme counter-normative violence serves the Islamic State's ends.

A Long History of Losing Our Heads

The gruesome nature of beheadings, along with the savvy adoption of modern communication technologies, brought widespread attention to IS barbarity and provided the militant organization with a platform to share its political objectives with a global audience (Farwell 2014/2015). However, beheadings are nothing new. It is a widespread, enduring cultural practice that spans time and place (Janes 2005, 10). Samurai warriors severed their enemies' heads as proof of military success in 14th century Japan. Six centuries later, during WWII, two Japanese officers competed to kill or behead enemy combatants with swords (Yamamoto 2000). A famous LIFE photo from February 1943 shows a Japanese soldier's head mounted on an American tank at Guadalcanal. During the Vietnam War some American soldiers took enemy heads and other body parts as souvenirs (Greiner 2009, 171). Aztecs decapitated vanquished foes to honor their deities and to ensure agricultural fertility (Baquedano and Graulich 1993). Numerous cultures practiced headhunting in Southeast Asia (De Raedt and Hoskins 1996). From the Greeks, to the Romans, to revolutionary France, people remove heads for a variety of reasons.

Although IS currently stands out for embracing beheading as a defining element of their brand, the practice is also widespread in Mexico's drug war. While cartels battle for billions of dollars in illicit drug money, the frequency of torture, mutilation, and beheadings has increased. Authorities have linked drug trafficking organizations to gruesome acts on both sides of the border. In 2008 there were at least 186 beheadings in Mexico connected to drug violence. Cartels use beheading as a means to terrorize and to control. For example, early in the conflict, the cartels frequently targeted police, which led to mass resignations in some Mexican municipalities (Bunker, Campbell, and Bunker 2010).

Discoveries of a dozen or more headless victims at one time are not unusual in Mexico. In May 2014 officials discovered at least 49 headless bodies discarded on the side of a highway outside Monterrey. The Zetas, the

Sinaloa Cartel, the Knights Templar, and others have used a variety of decapitation tools and in some cases they release footage online. The number of incidents, poor attribution in many cases, and the range of victims point to a campaign aimed at terrorizing local populations and intimidating rivals and state security forces. Competition between cartels has seemingly created an outbidding dynamic of escalating brutality.

Hostage-taking and decapitation were also employed during the early years of the Iraq War where over 200 foreign nationals were abducted between 2003 and 2005. More than 35 of these incidents ended in the execution of the hostage (Shay 2007, 128). However, the majority of abductions in Iraq entailed criminal gangs kidnapping and ransoming other Iraqis. Best known to Westerners are the exploits of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the senior al-Qaeda leader in Iraq until his death in 2006. Zarqawi gained international notoriety for his brutal executions and the international al-Qaeda leadership sought to distance themselves from his actions. Victims of al-Qaeda in Iraq include free-lance radio repairman Nicholas Berg in May 2004 and construction contractors Jack Hensley and Eugene Armstrong. Zarqawi beheaded Berg and Armstrong personally. Militants used the tactic less frequently during the subsequent decade, but beheadings have captured public attention once again as the Islamic State uses the tactic in a broader campaign of violence.

Recent videos portray gruesome, torturous actions meant to terrorize and intimidate particular audiences. The Islamic State employs counter-normative violence against symbolic victims to gain compliance from adversaries. Its attacks generate fear and send signals to international and local audiences. Beheadings are one part of IS' tactical repertoire as it strives to establish proto-governance within its fledgling state. Understanding the Islamic State's desire to communicate through extreme violence, particularly against non-combatants, is key to understanding IS strategy.

Explaining Civilian Beheadings by the Islamic State

> *[T]errorism can best be understood as a violent communication strategy. There is a sender, the terrorist, a message generator, the victim, and a receiver, the enemy and/or the public. The nature of the terrorist act, its atrocity, its location and the identity of its victim serve as generators for the power of the message. Violence, to become terroristic, requires witnesses. 'Kill one, frighten ten thousand', a Chinese proverb says. If the killing of one is done primarily for the purpose of frightening thousands then we speak of terrorism.*
>
> *(Schmid and de Graaf 1982, 15)*

The Strategic Logic of Beheadings

One way to understand IS beheadings is through the lens of rational calculations. IS could anticipate that opponents will capitulate to its demands to avoid further victimization. In this view, militants believe in the efficacy of extreme forms of violence as part of a reasoned repertoire of deterrence, compellence, and coercion. This reasoning is consistent with the ostensible goal of halting airstrikes mentioned in several decapitation videos. However, while IS would likely be satisfied with that outcome, we believe that a more probable goal is to provoke Western powers and raise IS' profile abroad. In either case, if IS militants are not irrational fanatics, then their actions ought to have some strategic intent. Likewise we should not dismiss their media dissemination of beheading videos as propaganda. Rather it is evidence of the high salience IS places on its messaging value and recognition of Internet media's wide reach.

Beheadings and threats of violence also serve to coerce local populations. Beheadings and large-scale acts

of barbarity are instruments that IS uses to achieve compliance in pursuit of regional policy goals; striking fear in its enemies and weakening their resolve (Jones 2005). Under threat of violence, some communities have capitulated to IS. The brutal and public nature of these extremely violent acts communicates the consequences of resistance. For example, according to a report in the *Daily Mail*, two Yazidi teenage girls were beaten mercilessly and shown videos of their neighbors being beheaded. One victim recalled, "In some [videos] they put the heads into cooking pots. Sometimes they would stand on them. There were so many heads. And they would ask us, 'Do you know this one?' and laugh" (Thornhill 2014). The widespread fear and significant territorial gains illustrate the efficacy of this strategy (McCoy 2014).

General conditions of insecurity during armed conflict might also help explain beheadings; the situation compels behavior. Escalation and tactical choices depend on whether the organization feels threatened by rivals, the state, or international actors. (Gupta 2014). The more secure a group feels, the less likely it is to use extreme tactics. A powerful actor (i.e., the U.S.) targeting IS and supporting its opponents (e.g., Peshmerga fighters in Kurdistan or rival Sunni rebels in Syria) will push the weaker side to escalate violent practices. Competition with the al-Nusrah Front and other al-Qaeda groups in Syria, along with opposition from state security forces and international actors, has led the Islamic State to respond to what it perceives as an existential threat to its survival.

Symbolic Politics and Further Communicative Aspects of IS Violence

Strategic objectives and external threats do not fully explain why the Islamic State has embraced beheading. The timing of the beheadings suggests that IS used beheadings as a strategy against Western targets when it was gaining strength as well as after its opponents began to deal crippling blows to its advances in Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, it seems implausible that IS believed beheadings would compel a U.S. stand-down at the same time the group was seizing vast swaths of Iraq. Identity politics offer a persuasive complementary explanation.

Militant group identities include notions of how members see themselves in relation to other collective actors, as well as appropriate behaviors given those beliefs. Militant groups assign meaning to political developments during conflict and continually renegotiate their relationships with other groups. Research on the Iraq War found that Sunni militant organizations adopted different targeting policies and shifted strategies over time (Gabbay and Thirkill-Mackelprang 2011). The Ansar al-Sunnah group, for example, refused to work with Zarqawi despite nearly identical goals and prior cooperation with al-Qaeda.

The way that IS understands the conflict and defines itself in relation to other actors explains its brutal tactics. In the 16 minute propaganda video released after the beheading of Abdul-Rahman (Peter) Kassig alongside over a dozen Syrians, IS described its members as the "sons of Islam." The organization identifies anyone victimized by Western aggression or sectarian violence as a "brother." The Islamic State stands beside and defends the community against "the armies of the cross," "crusaders," and "apostate rulers." Militants within the movement formulate narratives to justify actions such as beheadings against these oppressors.

Similarly, beheadings serve as a recruiting tool that sends a clear message – there is no room for negotiation or reconciliation.[2] Staking out the most extreme position possible may alienate moderates, but the messages of beheading videos attracts a more devout and impressionable type of recruit. Growing evidence suggests that the Islamic State has found greater success in attracting younger recruits, rather than seasoned Islamist militants, with its provocative acts of violence (Joscelyn 2014). Some view the rise of IS and its defiance toward the West as a source of pride. Some potential recruits are attracted by IS tactics, but many

are inclined to disbelieve news media accounts that show IS mass killings and beheadings (Kirkpatrick 2014). Psychological processes lead many of those already sympathetic to IS nationhood goals to dismiss the evidence of atrocity as a Western campaign to vilify Islam. Either way, a strategy that includes extreme forms of violence moves the organization closer to its goals.

The beheading videos define victims and opponents of the Islamic State as culpable, as deserving criminals, whether through direct action or complicity. In many videos the victims are seen to "repent and recant." The confessional aspect is part of IS' attempt to control the narrative and legitimize the murders in the eyes of viewers. Surely only the guilty would feel compelled to confess their sins? The viewer is meant to see the incidents as executions, not murder, which implies an illegitimate, criminal act. Executions suggest a judicially-sanctioned punishment, albeit aimed at a collective perpetrator – the West, Shiite opposition, or apostate regimes (Jones 2005). The Islamic State also uses violence as an internal sanction, to communicate appropriate behaviors, and to punish and control members. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights notes that IS recently executed four militants; two for spying and the other two for theft. However, beheadings are mostly reserved to send a strong message to rival combatants and security forces.

One crucial aspect of beheadings by IS militants is the visceral symbolism captured in decapitation videos with the ritualistic placement of the head back onto the body. Politically, beheading has run the gamut from special punishment for traitors or "enemies of the state," to a standardized method of carrying out the death penalty, as in revolutionary France. Unlike IS, however, France promoted the guillotine as a means of equalizing and standardizing punishment and reducing victims' suffering vis-à-vis other methods available at the time. Such bureaucratized judicial beheadings stand in contrast to IS' crude implementation which aims to cultivate fear and anger, on the one hand, while galvanizing potential recruits on the other. While the guillotine symbolized modernity and equality, IS' beheadings focus attention on the gore and difficulty of manual decapitation.

The Weakness of Cultural Explanations for Beheadings

Popular commentary and debate about whether Islam condones the brutal practices employed by IS militants seems to imply a cultural explanation might account for IS beheadings.[3] But, stated simply, there is no singular Islamic culture. Islam may be a unifying force that ties together a variety of cultures in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, but the diversity of practices and interpretations within the faith make cultural generalizations concerning Islam meaningless. Although one can find justifications for amputating limbs and decapitation as a form of punishment within Islam, this behavior is not the norm. Public debate within al-Qaeda during the first wave of beheadings in Iraq between 2003 and 2005 offers evidence that beheading is a contested strategy even among Muslim militants (Dreazen 2004). Furthermore, in November 2004, the Trustee Council of the International Federation of the Muslim Ulama (a group of religious scholars) met in Beirut. They issued a statement defining appropriate behaviors in war. The proclamation emphasized the need to protect civilians and to not harm individuals not involved in the hostilities, even those acting on behalf of "aggressive" countries (Shay 2007, 136).

In response to more recent brutality and beheadings, over 120 Muslim scholars issued an open letter that denounces the actions of the Islamic State and identifies a clear disconnect between IS tactics and Islamic teachings (Markoe 2014). The Islamic State uses religious texts selectively to advance a broader political project. Militants have reimagined a preexisting political and sectarian conflict as a struggle with greater religious undertones. A cultural argument that suggests these acts of barbaric violence are simply tied to

Islam is too simplistic. Assessments of causation demand that a satisfactory explanation be able to account for cross-case variation as well as within the same case across time, which a cultural argument alone cannot. We observe beheadings across cultures and we see shifting strategies even under relatively stable cultural conditions. Likewise, embracing beheading appears to be a component of an organizational move to establish the IS brand and win support from other jihadist groups.

Organizational Perspectives

Beheadings distinguish the Islamic State's brand of violence from that of its al-Qaeda rivals in Syria, the al-Nusrah Front. Other al-Qaeda affiliates share similar goals, especially the desire to overthrow the Assad regime and establish a caliphate. The al-Nusrah Front ostensibly seeks to avoid the appearance of extremism. Although they have carried out numerous suicide attacks, executions, and kidnappings, they have not earned the same reputation for extreme brutality that came with IS beheadings. Despite attempts in 2013 to merge some factions operating in the region, cooperation proved difficult and in late 2013 IS (then ISIS) moved against other resistance groups in Syria (Joscelyn 2013). A rash of sectarian killings in 2013 and 2014 deepened the factional divide, pushing some groups toward IS and others toward the al-Nusrah Front.

Beheadings signal to other factions that the Islamic State claims to be the legitimate heir to the broader regional movement. The reemergence of beheadings occurred at the very moment of increased tension between various factions of Sunni Islamists sympathetic to al-Qaeda and were likely a deliberate attempt to identify IS as the successor to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's al-Qaeda in Iraq. The IS propaganda wing provided evidence for this association with Zarqawi in the Peter Kassig and Syrian soldier beheading video. Zarqawi, whose beheadings inflamed sectarian violence, is an integral part of the broader narrative describing the genesis of the Islamic State. The videos create an instrumental link to Zarqawi and refine the group's political boundaries. By adopting Zarqawi's tactics, IS demonstrates a commitment to the same political and social vision that appeals to sympathetic fighters.

Militant organizations pursue strategies to capture finite resources. A potential fighter cannot travel to Syria and join multiple groups. The more specialized a niche, the better an organization can reduce competition. Beheading is also understood as a tactic intended to provoke repression by Western powers. In turn, airstrikes reinforce the IS narrative portraying them as rulers of a caliphate persecuted by Western "crusaders." With its large Internet presence, IS has stronger control of the Syria-Iraq narrative than its rivals. This ties in with the idea that beheadings are a way for the Islamic State to stake out its identity as: 1) distinct from al-Qaeda, and 2) historically continuous to a struggle previously led by Zarqawi. More troubling, IS beheadings and discourse signify a shift in the global jihad narrative where al-Qaeda is seen as moderate or ineffective.

The actions of Jund al Khilafa (Soldiers of the Caliphate) in Algeria also suggest that beheading is perceived as a strong brand-building activity that other groups might use to cement their position on the side of the Islamic State. The obscure Algerian group beheaded Frenchman Herve Gourdel after IS called for worldwide attacks against Westerners (Callimachi 2014). Thus far it looks like the IS media strategy is working, with several prominent groups declaring support for the caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In October 2014 a number of senior Pakistani Taliban officials declared allegiance to al-Baghdadi and IS, distancing themselves from the more proximate Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) ("Six Pakistan Taliban Leaders" 2014). Their action is indicative of the local rifts within the TTP itself as well as the wider ideological battle between transnational terrorist groups. In November 2014 Egypt's Ansar Bait al-Maqdis group also officially declared allegiance to the IS

caliphate (Al-Anani 2014; "Egyptian Jihadis" 2014). The long-term loyalty of these recent converts remains to be seen.

The Future of Islamic State Violence

To understand the Islamic State's motivations and goals we must understand its repertoire of violence. In September 2014 President Obama addressed the United Nations General Assembly lamenting, "The brutality of terrorists in Syria and Iraq forces us to look into the heart of darkness." Indeed, the tactics employed by the Islamic State constitute some of the most horrific actions perpetrated by a militant organization in modern history. Now that IS has firmly established a reputation for extreme violence it will be difficult for the group, in its current form, to back down from those actions. Beheadings will likely persist as criminal punishment in IS-held territory. Kidnappings have proven to be a lucrative revenue stream and beheading victims primarily come from countries that are known not to pay. Western civilians are targets of opportunity, but beheadings against rival forces will continue.

The US-led coalitions in Syria and Iraq cannot ignore IS, but unfortunately airstrikes and support for opposition groups contribute to the victimization and oppression narrative. Despite widespread media coverage and public awareness of the Islamic State's brutal actions, we still know few details about how IS formulates and implements its strategic outlook. The Islamic State is certainly operating under a decision-making framework with long time horizons as they seek to consolidate territory. But beliefs within the group might play some role in explaining questionable tactical decisions. Recent interest in an ancient Islamic prophecy about a great battle between Muslims and infidels preceding the Day of Judgment could explain ferocious fighting to capture the village of Dabiq, a site of minimal strategic importance (McCant 2014). Dabiq is also the name of the Islamic State's English-language magazine it began publishing in July 2014. Analysts might examine patterns of IS counter-normative violence and targeting practices to better understand its behavior and decision-making.

In some ways IS has started to behave like a conventional state. First, IS adhered to the rules of war, albeit instrumentally, when it participated in a prisoner exchange, swapping 46 Turkish hostages for as many as 180 IS militants ("UK jihadist prisoner swap" 2014). Second, the Islamic State has moved toward systematization of bureaucratic rule in its capital city of Raqqa and surrounding areas. IS has restructured the regional bureaucracy to increase administrative capacity in terms of local governance, education, Islamic guidance, and the provision of utilities such as water, electricity, and telephone service. The group recently announced that it will mint its own currency (Al-Bahri 2014). Although we are far from optimistic about IS rule, these moves toward formalizing institutions might limit brutal acts perpetrated by IS militants if they are accompanied by mechanisms for internal accountability or create internal rifts between ethno-religious nationalists and global-jihadist factions. Consolidating statehood and minting currency are at odds with the mission of violent global jihad and we take these disparate moves as indicative of possible fault lines within the organization. Neither should we assume uniform support inside the organization for extreme acts of violence; reports of disaffected young recruits slipping away to return home are already emerging.

Strategic bombing campaigns and other pressure from foreign actors, along with increased support to oppositional forces, have dealt significant blows to IS. The United States continues to arm and train moderate rebels in Syria, but a two-front war where the Free Syrian Army simultaneously battles Assad's forces and Islamist groups has proven challenging. Policymakers have started to look for alternative strategies that include targeting the Islamic State's financial resources and discussions have begun about introducing ground

forces in the campaign (Francis 2014). In Iraq, a central component of the Obama administration strategy has been to mobilize Sunni tribal militias, key actors to the successful "Awakening" campaign against al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2007 and 2008. But planners are finding that IS may have preemptively assassinated hundreds of key actors since 2009, raising significant obstacles to this strategy (Ignatius 2014). Shiite militias will also play a significant role in combatting IS.

There is some question about whether IS has withheld video footage of stonings in its territory, fearing a backlash from the Muslim community (Al-'Ubaydi et al. 2014). It would be wrong to take this as a sign that the Islamic State is turning away from its extreme violence. So far, beheadings have brought the attention IS wants: Western airstrikes, media coverage, and recruits. They are unlikely to stop, not only because they work, but because they fulfill a range of organizational goals. Islamic State militants will continue to "smite the neck" of unbelievers, albeit selectively, to foment terror, to attract new allies, and to expand the reach of the new caliphate.

About the authors

Steven T. Zech *is a Post-Doctorate Research Fellow at the Sié Chéou-Kang Center for International Security and Diplomacy at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver. He is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Washington, Seattle where he teaches courses on political violence and terrorism.szech@uw.edu*

Zane M. Kelly *is a Post-Doctoral researcher at the Applied Physics Lab, University of Washington. He was a Fellow at the Miller Center of Public Affairs (2009-10), worked as a Defense Department political analyst, and previously taught courses on foreign policy, development, and strategic interaction zane@uw.edu*

References

Al-Anani, Kalil. "ISIS Enters Egypt: How Washington Must Respond." *Foreign Affairs* (December 4, 2014), http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142423/khalil-al-anani/isis-enters-egypt.

Al-Bahri, Ahmad. "ISIS Restructures Raqqa Under its New Ruling System." *Syria Deeply* (November 17, 2014). http://www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2014/11/6388/isis-restructures-raqqa-ruling-system/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_term=*Democracy%20Lab&utm_campaign=DemLab%20Weekly%20Brief%2011%2F17

Al-'Ubaydi, Muhammad, Nelly Lahoud, Daniel Milton, and Bryan Price. 2014. *The Group that Calls Itself a State.* The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CTC-The-Group-That-Calls-Itself-A-State-December20141.pdf

Amnesty International. 2014. "Ethnic Cleansing on a Historic Scale: The Islamic State's systematic targeting of Minorities in Northern Iraq." https://www.es.amnesty.org/uploads/media/Iraq_ethnic_cleansing_final_formatted.pdf

Baquedano, Elizabeth and Michel Graulich. 1993. "Decapitation among the Aztecs: Mythology, Agriculture and Politics, and Hunting." *Estudios De Cultura Nahuatl* 23, 163-178.

Bunker, Pamela L., Lisa J. Campbell, and Robert J. Bunker. 2010. "Torture, beheadings, and

narcocultos," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21/1, 145-178.

Callimachi, Rukmini. "French Hostage in Algeria Is Beheaded in Video Released by Militants." *The New York Times* (September 24, 2014). http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/25/world/africa/herve-gourdel-french-hostage-beheaded-algeria.html.

De Raedt, Jules and Janet Hoskins. 1996. *Headhunting and the social imagination in Southeast Asia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Dreazen, Yochi J. "Beheadings Become Tactic of Choice." *The Wall Street Journal* (September 3, 2004).

"Egyptian Jihadis Pledge Allegiance to ISIS." *The Guardian* (November 10, 2014). http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/10/egyptian-jihadists-pledge-allegiance-isis

Farwell, James P. 2014/2015. "The Media Strategy of ISIS." *Survival* 56/6 (December/January), 49–55.

Francis, David. "FP's Situation Report: Obama wants a new strategy to fight the Islamic State." *Foreign Policy* (November 13, 2014). http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/11/13/obama_wants_a_new_strategy_to_fight_the_islamic_state_russia_and_ukraine_move_cl.

Gabbay, Michael and Ashley Thirkill-Mackelprang. 2011. "A Quantitative Analysis of Insurgent Frames, Claims, and Networks in Iraq." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Seattle.

Greiner, Bernd. 2009. *War without fronts: the USA in Vietnam*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Gupta, Devashree. 2014. "The Limits of Radicalization: Escalation and Restraint in the South African Liberation Movement." In *Dynamics of Political Violence: A Process-Oriented Perspective on Radicalization and the Escalation of Political Conflict*, eds. Lorenzo Bosi, Chares Demetriou and Stefan Malthaner. Surrey: Ashgate, 137-164.

Hasan, Mehdi. 2015. "How Islamic is Islamic State?" *New Statesman* (10 March 2015). http://www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/2015/03/mehdi-hasan-how-islamic-islamic-state

Holland, Tom. "We must not deny the religious roots of Islamic State." *New Statesman* (March 17, 2015). http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/03/tom-holland-we-must-not-deny-relgious-roots-islamic-state

Ignatius, David. "The Islamic State's Terrifying Strategy." *Real Clear Politics* (November 21, 2014). http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2014/11/21/the_islamic_states_terrifying_strategy_124720.html. "The Islamic State." *Vice News* documentary (2014). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUjHb4C7b94.

Janes, Regina. 2005. *Losing Our Heads: Beheadings in Literature and Culture.* New York: NYU Press.

Jones, Ronald H. 2005. *Terrorist beheadings cultural and strategic implications*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College.

Joscelyn, Thomas. "Al Nusrah Front leader renews allegiance to al Qaeda, rejects new name." *The Long War Journal* (April 10, 2013). http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/04/al_nusrah_front_lead.php

Joscelyn, Thomas. "Analysis: Islamic State snuff videos help to attract more followers." *The Long War Journal* (November 17, 2014). http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/11/analysis_islamic_sta_1.php?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+LongWarJournalSiteWide+%28The+Long+War+Journal+%28Site-Wide%29%29

Kirkpatrick, David D. "New Freedoms in Tunisia Drive Support for ISIS." *The New York Times* (October 21, 2014). http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/22/world/africa/new-freedoms-in-tunisia-drive-support-for-isis.

html.

Markoe, Lauren. "Muslim Scholars Release Open Letter To Islamic State Meticulously Blasting Its Ideology." *The Huffington Post* (September 24, 2014). http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/24/muslim-scholars-islamic-state_n_5878038.html

McCant, William. "ISIS Is Making Strategic Decisions In Syria Based On Ancient Islamic Prophecy Of The End Time." *Business Insider* (October 3, 2014). http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-is-making-strategic-decisions-in-syria-based-on-ancient-islamic-prophecy-of-the-end-time-2014-10

McCoy, Terrence. "ISIS, beheadings and the success of horrifying violence," *The*

Washington Post (June 13, 2014). http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/13/isis-beheadings-and-the-success-of-horrifying-violence/

Obama, Barack. "Full text of President Obama's 2014 address to the United Nations General Assembly." *The Washington Post* (September 24, 2014). http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/full-text-of-president-obamas-2014-address-to-the-united-nations-general-assembly/2014/09/24/88889e46-43f4-11e4-b437-1a7368204804_story.html

Schmid, Alex Peter and Janny de Graaf. 1982. *Violence as Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media*. London: Sage Publications.

Shay, Shaul. 2007. *Islamic terror abductions in the Middle East.* Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.

"Six Pakistan Taliban Leaders Swear Allegiance to ISIS: Spokesman." *NBC News*(October 14, 2014). http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/six-pakistan-taliban-leaders-swear-allegiance-isis-spokesman-n225386

Thornhill, Ted. "Raped, tortured, forced to watch beheadings, then beaten when they tried to kill themselves: Yazidi girls reveal the hell they endured during ISIS captivity." *The Daily Mail.* (October 1, 2014). http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2776268/Raped-tortured-forced-watch-beheadings-beaten-tried-kill-Yazidi-girls-reveal-hell-endured-witnessed-ISIS-captivity.html

"UK jihadist prisoner swap reports 'credible'." *BBC News* (October 6, 2014). http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-29504924.

Wood, Graeme. 2015. "What ISIS Really Wants." *The Atlantic* (March). http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/

Yamamoto, Masahiro. 2000. *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

York, Bryan. "After ISIS execution, angry King Abdullah quotes Clint Eastwood to U.S. lawmakers." *Washington Examiner* (February 4, 2014). http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/after-isis-execution-angry-king-abdullah-quotes-clint-eastwood-to-u.s.-lawmakers/article/2559770

Notes

[1] The Islamic State (IS) evolved out of other Sunni insurgent organizations active after the U.S. invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. The current movement emerged out of previous groups such as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which later joined up with others and consolidated into the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). In 2013 the group changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and became increasingly involved in the Syrian civil war.

[2] Of course, IS has simultaneously staked out a very lucrative, and much quieter, sideline in ransoming hostages from states that are willing to pay.

[3] For more recent debates related to the cultural arguments see Hasan (2015), Holland (2015), and Wood (2015)

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence
Journal of Terrorism Research

Book Review

Sandra Walklate and Gabe Mythen, *Contradictions of Terrorism: Security, Risk and Resilience*. London and New York: Routledge 2014.

194 pp., US $ 44.95 [Paperback]; ISBN 978-0-415-62653-8.

reviewed by Nick J. Sciullo

Sandra Walklate and Gabe Mythen have written a strong contribution to critical terrorism studies as part of Routledge's New Directions in Critical Criminology series. The series, which has tackled drug policy, globalization, and rural criminology, among other topics, is characterized by short, academically rich texts from leading authors in their respective fields. Walklate and Mythen do not disappoint as both are veterans of critical terrorism studies and superb writers.

This book is recommended for graduate students, faculty in need of a short compendium on recent literature and potential new directions in the field, and practitioners who look to combine theory and practice in their work. While not without fault, some structural and some argumentative, this book deserves a place in research libraries and bookshelves for its strong prose, succinct martialing of evidence, and interdisciplinary approach.

Before addressing the missteps in this book, it is important to get a sense of its structure. For those interested in longer books and more complete arguments, readers should look to Mythen's *Understanding the Risk Society: Crime, Security and Justice,* which will expose readers to more nuances and a deeper theoretical understanding of Mythen's risk society. The book under review contains an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion, with a helpful index. As the chapter titles indicate, the authors are guided by not simply critical terrorism studies, but also critical and sociological theory. Readers familiar with the work of Slavoj Žižek, Mitchell Dean, Pierre Bourdieu, Noam Chomsky, and Alain Badiou are likely to find this work a fast-paced introduction to the ways critical theory can be applied to the study of terrorism. Those researchers of a more traditional bent will be rewarded as well as Walklate and Mythen aptly cover the work of Richard Jackson, Zygmunt Bauman, and Samuel Huntington, all more familiar names for international relations scholars.

One way to judge a book is to by its adherence to the promise of its introduction. Walklate and Mythen write, "In the conclusion to the book, we endeavour to consciously muddy these particular conceptual waters and create some space for differently nuanced understandings to emerge within criminology. If we fail to create and protect an alternative discursive space, our quest to understand terrorism will remain as elusive as ever" (p. 13). Noble goals, to be sure, but they are only partially fulfilled. This book does open up space to engage terrorism by continuing the critical terrorism studies discussion, but it does not create new space. This is a difficult idea with which to grapple because in an otherwise find book, there is not much new work done, which is why it represents a great text for graduate students, but only a great review of work for established scholars.

One problem with this text though is that it reproduces much existing work. In fact, the authors cite so frequently to their own work in other forums, that the reader begins to wonder if an edited collection of

those works might be a more worthwhile project with a thoughtful introductory essay. That is not to say that the combinations of critical theorists, political scientists, and international relations scholars are not interesting or informative, but that this is well-walked territory, often by the authors themselves. So readers may better understand terrorism, but not understand terrorism in new ways. For these reasons the authors are only partially successful on their terms they lay out for evaluating their project.

Argumentatively, the authors conclude that "the issues debated in this book are of crucial concern for a discipline that aspires to be politically relevant and socially present" (p. 186). True enough, but the authors have not made a case that critical criminology and certainly traditional criminology are not politically relevant and socially present. It seems quite the opposite—both are politically relevant and socially present in issues of mass incarceration, sentencing, prison abolition, drug policies, and legal reforms.

Lastly, the authors seem to have left some bodies of literature out of this short volume. Perhaps that is a function of the book's length, but even so there are some glaring omissions. Surprisingly, Jacques Derrida, Alberto Toscano, and Carol Winkler's are all left out despite their relevance for the task at hand.

Overall, this book is a good read and brings together much literature perhaps unfamiliar for criminologists. While seasoned critical terrorism scholars may wish there was more here; the book is rewarding in many respects and in such a small volume the authors should be commended for accomplishing what they did.

About the reviewer: **Nick J. Sciullo** *is Assistant Professor of Communication and Rhetorical Studies and Director of Debate and Forensics at Illinois College (beginning July 2015). He expects to receive his Ph.D. in communication from Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia, USA this summer. He has written on critical terrorism studies and law in the Willamette Law Review, Drexel Law Review, and British Journal of American Legal Studies.*

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence
Journal of Terrorism Research

About JTR

In 2010 the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence launched the online Journal of Terrorism Research. The aim of this Journal is to provide a space for academics and counter- terrorism professionals to publish work focused on the study of terrorism. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the study of terrorism, high-quality submissions from all academic and professional backgrounds are encouraged. Students are also warmly encouraged to submit work for publication.

Authors who wish to have an article considered for publication should consult the submission guidelines or email gm39@st-andrews.ac.uk for further information.