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Revisiting the Contagion Hypothesis: Terrorism, News Coverage, and Copycat Attacks

by **Brigitte L Nacos**

Abstract

Contagion refers here to a form of copycat crime, whereby violence-prone individuals and groups imitate forms of (political) violence attractive to them, based on examples usually popularized by mass media. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, for instance, Palestinian terrorists staged a number of spectacular hijackings of commercial airliners, exploited the often prolonged hostage situations to win massive news coverage for their political grievances, and appeared to inspire other groups to follow their example. Although terrorism scholars, government officials, and journalists have pondered the question of mass-mediated contagion for decades, they have arrived at different conclusions. Because of significant advances in communication and information technology, and changes in the global media landscape during the last decade or so, this article reconsiders arguments surrounding contagion theories and contends that various types of media are indeed important carriers of the virus of hate and political violence.

Introduction

On April 19th, 1995, Timothy McVeigh ignited a homemade truck bomb that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City, killing 168 persons, injuring close to 700 more, and triggering massive news coverage at home and abroad. Five days later, the director of the California Forest Association, Gilbert Murray, was killed instantly when he opened a small package that had been mailed to his office. The enclosed message revealed that the sender was the mysterious person dubbed “Unabomber” by the FBI; he had killed already two other people and injured 23 via mail bombs since 1978. That same day, *The New York Times* received a letter from the Unabomber threatening another deadly parcel bomb mailing unless the newspaper published a 35,000 words manifesto he had written to explain his motives. It is difficult to imagine that there was no link between the non-stop coverage of the terrorist spectacular in Oklahoma City and the timing of the simultaneous mailings to Murray’s office and the *Times*. My guess was then and is now that the Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, was miffed because of the relatively modest news coverage his mail bombs had received over the years compared to the tremendous attention the mass media paid to the Oklahoma City bombing. More importantly, whereas McVeigh’s grievances and motives were prominently covered since he had

intentionally posited clues in his car (i.e., Waco, Ruby Ridge), there had been no definitive news about the Unabomber's motives in the wake of his long mail bombing trail.

Thus, Kaczynski wasted no time to finally get his share of media attention and recognition of his cause by sending off another mail bomb and a threatening letter to the country's leading newspaper. By September 1995, when *The Washington Post* also published his full-length manifesto "Industrial Society and Its Future" - sharing the printing costs with *The New York Times* - the Unabomber had already overtaken McVeigh as terrorist newsmaker-in-chief, seeing finally his grievances widely publicized and discussed in the mass media. It can be plausibly argued that the deadly mail bomb, the letter to the *Times*, a follow-up threat to bomb the Los Angeles airport contained in a letter to the *San Francisco Chronicle* and a host of demands and threats communicated to several newspapers and magazines were indeed inspired by the high volume and nature of news coverage about the Oklahoma City bombing in order to get comparable coverage. However, it is, in this case, impossible to prove media-related contagion unless the imprisoned perpetrator, Kaczynski, himself were to confirm such a contagion effect. While this case speaks to the difficulty of finding conclusive evidence for *direct* media-induced contagion with respect to terrorist acts, it encourages the exploration of media coverage of terrorist incidents, methods, and, most importantly, ideologies as a vector of terrorist infection. In the following, I revisit the media contagion hypothesis as it relates to terrorism and, to a lesser extent, for comparative purposes, to violence-as-crime.

Contagion Theories

Contagion theories have been forwarded and rejected with respect to terrorism for several decades—often in the context of media effects. While some scholars deny such a cause-effect relationship,[1] the notion of mass-mediated contagion seems commonsensical and is indeed supported by anecdotal accounts as well as more systematic research.[2]

However, more than twenty years ago Robert G. Picard attacked the news-as-contagion theory as "backed by dubious science" and argued, "[t]he literature implicating the media as responsible for the contagion of terrorist violence has grown rapidly, but, under scrutiny, it appears to contain no credible supporting evidence and fails to establish a cause-effect relationship." [3] He cited the minimal press effect findings of social scientists in the 1940s and 1950s in support of his rejection of the media contagion theory.[4] What he failed to mention was that ample and far from "dubious" research conducted since the 1960s which found far stronger media effects on audiences (most notably with respect to agenda setting, framing, and priming) than the minimal effect school.

Writing with Northern Ireland and domestic UK terrorism in mind, Schlesinger, Murdock, and Elliott, too, rejected the idea that the media are spreading the virus of political violence, claiming that it ignored the intelligence and good judgment of news consumers and especially television audiences.[5]

However, based on their quantitative analysis of media reporting (or non-reporting) of terrorist incidents and subsequent terrorist strikes of the same type (i.e., hijackings, kidnappings), Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn concluded that their data “yielded considerable evidence of a contagion effect wrought by coverage.” More specifically, these scholars found that “television coverage was associated with a shortened lag time to emulation in the case of kidnapping, attacks on installations, hijackings, bombings, and assassinations.”[6]

Alex P. Schmid and Janny de Graaf concluded in their study *Violence as Communication* that “[t]he media can provide the potential terrorist with all the ingredients that are necessary to engage in this type of violence. They can reduce inhibitions against the use of violence, they can offer models and know-how to potential terrorists and they can motivate them in various ways.”[7] Similarly, Brian Jenkins wrote, “Initial research tentatively suggests that heavy media coverage of hijackings, kidnappings and other hostile seizures carried out by terrorists increases the likelihood that similar incidents will occur in the period immediately following. A RAND analysis of embassy seizures during the 1970s showed them occurring in clusters, clearly suggesting a contagion effect.”[8]

Assumptions or inferences about contagion in the area of violent crimes are often based on observations and statistical data in the context of particularly horrific incidents. For example, Berkowitz and Macaulay studied crime statistics in the aftermath of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and subsequent to two mass killings in 1966, when Richard Speck killed eight nurses in Chicago and Charles Whitman shot 45 persons from a tower at the University of Texas. The researchers found that “[s]tatistical and graphic data from 40 U.S. cities indicate” that those incidents “were followed by unusual increases in the number of violent crimes.”[9] While the scholars characterized these cases as “widely published crimes” and implied a relationship between heavy news coverage of the three incidents and subsequent jumps in the number of violent crimes, they did not argue that most such crimes are instigated by media reports.”[10]

More recently, Loren Coleman explored the links between the Columbine school shooting in 1999 (when high school students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed 12 and injured 23 fellow students) and some 400 similar incidents in the following years, including the Virginia Tech campus shooting in 2007, when student Seung-Hui Cho killed 32 people and wounded many others. In many of these cases the killers revealed the copy-cat nature of their violence by referring directly or indirectly to the Columbine massacre. In Coleman’s words, “The copycat effect is what happens when the media makes an event into a ‘hot death story’ and then via behaviour contagion, more deaths, suicides, murders, and more occur in a regularly predictive cycle....”[11]

But just as the media-terrorism connection is embraced or contested by communication-, media-, and terrorism- scholars, there is also disagreement about the impact of media reporting on violent crimes. In a comprehensive, recent review of the relevant literature, one expert in the field cautioned:

“Despite the vast volume of published literature that has concluded that the causal link between media violence and antisocial behaviour is established, there have been more cautious and even dissenting voices that have challenged the strong effects position. Some writers have accepted that media violence can influence viewers, but not all the time and not always to the same degree in respect of different members of the audience.”[12]

As for mass-mediated diffusion of terrorism, the strongest arguments against connections between media content and terrorist incidents are made by those who fear that the notion of the media as agent of terrorist contagion will strengthen the hands of governments in efforts to curb or alter terrorism-related content and thereby interfere with freedom of the press and freedom of expression. I share those concerns and oppose censorship categorically. Yet these concerns must not prevent us from considering possible connections between media content and terrorism contagion and search for mitigating factors without media restrictions from government or other outside bodies.

Observations and Testimony

What is perhaps the most-cited example for media-related contagion of violence or the threat thereof is the case of D.B. Cooper. In November 1971 he hijacked a commercial airliner on the flight from Portland to Seattle under the threat of detonating a bomb in his briefcase. After receiving a \$200,000 ransom and two parachutes at the Seattle-Tacoma Airport and ordering the crew to fly at the lowest possible altitude to Las Vegas, he jumped out of the plane - never to be seen again. In the wake of heavy media coverage and the release of songs and a motion picture devoted to his daredevil heist, Cooper became a cult hero. More importantly, he inspired a series of more than two dozen copycat hijackings by other criminals during which the hijackers also asked for ransom money and parachutes along the lines of Cooper’s deed.[13]

As for political terrorism, some of the best evidence of contagious media content comes from the testimony of captured terrorists or ex-terrorists themselves. According to two scholars, “Horst Mahler, one of the founders of the German Red Army Faction [RAF], recalled years later how television newscasts had triggered the ‘shock...[which led to] self-liberation...[and] the basis for RAF ideology. Several biographical studies of terrorists show that many were motivated by a desire to emulate the publicity achievements of precursors.”[14] Another example is that of South Moluccan nationalists who hijacked trains in the Netherlands on two occasions in the 1970s to dramatize the Indonesian occupation of their fathers’ homeland, the South Moluccas.

They reportedly admitted after their arrest that their deeds were inspired by a similar attack plotted by Arab terrorists en route to Austria.”[15]

Copycatting Terrorist Methods/Tactics of Attack

In the case of the South Moluccan train hijackers, media reports affected simply what method of attack the group would select as most likely to succeed from what one would assume were several options the extremists considered. This appears to be a quite common media-related contagion effect that explains why particular *modes* of terrorist attacks tend to come in clusters or waves. Thus, beginning with the hijacking of commercial airliners by Palestinian terrorists in the late 1960s (who, in turn, were probably inspired by a wave of hijackings from and to Cuba), other Palestinian and non-Palestinian groups followed suit so that there was a cluster of hijackings with passengers held hostage. This method remained attractive into the 1970s and beyond. Yet as airlines and governments improved their security systems, the takeover of planes became more risky. While terrorists continued to hijack planes and in the case of the “Achille Lauro” even a cruise ship, it was no longer the preferred method of attack. Instead, terrorist groups embraced other means of attacking different targets and victims, e.g., embassy takeovers.

Based on incident data collected by the RAND Corporation, Brian Jenkins found that 43 successful embassy takeovers and five unsuccessful attempts occurred between 1971 and 1980 in 27 countries, targeting the embassies of many countries—albeit most of all those of the United States and Egypt. “Like many other tactics of terrorism, hostage-taking [in embassies] appears to be contagious,” Jenkins concluded. “The incidents do not fall randomly throughout the decade, but occur in clusters.”[16] It is plausible to argue that one event inspired the next, especially if successful. Presumably, terrorists learned about these takeovers, most of them successful, from media reports since these incidents took place in a host of different countries on different continents. By late 1979, when the Iran Hostage Crisis began, the “students” who took over the U.S. embassy in Teheran and the Iranian leaders who backed them must have known (via news accounts) about the prominent news coverage such incidents received. After all, of the embassy takeovers during the 1970s, more than half occurred in the last two years of the decade.

Or take as a more recent example the cluster of gruesome beheadings of American, British, Japanese, and South Korean hostages by ruthless terrorists in Iraq and other countries in the region, starting in the spring of 2004 with the killing of Nicholas Berg, a Philadelphia businessman. Emotionally wrenching videotapes that depicted the hostages begging for their lives were posted on the Internet by the killers and were subsequently reported on by traditional news organizations’ in shocking detail. Consider, for example, the following description of an American civilian’s decapitation by his terrorist kidnappers as published in a leading U.S. newspaper:

As the insurgent speaks, the gray-bearded man identified as Mr.

Armstrong appears to be sobbing, a white blindfold wrapped around his eyes. He is wearing an orange jumpsuit. The masked man then pulls a knife, grabs his head and begins slicing through the neck. The killer places the head atop the body before the video cuts to a shot of him holding up the head and a third, more grainy shot showed the body from a different angle.[17]

It is likely that the global wave of shock and outrage ignited by Berg's beheading inspired the decapitation of other hostages as a novel method of spreading terror from the Middle East. Indeed, there were a number of cases in which terrorists beheaded their victims or threatened to do so outside the Middle East. In Haiti, for example, the bodies of three headless policemen were found; they were victims of local terrorists who called their action "Operation Baghdad"—a label that had no previous meaning in Haiti's civil strife, except for the cruel method of murder copied from in Iraq. In another case of imitation, the beheading of a Buddhist official in a village in Thailand was described as an act of revenge for violence against Muslim rioters. After the shooting of the critical Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh (his killer tried to cut his throat as well), self-proclaimed *jihadis* in the Netherlands threatened to decapitate other critics of Muslim extremists. All of these perpetrators had recognized the shock-value and media attractiveness of this particularly gruesome terrorist tactic first performed for public consumption in Iraq.

As one terrorism expert concluded in this context, "[t]here is no doubt that besides direct contacts between terrorist groups and/or individual terrorists, indirect observations of successful terrorist methods and strategies rely on *traditional news* reports and, more recently, *new media* outlets—especially Internet sites." [18] Examining the diffusion of suicide terrorism, Mia Bloom explained:

We can discern the direct (patron-client) and indirect (through observation) influences of suicide terror. In some instances, insurgent factions have been physically trained by other organizations and taught how to best use horrifying tactics to devastating effect, who subsequently import the tactic far and wide.... On other occasions, factions observe the successful operations of groups from afar—because of the publicity and media attention engendered by spectacular bombings, and then tailored the techniques to suit local circumstances.[19]

While suicide terrorism spread inside and outside the Middle East well before 9/11, it became an even more popular weapon since 9/11. Examining possible reasons for the post-9/11 wave of suicide terrorism, Paul Marsen and Sharon Attia argued that the media cannot cause "suicide bombings any more than sex (as opposed to HIV) can cause AIDS", but they also suggested that media might be "a vector of transmission that can precipitate its spread." [20] Considering the publicity success of the 9/11 attacks from the perspective of Al Qaeda and the organization's

supporters and sympathizers, in an article published in 2003 I pointed to the likelihood of spectacular homicide-suicide attacks becoming a most-attractive model for future acts of terrorism in one form or the other.[21] While nobody has repeated the flying-of-commercial-airliners-into-buildings scenario on a similar scale so far, there have been many spectacular homicide-suicide attacks since 9/11 in different countries and continents.[22]

To summarize, besides personal contacts and cooperation between various groups, mass media reports are the most likely sources of information about the efficacy of terror methods and thus important factors in the diffusion of terrorist tactics. Interestingly, based on their analysis of terrorist incidents in the 1960s and 1970s around the globe, Midlarsky, Crenshaw and Yoshida concluded that some terrorist methods of attacks (hijackings, kidnappings, and bombings) were more contagious than others (assassinations, raids). These scholars recognized also that publicity provided by the news media was a factor in terrorists' decision to imitate terrorist methods deemed effective. As they put it, "Visible and unusual violence is in essence newsworthy and attracts international publicity necessary for cross-regional and cross-cultural spread."[23]

Inspirational Contagion

The adoption of effective terrorist tactics, however, does not cause terrorism per se because those tactics are imitated or adapted by organizations that already exist and have embraced terrorism. As one expert in the field put it:

A particular terrorist technique is only of interest to a group that has already made the decision to adopt a terrorist strategy; a technique cannot on its own cause a resort to terrorism. Similarly, a radical group will normally enter into direct contact with an established terrorist group only once the decision to adopt a terrorist strategy has already been made.[24]

Inspirational contagion is more alarming for the targets of terrorism because it is the stuff that makes terrorists tick and leads to the formation of new organizations and cells. The above-mentioned recollection of one of the Red Army Faction's founders, Horst Mahler, about the crucial role of televised terrorism news in formulating his group's ideology and the RAF's *raison d'être* might not have been a surprise for Midlarsky, Crenshaw and Yoshida whose data analysis revealed the spread of terrorist thought from the Third World, and particularly from Latin-American and Palestinian terrorist leaders and groups, to Western Europe in the early 1970s. Noting that radicals in Germany and elsewhere in Western Europe received this sort of inspirational information from the mass media, the three scholars figured that "physical contacts [for example, between RAF and Palestinian groups] followed rather than preceded the decision to adopt terrorism."[25]

Writing more than a quarter century later and considering David Rapoport's categorization of four global waves of terrorism, Mark Sedgwick suggested

Contagion is possible at two levels, and can happen in two ways. On one level, a group might copy a particular terrorist technique, and on another level a group might copy a general terrorist strategy. Either of these might happen directly or indirectly. All these forms of contagion take place.

The primary form, however, is the adoption of a general terrorist strategy without direct contact. All other forms of contagion are secondary to this.[26]

The most recent, most lethal, and geographically most diffused inspirational virus originated with Afghan *mujahideen* fighting Soviet occupiers in the 1980s and, most important, with the establishment of Al Qaeda and its rapidly expanding terrorism network. It is hardly surprising that contagion effects tend to be far stronger among those individuals and groups that share the cultural and religious background of organizations and leaders with inspirational ideologies. Whereas kinship and friendship brought the members of the Al Qaeda Central organization together,[27] the mighty 'Afghan wave'[28] that reached literally all continents in the post-9/11 years is now mostly driven by inspirational contagion.[29] As Marc Sageman noted:

The Islamist terror networks of the twenty-first century are becoming more fluid, independent, and unpredictable entities than their more structured forebears, who carried out the atrocities of 9/11. The present threat has evolved from a structured group of al Qaeda masterminds, controlling vast resources and issuing commands, to a multitude of informal local groups trying to emulate their predecessors by conceiving and executing operations from the bottom up. These 'homegrown' wannabes form a scattered global network, a leaderless jihad.[30]

In the first decade of the new millennium the Internet has become the agent of virtual inspirational contagion spread by a multitude of extremist web sites with chat rooms and message boards that condition and inspire especially vulnerable young men and, increasingly, women within the Muslim world and in the diaspora to form or join autonomous groups or cells and plot terrorist strikes.[31]

But other kinds of ideologies of hate and terror are also disseminated via old and new media and communication technologies. There can be little doubt that the inspirational virus is particularly potent when diffused through media forms that are not subject to checks by the traditional media gatekeepers. It is for this reason that inspirational contagion spreads faster and further via books, CDs, and, of course, the Internet.

Timothy McVeigh was inspired by the extremist anti-government and White Supremacy doctrines of the militia movement, neo-Nazi groups, and Christian Identity cells as these were

synthesized by William Pierce, the founder of the neo-Nazi National Alliance. Using the pseudonym Andrew McDonald, Pierce published the novel *The Turner Diaries* that describes an all out race war—starting with the bombing of FBI headquarters in Washington. McVeigh and Pierce did not have any personal contact. Yet *The Turner Diaries* was the book that inspired McVeigh’s extremist worldview and, at the same time, served him as a blueprint for the actual bombing plot. His accomplice Terry Nichols was inspired by another novel, “Hunter”, authored by Pierce under the McDonald name that was just as racist and violent as *The Turner Diaries*.

Or take the extremist fringe in the anti-abortion movement that uses web sites to spread its hateful agenda in the name of God, displaying gruesome pictures of bloody fetuses of “butchered” children. They publicize the names and locations of abortion providers, celebrating the murderers of abortion providers as inspirational heroes and role models. They also cite from the bible to spread the word that God is on the side of those who serve as soldiers in the ‘Baby Liberation Army’. After Dr. George Tiller, a physician who provided legal abortions in Wichita, Kansas, was shot in May 2009 during a Sunday morning service in his church by Scott Roeder, it was revealed that the killer had been a frequent visitor to several of the most notorious anti-abortion websites. On one occasion, he had posted a message on a fake Tiller.com web site that labeled Dr. Tiller “the concentration camp Mengele of our day” who “needs to be stopped before he and those who protect him bring judgement upon our nation.”[32] It is likely that he took this comparison from the Army of God’s and/or similar web sites that vilified Tiller by comparing him to Dr. Josef Mengele, a Nazi physician in the Auschwitz concentration camp. Not surprisingly, *The Army of God* praised Roeder’s killing of “Tiller the Killer” on its web site and demanded that Roeder must be found not guilty” since he “faced a terrible evil...”[33]

In conclusion, when it comes to international and domestic terrorism, various kinds of media figure quite prominently in both tactical and inspirational contagion. While the Internet has moved center-stage in this respect during the last decade, the targets of terrorism have not been able to effectively counter the mass-mediated virus of this form of political violence.

Recognizing this, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said,

[P]ublic relations was invented in the United States, yet we are miserable at communicating to the rest of the world what we are about as a society and a culture, about freedom and democracy, about our policies and our goals. It is just plain embarrassing that al-Qaeda is better at communicating its message on the internet than America. As one foreign diplomat asked a couple of years ago, “How has one man in a cave managed to out-communicate the world’s greatest communication society?”

Speed, agility, and cultural relevance are not terms that come readily to mind when discussing U.S. strategic communications.[34]

About the Author: Brigitte L. Nacos is a journalist and adjunct professor of political science at Columbia University. Besides other books and articles, she authored 'Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding Threats and Responses in the Post-9/11 World'; 'Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism'; and 'Fueling Our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans'.

Notes

- [1] Robert G. Picard, "News Coverage as the Contagion of Terrorism: Dangerous Charges Backed by Dubious Science." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication at Norman, OK, August 1986; Philip Schlesinger, Graham Murdock, and Philip Elliott, *Televising Terrorism: Political Violence in Popular Culture*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984.
- [2] Alex P. Schmid and Janny de Graaf. *Violence and Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media*. London: Sage, 1982; Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn. *The Theater of Terror: Mass Media and International Terrorism*. New York: Longman, 1994.
- [3] Picard, op. cit., p. 1.
- [4] Robert G. Picard, "News Coverage as the Contagion of Terrorism: Dangerous Charges Backed By Dubious Science." In A. Odasuo Alali and Kenoye Kelvin Eke (Eds). *Media Coverage of Terrorism: Methods of Diffusion*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1991, pp. 55-56.
- [5] Schlesinger, Murdock, and Elliott, op. cit.
- [6] Weimann and Winn, op. cit., p. 277.
- [7] Schmid and De Graaf, op. cit. p. 142.
- [8] Brian Jenkins, "The Psychological Implications of Media-Covered Terrorism." Paper issued by the Rand Corporation. St. Monica, RAND, June 1981, p. 6.
- [9] Leonard Berkowitz and Jacqueline Macaulay, "The Contagion of Criminal Violence." *Sociometry*, 34 (2) (Jun. 1971), p. 238.
- [10] Ibid, pp. 241, 260.
- [11] Loren Coleman, "The Copycat Effect," *blogspot.com*, April 19, 2007, p. 1.
- [12] Barrie Gunter, "Media Violence: Is There a Case for Causality?" *American Behavioral Scientist* 51 (8), (April 2008), p. 1063.
- [13] For a detailed description of the subsequent 26 incidents and the one that inspired D.B. Cooper himself, see A. P. Schmid & J. de Graaf, op. cit., 1982, pp. 133-136.
- [14] G. Weimann and C. Winn, op. cit., pp. 217, 218.
- [15] Alex P. Schmid and Janny de Graaf, "Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media: An Exploratory Analysis with a Dutch Case Study." Leiden, Center for the Study of Social Conflicts, November 1980.
- [16] Jenkins, op. cit., p. 7.
- [17] Neil MacFarquhar, 'Acting on Threat, Saudi Group Kills Captive American.' *New York Times*, 19 June 2004, p. 1.
- [18] Mark Sedgwick. 'Inspiration and the Origins of Global Waves of Terrorism.' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30 (2) (February 2007), p. 102.
- [19] Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 122.
- [20] Paul Marsden and Sharon Attia, "A deadly contagion?" *The Psychologist*, 18 (3), March 2005, p. 153.
- [21] Brigitte L. Nacos, "The Calculus behind 9-11: A Model for Future Terrorism?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 26, No. 1, January/February 2003.
- [22] However, the idea of imitating the 9/11 attacks has been discussed among terrorists. Thus, the Colombian FARC wanted to fly a plane into the presidential palace during President Alvaro Uribe's inauguration but was unable to find a pilot willing to die for the cause—even though the organization offered to give the suicide pilot's family a \$2 million reward. – Incidentally, there was what looked very much like a copycat suicide with a small plane taking place in Milan, Italy, when the pilot, crashed his plane in the Pirelli Tower on 18 April 2002.
- [23] Manus I. Midlarsky, Martha Crenshaw and Fumihiko Yoshida, "Why Violence Spreads: The Contagion of International Terrorism." *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 24, No. 2, June 1980, p. 279.
- [24] Sedgwick, op. cit., p.102.
- [25] Midlarsky, Crenshaw and Yoshida, op. cit., p. 282.
- [26] Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 102.
- [27] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- [28] Mark Sedgwick. 'Inspiration and the Origins of Global Waves of Terrorism.' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 30, No. 2, February 2007, pp. 106-107.
- [29] Sedgwick, op. cit., pp. 106-7.
- [30] Mark Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, p. vii.
- [31] For the importance of the Internet in the spread of inspirational terrorism, see Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, the New Challenges*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2006; Brigitte L. Nacos, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding Threats and Responses in the Post-9/11 World*. 3rd Edition. New York: Longman Pearson, 2010, chapter 15; and M. Sageman, *Leaderless Resistance*, op. cit., chapter 6.

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- [32] "The Suspect at a Glance." *The Washington Post*, June 2, 2009, available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/01/AR2009060103675_pf.html, accessed August 20, 2009.
- [33] From the web site of *The Army of God*. <http://www.armyofgod.com/MikeBrayScottScoutandBooRadley.html>, accessed August 14, 2009.
- [34] The remarks were made during the Landon Lecture at Kansas State University, Nov. 26, 2007. The transcript of the speech is available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199>, accessed September 1, 2008.

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Foreign Fighters and Their Economic Impact: A Case Study of Syria and al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)

by Matthew Levitt

[1]

Abstract

Over the past several years, terrorist and insurgent groups have established sophisticated networks in Syria to facilitate the movement of foreign fighters into Iraq. These networks are worth closer scrutiny since foreign fighters, facilitated through Syria, have been responsible for some of the most spectacular attacks on Iraqis and coalition forces. Given the priority that Iraq and Syria both play in the Obama administration's efforts to stabilize the Middle East, as well as the wealth of information now available on Syrian-based foreign fighter facilitation networks, this article provides a case study of Syria, foreign fighters in the Iraqi insurgency, and their economic impact. Foreign fighters' use of third party countries for training, fundraising, and transit is not merely an operational phenomenon; it is an economic one as well. There are direct and indirect economic consequences – both positive and negative – that result from the existence and operation of foreign fighter networks in a country like Syria. These consequences impact Syria and its government, various elements of the Syrian populace, Iraq as the foreign fighters' destination, and other countries in the region. Developing realistic strategies to contend with foreign fighter networks that operate in third party countries is contingent upon first developing a holistic understanding of the phenomenon, including its economic impact.

Introduction

In late August 2009, a string of truck bombs and other attacks rocked Iraq and led Iraq and Syria to withdraw ambassadors from Damascus and Baghdad after Iraqi officials publicly and angrily accused Syria of hosting foreign fighter networks that were plotting and facilitating attacks in Iraq, which included the two purported masterminds of these most recent attacks. Days later, Iraqi officials aired a supposed confession by a suspected al-Qaeda militant from Saudi Arabia who claimed he not only entered Iraq from Syria but also admitted that he was first trained in an al-Qaeda training camp there which was led by a Syrian intelligence officer. [2] Whether the details of his confession ultimately ring true or not, the long established Syrian “rat routes” through which foreign fighters, as well as funds and supplies are moved into Iraq, are real. They are also part of a larger economic phenomenon.

Running an insurgency is an expensive endeavor. Financing and resourcing insurgent activities, from procuring weapons and executing attacks to buying the support of local populations and bribing corrupt officials - all this requires extensive fundraising and facilitation networks that often involve group members, criminal syndicates, corrupt officials, and independent operators

such as local smugglers. Along these lines, a report of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an international body focused on anti-money laundering and combating terrorism financing, found that while financing any singular attack may be relatively inexpensive compared to the damage incurred, “maintaining a terrorist network, or a specific cell, to provide for recruitment, planning, and procurement between attacks represents a significant drain on resources. A significant infrastructure is required to sustain international terrorist networks and promote their goals over time.” Creating and maintaining such support and facilitation networks, FATF concluded, requires significant funds. [3]

FATF’s findings are certainly applicable to Syria, where terrorist and insurgent groups have established sophisticated networks to facilitate the movement of foreign fighters into Iraq. These networks are worth closer scrutiny since foreign fighters, facilitated through Syria, have been responsible for some of the most spectacular attacks on Iraqis and coalition forces. Given the priority that Iraq and Syria both play in the Obama administration’s efforts to stabilize the Middle East, as well as the wealth of information now available on Syrian-based foreign fighter facilitation networks, this article provides a case study of Syria, foreign fighters in the Iraqi insurgency, and their economic impact.

Foreign fighters’ use of third party countries for training, fundraising, and transit is not merely an operational phenomenon; it is an economic one as well. There are direct and indirect economic consequences – both positive and negative – that result from the existence and operation of foreign fighter networks in a country like Syria. These consequences impact on Syria and its government, on various elements of the Syrian populace, as well as on Iraq as the foreign fighters’ destination, and other countries in the region. Developing realistic strategies to contend with foreign fighter networks that operate in third party countries is contingent upon first developing a holistic understanding of the phenomenon, including its economic impact.

Benefits of Foreign Fighter Networks

Benefits to the Insurgent Group (AQI)

The benefits of facilitation networks for terrorist and insurgent groups are clear: without such support networks such groups cannot function. They are essential elements of any groups’ efforts to finance and resource their expensive activities. It is not the cost of any individual attack, but rather the larger infrastructure costs that drive up insurgent expenses. A Senior Intelligence Officer from the US Defense Intelligence Agency explained in 2005:

We believe terrorist and insurgent expenses are moderate and pose little significant restraints to armed groups in Iraq. In particular, arms and munitions costs are minimal—leaving us to judge that the bulk of the money likely goes toward international and local travel, food and lodging of fighters and families of dead fighters, bribery and pay-offs of

governmental officials, families and clans; and possibly into the personal coffers of critical middle-men and prominent terrorist or insurgent leaders. [4]

Documents seized in a September 2007 raid on a suspected AQI safe house in Sinjar in Western Iraq revealed that in the 2006-2007 timeframe, the group was heavily dependent on donations, much of which came from AQI leaders, foreign fighters, as well as local Iraqis. [5] Among the foreign fighters who contributed to AQI, Saudi fighters were the most prolific, contributing significantly larger amounts than the other foreign fighters, with an average contribution of \$1,088. Additionally, of the twenty-three fighters who contributed more than \$1,000, twenty-two were Saudi.

A review of these AQI records seized in Iraq, conducted by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, found that a robust facilitation network in Syria has helped foreign fighters travel into Iraq. According to these seized documents, AQI has relied on at least 95 different Syrian “coordinators” to provide such services. Illustrating a sense of how well-organized this system was, the coordinators appeared to specialize in working with prospective foreign fighters and suicide bombers from specific locations.

In February of 2008, the Treasury Department underscored the findings in the Sinjar documents, designating four members of a key terrorist facilitation and finance network operating out of Syria for supporting AQI. Treasury reported that the “Abu Ghadiyah” network, named for its leader, controlled the flow of much of the money, weapons, personnel, and other material through Syria into Iraq for AQI. According to the Treasury Department, the network “obtained false passports for foreign terrorists, provided passports, weapons, guides, safe houses, and allowances to foreign terrorists in Syria and those preparing to cross the border into Iraq.” [6] Indeed, Abu Ghadiyah reportedly received several hundred-thousand dollars from his cousin, another member of the network, with which he supported insurgent activity targeting the U.S. military while also facilitating the travel of AQI foreign fighters.

Abu Ghadiyah’s network - and others like it - pump money into the local economy through the purchase of food and provisions of housing for fighters moving through safe houses. Such networks additionally provide business opportunities for the local, smuggling-based economy and offer bribes to local officials. The Abu Ghadiyah network reportedly maintained safe houses in Damascus and Latakia as well, investing in local economies in other parts of the country far from the Iraqi border. [7]

While AQI and its foreign fighter networks have not enjoyed state sponsorship in the classical sense, it has benefited from relationships with governments like Iran and Syria. Indeed, while active state sponsorship is becoming increasingly rare, sometimes the greatest contribution a state can make to a terrorist or insurgent group is choosing not to act. As Daniel Byman from

Georgetown University has noted, “A border not policed, a blind eye turned to fundraising, or even the toleration of recruitment all help terrorists build their organizations, conduct operations and survive.” [8]

While this has generally also been true of Syria, in some cases, Syrian support has been more active. Consider the case of Fawzi al-Rawi where the extent of the Syrian government’s role is noteworthy. In late 2007, the US Treasury Department designated al-Rawi – a leader of the Iraqi wing of the Syrian Ba’ath Party – for providing financial and material support to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s AQI. Al-Rawi was appointed to his position by Syrian President Bashar al-Asad in 2003. According to the US Treasury, the Iraqi wing of the Syrian Ba’ath Party “has since provided significant funding to Iraqi insurgents and al-Rawi’s direction.” The US Treasury noted that al-Rawi “is supported financially by the Syrian Government, and has close ties to Syrian intelligence.” [9] With the authorization of the Syrian regime, al-Rawi twice met with a former commander of Saddam Hussein’s *Army of Muhammad* in 2004 and assured this commander that his group would receive material aid from Syria. In 2005, al-Rawi “facilitated the provision of \$300,000 to members of AQI,” as well as providing AQI vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, rifles, and suicide bombers, according to the US Treasury Department. In meetings with senior AQI representatives in September 2005, al-Rawi and AQI leaders discussed operational issues, including conducting attacks against the U.S. Embassy and concentrating attacks on the international zone.

Benefits to the Host Country (Syria)

As an extension of its foreign policy, Syria’s tolerance of foreign fighter support networks – and certainly its more active support for Iraqi insurgents – was intended to further Syrian interests in Iraq and deliver other non-economic benefits as well. According to a US Department of Defense March 2007 report to the American Congress entitled “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” Syria has supported insurgents in Iraq for political purposes. Specifically, the report stated: “Damascus also recognizes that Islamist extremists and elements of the former Iraqi regime share Syria’s desire to undermine Coalition efforts in Iraq.” [10]

Another benefit to the Syrian regime is the very significant boost to local businesses along the border with Iraq – mostly illicit, such as the smuggling of goods and persons – which benefited the Syrian regime indirectly by generating jobs and income and freeing the central government from having to invest in remote areas during difficult economic times. While supporting such networks incurs high political costs for the Syrian regime, in the immediate term following the fall of the Saddam regime it may have brought significant dividends. According to Iraqi bank records, for example, Saddam himself withdrew over a billion U.S. dollars from Iraqi banks which were then smuggled out of the country in cash. A study published in 2006 found that “In Syria the money was managed by Saddam’s half-brother, Sabawi Ibrahim al-Hassan al-Tikriti,

the former head of the feared Mukhabarat” who was considered at the time by the United States “to be the chief financial facilitator of the insurgency in Syria.” [11]

Syrian authorities have periodically cracked down on smugglers and tightened control of the borders, but to little effect. For example, the Syrian government constructed a four foot “sand berm” along the border and laid out fallen electricity poles in order to flip smugglers’ vehicles. According to U.S. intelligence officer Major Adam Boyd,

“For every example of cooperation from Syria, there are an equal number of incidents that are not helpful... We just captured someone who was trying to escape into Syria and found out that he’s been arrested last November on the Syrian side after they caught him with a bunch of fake passports. But he bribed his way out and managed to get back in. But, again, I don’t know I necessarily attribute that to the government as to an individual Syrian border patrol unit.” [12]

One reason for the lack of success was the traditionally distant relationship – geographically and otherwise – between the local tribal leadership along the Syrian-Iraqi border and the national leadership back in Damascus. This helps explain the complicated relationship between security forces and smugglers along the border. Whatever jobs and income these illicit networks provide are jobs and income the national government cannot provide. As one study from Westpoint put it, this buffer “saves the government in Damascus from having to invest scarce resources in a region seen as remote from the regime’s heartland.” [13]

Benefits to the Local Population

Smuggling is indeed a lucrative business, and the foreign fighters pipeline in Syria is believed to have benefitted the local populations on both sides of the Syrian-Iraqi border in the form of jobs, increased cash flow into the local economy, purchase of supplies, staples, and rents. One assessment of the Sinjar documents, assuming all thirty-nine Syrian smuggling contacts in the Sinjar records received an equal share of the cut from foreign fighters, concludes that each Syrian would earn more than \$3,000 in the course of a year. [14] 53 of the 93 Syrian Coordinators, identified by name in the Sinjar records, were paid by the fighters they transported into Iraq.

The region of Deir ez-Zour is one of Syria’s poorest provinces. In an area that lacks other significant industry, smuggling is not only well-ingrained in society, but also has become a mainstay of the economy. However one assesses the annual income of a smuggler of foreign fighters or the amounts of bribes paid to local officials, intelligence officers, border officials, and tribal leaders, the amounts are significant enough to conclude that a trickle down effect exists in which the local population benefits from the existence of these smuggling routes.

In Iraq, AQI has to some extent filled an economic vacuum created by sectarian tensions. The political fight over control of Mosul and the Nineveh province, between the Sunnis and the Kurds, has prevented the local population from being integrated into the Iraqi economy or the Kurdish regional economy. AQI, therefore, has been able to build a base in the Nineveh province, and fill the void—thereby economically assisting the Iraqis living in these border cities. [15]

Costs of Foreign Fighter Networks

Costs to the Insurgent Group (AQI)

While smuggling and facilitation coordinators like Abu Ghadiyah have played an important role for AQI, they also pose difficulties for the group since many of these coordinators were motivated more by money than by loyalty. According to the Sinjar records, AQI experienced difficulties in funding stemming from financial disputes with Syrian coordinators. In 2006, “Shahin the administrator” reported that there was a shortage of funds in 2006 “[because] the money didn’t arrive with the suicide brothers, and the coordinating brothers in Syria kept the money.” [16] Indeed, Abu Ghadiyah himself is reported to have used AQI funds for his personal use. [17]

AQI managers should not be surprised by such skimming of funds; it is a phenomenon with a long track record within al-Qaeda-affiliated groups. Employing facilitators who may lack ideological commitment can translate into both financial losses and poor operational security. Jamal Al-Fadl, one of al Qaeda’s first operatives, began embezzling funds from the group during its years in Sudan, based on his displeasure with his low salary, stealing approximately \$100,000 in all. [18]

In addition to coordinators who were not ideologically motivated, overzealous foreign fighters also pose a problem to AQI. Inexperienced foreign fighters often arrive in Iraq without sufficient training. In addition, they are often unaware of the political climate in Iraq—including knowledge about the presence of a large Shi’a community. This has contributed to a lack of integration of foreign fighters into AQI’s local community. According to a document captured in 2008, these problems even led AQI to reject at one moment in time foreign fighters coming into Iraq. [19]

One of the largest costs insurgent groups incur stems from the obligation to assume some financial responsibility for the families of foreign fighters. Materials found among the Sinjar documents, for example, reveal that “the majority of the permanent manpower appears to have families requiring support.” [20] In other words, while foreign fighters provide a variety of

tangible benefits to the insurgency, the financial support required for their families is a significant cost.

Finally, insurgents by definition seek to discredit the government they are fighting and also create dependencies on the part of local populations through their low-intensity conflict warfare targeting local political and economic interests. Later, they may seek to control territory. Note, for example, that the Abu Ghadiyah network “planned to use rockets to attack multiple Coalition forces outposts and Iraqi police stations, in an attempt to facilitate an AQI takeover in Western Iraq,” according to information released by the US Treasury Department. [21] In the end, insurgents have to assume a level of financial responsibility for the local economy and also build grassroots support among local populations. This too increases the costs of the insurgency. [22]

Costs to the Host Country (Syria)

Countries that host networks that facilitate the presence or transport of foreign fighters risk incurring both political and economic consequences. Ultimately, violent extremists tolerated and supported by the host country may turn against it and pose a threat within the country and/or to the regime itself. For example, in October 2007, Sheikh Abdel-Aziz Al-Asheikh, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, announced a *fatwa* instructing Saudis not to leave the Kingdom to participate in *jihad* – a statement directed primarily at those considering going to Iraq, often passing through Syria. Al-Asheikh said that he decided to speak up, “after it was clear that over several years Saudis have been leaving for jihad” and that “our youth...became tools carrying out heinous acts.” In the same way, the 2006 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Damascus reportedly had a similar effect on the Syrian regime. The four men who attacked the Embassy with grenades and small-arms fire killed one security guard and wounded others. Three of the gunmen were killed in the firefight and the fourth was seriously wounded. This attack, according to one US official, served as a “wake-up call” for the Syrian government that fighters from Iraq were returning to Syria and could pose a security threat at home. [23]

In addition to the security threat posed by foreign fighters, Syria has also experienced sanctions for its support of foreign fighters. Syria is the longest-standing member of the US State Department’s list of state sponsors of terrorism, having been so designated in 1979. As a result, Syria has long been subject to a series of sanctions, including several trade-related restrictions, such as bans on arms sales and control over exports of dual-use items, as well as prohibitions on receiving financial aid. [24] According to the 2008 State Department Country Report released on April 30, 2009, “despite acknowledged reductions in foreign fighter flows [from Syria], the scope and impact of the problem remained significant.” [25]

In 2003, Congress passed the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act which cites, among other issues, the fact that Syria allows terrorist groups to operate within its territory and permits the flow of goods and fighters into Iraq, as reasons for sanctioning the regime. The American President also issued several executive orders directed at Syria. These

target the Syrian elite involved in corruption. [26] actors involved in interfering in the internal affairs of Lebanon, [27] and former Iraqi regime elements supporting the insurgency—some of whom were in Syria. [28] A number of top Syrian officials have been designated by the US Administration. In 2006, for example, the US Treasury blacklisted the Commercial Bank of Syria—the major player in the Syrian financial sector.

There is evidence that the Syrian Accountability Act and successive targeted financial sanctions have dissuaded American as well as some foreign businesses from investing in Syria. According to one report, General Electric, the French power company Alstom, and Japan's Mitsubishi company all declined to bid on a Syrian government contract for the construction of power plants. [29] Turkcell withdrew its bid to purchase Syriatel in August 2008 after the United States had sanctioned Syriatel's primary stakeholder, Rami Makluf. [30] As Syria's energy production levels decline, sanctions have prevented major Western energy companies from making new investments there, although other foreign companies have stepped in and took business from U.S. firms.

While the Syrian economy achieved a five percent average annual economic growth rate during the past five years, this was primarily a result of high oil prices and investments from the Gulf. Recent downturns in key sectors of the Syrian economy could enhance the possible impact of sanctions. A three-year drought has crippled Syrian agriculture (which accounts for twenty-three percent of the GDP) and oil production revenues have decreased thirty percent in the past five years. These economic woes, coupled with the lack of foreign direct investments in Syria due to US sanctions, will further damage the Syrian economy. [31]

Costs to the Local Population

Within the territory targeted by insurgents - in this case Iraq - the local population suffers the immediate consequences of both full-scale warfare and low-intensity attacks targeting the local infrastructure and economy. Often, insurgents seek to gain control of territory and destroy the existing socio-economic infrastructure with the aim of replacing it with their own "socio-economic infrastructure, an economic system created exclusively to feed the armed struggle." [32] According to one military expert,

State sponsors or groups which set up foreign fighter training facilities in these countries will have an initially positive effect on the local economy because the initial phase is like a courtship which usually starts with the building of schools, mosques, or possibly localized health care, then as the infrastructure matures, the benefits for the local populace begin to recede as the true focus of the group's presence becomes apparent. [33]

In terms of cost to the local Iraqi population, it is worth noting that *Transparency International* ranked Iraq as the most corrupt country in the Middle East and listed it on place 129 out of a total

of 145 countries ranked. [34] In addition to corruption, criminal networks have taken over smuggling routes that were previously linked to local tribes. This is true when it comes to smuggling oil siphoned from pipelines, which cuts into local tribes' traditional streams of revenue. [35] This smuggling amounted to a significant sum of money, considering that that Baghdadi oil ministry estimated in 2005 that approximately ten to thirty percent of imported fuel was ultimately smuggled out of Iraq. [36] In 2008, the Iraq Study Group found that corruption is "debilitating." The report cited expert estimates that "150,000 to 200,000—and perhaps as many as 500,000—barrels of oil per day are being stolen." The consequence for local populations is clear: "Controlled prices for refined products result in shortages within Iraq, which drive consumers to the thriving black market...corruption is more responsible than insurgents for the breakdowns in the oil sector." [37]

Inevitably, pressure on the Syrian regime to crack down on longstanding smuggling networks that prop up the local border economy will come face-to-face with the reality that the central government lacks the will and possibly the means to step in and fill this economic gap.

The Way Forward

AQI and other insurgents in Iraq have been so successful in Iraq because their facilitation networks have successfully raised and transferred funds, recruited and transported fighters, and procured and moved weapons and goods – mostly through Syria. Shutting down these networks and starving the insurgency of its supply of material, funds, and manpower is a critical component of any successful counter-insurgency campaign. Yet convincing and enabling Syria to take the necessary steps to shut down the smuggling pipelines will require something more than just economic sanctions.

The various ways in which foreign fighter and other smuggling networks impact host countries and local populations, however, suggest that there are several steps that could be taken – and some to be avoided – to successfully separate insurgents from their suppliers and supply routes. It should be stated from the outset that, given the relatively strong return on minimal financial investment, Syrian support for insurgents and terrorists will remain an attractive option for the regime in Damascus so long as it continues to be a viable and productive means of furthering the regime's domestic and foreign policy goals. Given the financial interests of local and national officials, cracking down on established smuggling networks (and thereby threatening the regular payments that supplement officials' income) is no easy task. A multi-faceted approach to the foreign fighter facilitation network problem is therefore required, including:

- A plan to backfill the local economies with jobs and services to replace the losses sure to follow the shuttering of the smuggling economy;

- An anti-corruption and civil society campaign aimed at breaking the traditional and deeply ingrained culture of bribing people in positions of authority as the cost of doing business;
- Robust efforts to secure political stability in Iraq generally and specifically in areas controlled or largely influenced by insurgents;
- Diplomatic efforts to address the underlying policy concerns that have led Syria to support insurgents and terrorists as a means of furthering domestic and foreign policy;
- Finally, all efforts on the Syrian side of the border will have to be replicated by concurrent and parallel efforts on the Iraqi side of the border.

At the end of the day, however, political and diplomatic efforts may fall short, in which case targeted financial sanctions – focused on illicit activity, authority figures engaged in criminal or other activity threatening regional security, and corruption – present an attractive second option. Combined with regional diplomacy employing a variety of countries’ efforts to cajole Damascus when possible and sanction the regime when necessary, sanctions can at least increase the costs to the regime of its continued belligerent behaviour. Sanctions alone, however, will never solve national security problems, but when used in tandem with other elements of national power in an integrated, strategic approach, they can be very effective.

Were the shadow economy of smuggling enterprises to contract, the most critical and time-sensitive issue would be to successfully jumpstart legitimate economic growth in its place. In the words of General Sir Frank Kitson, “The first thing that must be apparent when contemplating the sort of action which a government facing insurgency should take, is that there can be no such thing as a purely military solution because insurgency is not primarily a military activity.” [38]

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Notes

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Re-evaluating the Disengagement Process: the Case of Fatah

by Gordon Clubb

Abstract

Recently, a number of studies have looked at the disengagement/de-radicalisation of terrorist groups and individuals. This article critically assesses part of this literature in relation to the process of voluntary collective disengagement, using the case of the Palestinian Fatah organization as an example. It questions the specific focus of most de-radicalisation studies upon solely ending the use of the terrorist tactic, arguing that the disengagement process should be studied in conjunction with groups ceasing to use other forms of political violence as well. Although the article favours an objective definition of terrorism, it also recognises the salience of the term's normative power and argues that both perspectives can play a role in the disengagement process. This process can be divided into a number of stages: (i) declarative disengagement, (ii) behavioural disengagement, (iii) organisational disengagement, and (iv) de-radicalisation. Fatah's disengagement process demonstrates that the process can be conditional, reversible, and selective. Consequently, a number of problems arise in terms of defining when an organisation has actually ceased to use terrorism and other forms of political violence. The article argues that Fatah represents a case of mixed disengagement; it was selective, conditional and mostly only behavioural. However, despite the disengagement process only being partially successful during the Oslo period - and reversed considerably during the al-Aqsa Intifada - it has had some lasting effects on the organisation, making it less likely to re-engage in terrorism.

What makes Terrorism so Special?

Groups like Fatah and Hamas use a wide range of more or less violent tactics which raises the question: why should the focus be only on 'ending terrorism'? A number of scholars argue that terrorism should be seen as a subset of political violence [1]. Therefore it would make sense to focus on how groups disengage from political violence. The reason for focusing on terrorism largely depends on its definition. Definitions of terrorism generally fall under objectivist and subjectivist approaches [2]. Yet studying 'how terrorism ends' necessitates the adoption of an objective definition of terrorism 'as a particular kind of political behaviour' [3] – otherwise measuring whether terrorism ended or not becomes impossible.

One argument for singling out acts of terrorism is that these tend to produce a disproportional impact; therefore there are real benefits in focusing on bringing at least this form of political violence to a halt. Hamas's use of suicide bombings during the Oslo Peace Process (OPP) had a profound impact upon the Israeli population as well as Fatah's disengagement from the peace process. The benefit of a narrow focus on terrorism is that it can be more easily measured; it is

possible to trace a decline in the use of suicide terrorism. Although the use of the concept of the 'disengagement process' favours an objectivist definition of terrorism, it would be unfair to dismiss the normative value of the terrorism label (with its stigma) completely. Targeting civilians is widely seen as illegitimate or immoral [4]. However, it is a fact that in some social contexts processes are enacted which aim to legitimise it and it becomes accepted by some sectors of society (e.g. in the form of support for martyrdom operations/suicide bombings). It is well-known that certain reactions of audiences which are significant for terrorists can place normative constraints on a terrorist group. For example, Hamas was constrained in launching suicide bombings when the Palestinian population perceived such actions as less legitimate. When this perception was reversed, there was a considerable increase in suicide bombings. Perceptions regarding the degree of (il-)legitimacy of various forms of political violence among constituencies is crucial for the freedom of operation of a militant group engaged in various forms of armed struggle. A case in point is the decline of support amongst Arab states for the Palestinian armed struggle (terroristic or not); it had a great impact on the PLO. De-legitimisation of terrorism is a crucial element in the de-radicalisation of violent groups. Opinion polls, interviews and discourse analysis can help us tracing changes amongst various significant audiences regarding the perceived legitimacy of various tactics of political violence, including the perpetrators own perception how far they can go in a given political constellation.

Stages of the Disengagement Process

There are a number of studies that have tried to explain the process by which terrorist groups reach and conclude - successfully or not - the final stage in their life cycle or at least came to end the use of terrorist tactics (such as hijackings, kidnapping, bombing of civilian targets) as a form of waging political conflict. This article adopts the term 'disengagement' to describe the overall process. It uses the term 'de-radicalisation' to describe one part of the disengagement process. The different parts of the disengagement process are an adaptation of the terminology proposed by Omar Ashour (2009) and John Horgan (2008). This article focuses on when organisations voluntarily [5] decide to disengage from terrorism (and to some extent: other forms of political violence). It aims to pull together various ideas recently proposed by terrorism analysts to conceptualize various stages of the disengagement process [6].

The disengagement process can be divided into the four following categories; declarative, behavioural and organisational disengagement and de-radicalisation:

- (i) The first stage is *declarative disengagement*; this is a commitment (usually by the leadership) to implicitly/explicitly [7] stop using terrorism/political violence.
 - (ii) The implementation of this declaration depends upon a number of organisational factors. Its successful implementation is referred to as *behavioural disengagement*. Behavioural disengagement simply means that the number of attacks, terrorist or
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- otherwise, cease. This can be measured. The disengagement can result in a short-term cease-fire or a longer commitment to cease (terrorist) violence.
- (iii) Following behavioural disengagement there is usually the challenge of *organisational disengagement* which refers to the dismantlement of armed units. This includes demobilising the group's members without damaging organisational splits, mutiny or internal violence [8].
 - (iv) *De-radicalisation* refers to a change in discourse and involves the group denouncing and de-legitimising the use of terrorism (and sometimes other forms of political violence as well).

Comprehensive disengagement is the term we use when a group 'abandons terrorism and other forms of political violence) behaviourally, de-legitimise(s) it ideologically and act(s) on that by dismantling its armed units organisationally' [9]. The overall disengagement process is not linear; different types of disengagement can occur in different orders. However, one stage might be more important than the other and it might also lead to progression towards other stages of disengagement.

The stages of the disengagement process sketched above are based on Ashour's work. Yet two elements have been added: the process can be *selective* and *conditional*. Firstly, *selective disengagement* refers to delineating the range of licit targets (e.g. when the PLO renounced 'terrorism', but only against non-Israeli targets) and/or limiting types of violence, perhaps once again to certain targets (e.g. opposing suicide bombings against targets inside Israel). This relates to the extent of disengagement: does it mean the group has to oppose all forms of political violence in all contexts, only terrorism in all contexts, or terrorism and/or other forms of political violence in certain areas of operation? Secondly, *conditional disengagement* refers to a situation when the disengagement process is dependent upon receiving something in return. It can make the process reversible; the ladder of escalation can be climbed up or down - re-engagement and re-radicalization remain an option. For example, an organisation's commitment to disengagement might be linked to gains resulting from a peace process as was the case with Fatah. It is through incentives such as those a peace process can offer that the disengagement process can be jump-started and, later perhaps, be brought to a successful conclusion.

The temporary and bi-directional nature of the process means that there are some problems in determining when a terrorist group ceases to exist. Jones and Libicki define the end of a terrorist group on the basis of 'the earliest evidence that the group no longer existed or that the group no longer used terrorism to achieve its goals' [10]. However, whereas their study lists the PLO still as an active terrorist group, other authors (e.g. Cronin) hold that the PLO *as a terrorist organisation* came to an end in 1993. Having a specific date when a terrorist group or campaign 'ended' can only work retrospectively; at best it might be an interim assessment. Some

‘organisations undoubtedly continue to exist despite apparent passivity’ (e.g. the official IRA before being overtaken by the Provisional IRA in the late 1960s) and it ‘is hard to predict when terrorism is likely to be reactivated’ [11]. It is not difficult to imagine a data-set of ‘how terrorist groups end’ becoming quickly obsolete as some groups desisting from acts of terrorism, re-start their use of terrorist tactics and halt it once more. The judgement whether a group has actually stopped using terrorism as a tactic is often in the eye of the beholder. Firstly, there is the problem of defining what counts as terrorism. Secondly, there is the problem of determining whether and which action is attributable to the main group or originating from a splinter group. Thirdly, political expediency and power-relations also affect the decision when a terrorist group has ended its use of indiscriminate violence against civilians. For example, for a while, the United States turned a blind eye to acts of terrorism attributed to the PLO to maintain the momentum of the peace process during the pre-Oslo period. Later, from the al-Aqsa Intifada onwards, the links between Fatah and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade have been played down, arguably for similar political reasons.

Some of these attribution problems are inherent to the study of clandestine groups. Nevertheless, the proposed conceptualization of the disengagement process might provide benchmarks to measure if a group has stopped using terrorism. It seems likely that once a group has comprehensively disengaged, it is less likely that the process will be reversed than in cases of mere behavioural disengagement. In essence, there needs to be some durability for the concept of a ‘disengagement process’ to be applicable. Voluntary disengagement appears to involve also organisational transformation: the (former) terrorist organisation might become part of the political system as a legal party. Alternatively, it might become a social movement, a criminal group or, as we will see, become integrated into the (proto-) state’s security forces.

In the following, we will assess the utility of the conceptual distinctions introduced here by looking at their explanatory power with regard to Fatah’s disengagement process.

Fatah’s Disengagement Process

With the signing of the Oslo Peace Accord in 1993, Yasser Arafat had started the first stage, declarative disengagement. This phase is transitional and progress to the next phase depends primarily on the leadership’s ability to enforce its decision throughout the organisation. The Oslo Accord provided Arafat with the incentives and resources to implement Fatah’s disengagement. Behavioural disengagement was linked closely to a form of organisational disengagement. In 1994 the first contingent of PLO forces were deployed in parts of the West Bank and Gaza (WBG). In the end, some 80 per cent of PLO cadres would be incorporated into the new public sector [12]. The Oslo Peace Process (OPP) stipulated that the Palestinian Authority (PA) should establish a ‘strong police force’, recruited both locally and from abroad. This instrument allowed Arafat to bolster consensus regarding his leadership and authority to make decisions [13]. Arafat

was able to bring Fatah activists from the WBG into the new security apparatus, including local militias 'loosely allied' to Fatah. The incorporation of the *Black Panthers* and the *Fatah Hawks* into the PA contributed significantly to the subordination of local resistance. Thereby it weakened a potential source of opposition to the OPP, giving autonomous activists a stake in the process through the prestige associated with their new positions and the material incentive of receiving regular salaries [14].

Arafat's control over the public sector's purse strings, which included the security sector, gave 'him an impressive network of about 350,000 dependants throughout the territories' [15]. The PA offered Arafat the opportunity to create a patronage system that provided strong incentives to former militants to support the OPP and the PA in general. These incentives were concrete and material and differed from the situation of the early 1960's and the years thereafter when it had become clear that revolutionary zeal alone was not enough to maintain members' commitment to the organisation. Thus, the OPP provided direct incentives to initiate and implement the disengagement process. The establishment of the PA facilitated the organisational disengagement of Fatah forces which, in turn, enabled Fatah to behaviourally disengage.

However, Fatah did not organisationally disengage completely; although the vast majority of its forces were incorporated into the PA structures, there were still some operationally active armed Fatah groups. For example, Arafat publicly reactivated the Fatah Hawks in 1994 with the aim of confronting the Islamists [16]. In the same way, the al-Aqsa Intifada demonstrated that even if members of an armed group joined the PA's security sector, it was possible for members to leave and take up arms again, sometimes even against their former employers [17]. Therefore, for organisational disengagement to be successful it has to be total; there can not be exceptions. The state structures that are absorbing them must be able to retain them, whether through stable structures or by virtue of being efficiently ran (i.e. limiting corruption and nepotism). Two inter-related factors prevented complete organisational disengagement; 1) competition between Fatah - PA and the armed groups opposed to the OPP, and 2) the inability of the PA to successfully retain the support from the population.

The challenge posed by groups such as Hamas led Arafat to use Fatah militants against the Islamists. A factor that constrained the PA in fully confronting the Islamists was public support for the much less corrupt Hamas organization. There was also an important part of the Palestinian population that had always rejected the peace process; it became a majority by the time of the al-Aqsa Intifada [18]. The Islamists gained (and lost) from this fluctuating public opposition to the OPP. This forced Fatah activists to compete. Eventually it led to the splintering of Fatah into armed militias after the OPP collapsed in 2000. Possibly the main factor was the PA's dependency on the success of the OPP for its legitimacy. However, internal competition also played a role in undermining the success of the peace process. Another factor was the incompetence of the PA itself; its corruption and nepotism drove away members (e.g. Zacharia

Zubeidi) and helped create internal strife as well as public disillusionment [19]. In addition, the consolidation of Arafat's role in the PA sidelined the Fatah movement, creating disgruntled Fatah activists on the ground [20].

Fatah and its affiliated organisations did, by and large, behaviourally disengage from terrorism against Israel throughout the Oslo period. According to the University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database, there were only 14 incidents of terrorism in the WBG attributed to the PLO, the Black Panthers or Fatah Hawks. No incidents in Israel were attributed to these groups during this period. There was one incident whereby Israeli troops and PA armed police exchanged fire: that was on the occasion of a PA-controlled protest in 1996 against Netanyahu's policies regarding Jerusalem's holy sites [21]. Overall, the vast majority of these incidents, however, targeted Palestinians - such as collaborators or Hamas members although a couple of incidents attributed to the PLO were directed against Israeli targets [22]. However, Israeli secret forces also killed, possibly 'in error' [23], Fatah Hawk members in March 1994. Although Fatah forces were involved in various forms of political violence against Palestinians, this can be partly attributed to the blurred distinction between the role of the PA and the Fatah militias mentioned above. Partly it can be attributed to conflict between the factions. In short, during the OPP it is possible to say that Fatah reached the level of behavioural disengagement. Yet this was only with regard to Israel; Fatah was still active in limited forms of violent confrontations with rival Palestinian factions. However, these confrontations were relatively small-scale.

Overall, Fatah, its affiliates and the PA forces were not engaged in fighting with Israeli targets but fought groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and some leftist groups. The OPP made the Fatah leadership within the PA responsible for preventing such attacks; it was claimed that the PA was not adhering to the terms of the agreement. In addition, there was Israeli criticism of Palestinian rhetoric which, in Israeli perceptions, still appeared to encourage violence. Most of these criticisms concern statements made by notable Fatah/PA figures that a) did not recognise Israel, b) called for the liberation of historic Palestine, c) called for the use of violent tactics to end the occupation, claiming that the option of armed struggle was still available, d) were anti-Semitic/de-humanised Israelis, and e) glorified/praised Hamas' suicide bombings [24]. Thus, despite Fatah having behaviourally disengaged from terrorism (against Israel) and partially disengaged organisationally, it was accused of holding on to radical views; it had not reached the stage of de-radicalisation by de-legitimising terrorist violence. To a large extent this was true. In 1996, when the peace process was faltering, some Fatah cadres called for a return to the armed struggle at a Fatah meeting.

However, this was 'not the majority view' [25]. In 1995 and 1997, between 39 and 43 per cent of Palestinians believed that armed resistance was legitimate; 32 per cent even supported suicide bombing operations [26]. Marwan Barghouti, a rising leader in Fatah, cited such public support for armed struggle as limiting the ability of Fatah to organise more demonstrations in opposition

to attacks on Israeli civilians. Barghouti also stated that as 'Fatah is committed to the OPP... we are opposed to all armed attacks. But the important point is to convince Hamas not to perpetrate terror attacks inside Israel'. This reiterates the unsigned agreement between Fatah and Hamas to calm tensions between the factions. Implicitly, this allowed Hamas to operate against Israeli targets inside the occupied territories, but not in areas under the PA or in Israel itself [27]. In essence, Fatah had i) felt that renewing armed struggle was an option for the future if the peace process failed and ii) opposed Islamist attacks inside Israel and supported the PA in acting against these operations. Yet iii) it did not support the PA in any crackdown upon other groups involved in armed struggle in the occupied territories, either because a) they themselves supported the principle of armed struggle or b) they knew the 'Palestinian street' would have reacted negatively. De-legitimisation was limited to attacks within Israel and even that was conditional upon progress in the peace process. 'Armed struggle' within the occupied territories was still a catch-all term which encompassed attacks on civilians (unarmed settlers) as well as Israeli soldiers. Therefore, 'de-radicalisation' was non-existent within Fatah during the OPP; the policy of selective disengagement had now been changed to a prohibition of attacks 'on Israeli civilians inside Israel'. Yet the crossing of this 'red line' itself was conditional on the state of the peace process. In retrospect, it was probably too much to expect that Fatah, an organisation that has been involved in armed struggle for forty years, and the Palestinian people, whose identity was largely forged in the shadow of displacement and resistance [28], to de-legitimise all forms of violence against Israelis - soldiers and civilians - while at the same time seeing Israeli settlements increasing and occupation policies being tightened.

Israel's expectation regarding the disengagement process was one of de-radicalisation, including behavioural and organisational disengagement. It was also to be unconditional [29] - not just for Fatah but for every Palestinian group carrying arms. For most Israelis, progress in the peace process was conditional upon comprehensive disengagement [30] or, at the very least, full behavioural disengagement. The actual disengagement process that Fatah was engaged in was selective - a mixture of behavioural disengagement with organisational disengagement, conditional on progress in the peace process. De-radicalisation was either non-existent or very limited. It mirrored the other aspects of disengagement and was never clear-cut and comprehensive. The perceived failure of the Palestinians and their leaders to unconditionally de-legitimise all forms of violence led the Israeli public to believe Arafat was not truly committed to peaceful co-existence under a two-state solution, but remained intent on a phased program of destroying Israel [31]. However, the entire disengagement process was closely linked to progress in the peace process. The main underlying assumption had been that the Palestinians would substitute the armed struggle for a diplomatic approach based on negotiations that would ultimately lead to a resolution of the conflict.

It was inevitable that Fatah's disengagement would be conditional, especially after they lost their main trump card (recognising Israel) as a condition to enter negotiations. Fatah was actually

quite successful in behavioural and organisational disengagement, and the only exception were the Fatah Hawks which were used to control non-conforming Palestinians. Yet this was a choice of Arafat - he could have re-integrated them too. Arafat was successful in co-opting Fatah into the PA. This allowed him to successfully disengage Fatah behaviourally from the armed struggle, even though some Fatah members supported a renewed taking up of arms. Fatah did try to de-legitimise violence against civilians in Israel as these attacks had the most devastating effect on Israel's perception about the utility of the peace process. However, Fatah did not de-legitimise other forms of violence. In the end, Fatah was responsive to the Islamist attacks against Israelis and how the Palestinian population judged these. Yet these attacks highlighted for Israel Fatah's inability to de-legitimise them. However, the failure to de-legitimise all violence would not have been such a problem if there had been behavioural disengagement amongst all Palestinian factions, which, as the OPP stipulated, was the responsibility of the PA to bring about.

Conclusion

The 'disengagement process' conceptualization introduced here appears to be a useful tool for analysing the different stages a terrorist organisation can pass through. While, ideally, the goal is comprehensive disengagement, mixed forms of disengagement can definitely be valuable and contribute to success as long as the incentives that initiated the process can be maintained and promises made related to them fulfilled. The conditionality and reversibility of the disengagement process do not undermine the utility of the disengagement process concept; rather they are key parts of it. If the leadership of a group is to decide to halt the use of terrorism, it will need to gain control of alternative resources and action strategies as only these allow it to pursue the same, or more limited goals, without the use of terrorist tactics. Incentives, however, have to be distributed amongst the members of the group. Replacement incentives will have to be in some ways similar to the ones that led members to join the group in the first place. In the case of Fatah-PLO this led to the peace process. Obviously, the failure to deliver sufficient incentives to all stakeholders means that (some) members were prone to resort to violence again. However, the peace process provided also other incentives. These are long-term and still have an impact on Fatah members today. The PA is a driving force for disengagement because it can provide distinct material incentives to co-opt fighters. If and when it also enjoys widespread legitimacy, the PA could probably also regain and enforce a monopoly of power.

Despite the fact that the disengagement process can be conditional and reversible, it is a fact that the group entered a process, which would bring about changes. First of all, there are the changes that a group has to make to begin the disengagement process, both at the declaratory and behavioural levels. Fatah-PLO had to change its strategy and its goals structurally (e.g. changes in discourse, changes in its charter, and changing also to some extent its supporting constituencies and alliances). All this was necessary in order to be in a position to obtain gains from disengagement. Secondly, organisational disengagement leads to major structural changes.

Yet it depends on how this type of disengagement is brought about. Fatah's organisational disengagement only saw its members become PA security sector members. They could re-engage in armed struggle at an individual level quite easily. Nonetheless, they still remain mostly part of the PA. Thirdly, de-radicalisation changes the outlook of individuals regarding the use of violence. A reversal at this stage is less likely, especially if there has been comprehensive disengagement and if de-radicalisation is mirrored at the social level - thus diminishing the role of the complicit surround [32]. Fatah did behaviourally disengage from terrorism against Israel during the OPP. Although organisational disengagement was a mixed bag, integration into the PA's structures was essential for ensuring behavioural disengagement. Failure to de-radicalize was, however, understandable in the given context. Yet the leadership could have done a great deal more to prepare its members and the population for the major cognitive shifts required. Although the al-Aqsa Intifada saw Fatah pick up the gun against Israel again, this should in fact not have come as a surprise. The fact that Fatah has reverted to the position *during* the Oslo period and not to its position *before* the Oslo period, suggests that the disengagement process has had a long-term effect on the organisation, with armed struggle being replaced by diplomacy by its members for the first time in its history. Overall, Fatah's disengagement process has been partly successful; the likelihood it will commit itself to a terroristic form of struggle in the same way as it did in the 1970's is very small indeed.

About the Author: Gordon Clubb holds a Masters degree from the University of St Andrews (Scotland). A former intern of St. Andrews' Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV), he has written a number of articles on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Currently he is preparing for his PhD.

Notes

[1] John Horgan and Michael Boyle. 'A Case against 'Critical Terrorism Studies''. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol.1, No.1, 2008, p. 57. Political violence includes a wide variety of tactics, ranging from coordinated stone throwing and arson to violent demonstrations, destruction of property and sabotage on the lower end to macro-violence such as ethnic cleansing, mass deportation, large-scale massacres and genocide on the upper end.

[2] Martha Crenshaw. *Terrorism, Legitimacy, and Power*. Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 1983, p. 1.

[3] Ian S. Lustick. 'Terrorism in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Targets and Audiences'. In: M. Crenshaw (Ed.) . *Terrorism in Context*, University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, p. 516.

[4] Steven Kull et al. *Public Opinion in the Islamic World on Terrorism, al-Qaeda, and US Policies, World Public Opinion*. College Park, University of Maryland, 2009.

[5] Horgan noted that disengagement can be voluntary, involuntary, or somewhere in between. This article recognises that there are certainly external forces that pushed Fatah into disengagement; in that sense it was not entirely voluntary.

[6] The 'disengagement process' is described as the 'de-radicalisation process' by Omar Ashour. However, as de-radicalisation suggests a process that is cognitive (Fink and Hearne; 2008, p. 3) or psychological (as Horgan labels it), in this article I prefer to use the term de-radicalisation to describe this part, whereas disengagement is referring to the overall process.

[7] Groups do not always begin a disengagement process knowingly; they might declare a temporary cease-fire, which they might not see as the beginning of a 'disengagement process'.

[8] Omar Ashour. *The De-radicalisation of Jihadists*. London, Routledge, 2009, p. 6.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[10] Seth Jones and Martin Libicki. *How Terrorist Groups End*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008, p. 5.

[11] M. Crenshaw, in D. Rapoport. *Terrorist Organisations*, London: Frank Cass, 2001, p. 78.

[12] Nigel Parsons. *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, Oxon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005, p. 130.

[13] *Ibid.*, 132.

[14] *Ibid.*, 158.

- [15] Ibid., 132.
- [16] Graham Usher. *Dispatches from Palestine*, London, Pluto Press, 1999, p.70; and *Journal of Palestine Studies*; Vol. 24, No. 3, 1995, p. 162.
- [17] Cherly Rubenberg. *The Palestinians: in Search of a Just Peace*. London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003, p. 337; Zacharia MacIntyre. Zubeidi: The Marked Man. *The Independent*, May 2004.
- [18] Jerusalem Media Communication Centre (JMCC).
- [19] Abu Zayyad; Brand New Fatah?, *Jerusalem Post*, 2009.
- [20] Nigel Parsons, op. cit., p. 130.
- [21] Benny Morris. *Righteous Victims*. New York, Vintage Books, 2001, p. 642.
- [22] Global Terrorism Database, START (University of Maryland); accessed on 17th August 2009.
- [23] *Journal of Palestine Studies*. Vol. 23, No. 4, 1994, p. 164.
- [24] Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs; August 1997; accessed on 17th August 2009.
- [25] G. Usher, op. cit., p. 137.
- [26] JMCC, 1995 and 1997.
- [27] Menachem Klein, in: Bruce Weitzman and Efraim Inbar. *Religious Radicalism in the Greater Middle East*, London, Frank Cass, 1997, p. 123.
- [28] Anders Strindberg. 'The Damascus-Based Alliance of Palestinian Forces: A Primer'. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Spring, 2000), p. 62.
- [29] G. Usher, op. cit., p. 67.
- [30] Ibid.
- [31] Alan Dowty. *Israel/Palestine*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2008, p.155.
- [32] Louise Richardson. *What Terrorists Want*. London, John Murray Publishers, 2006.

U.S. Muslims after 9/11: Poll Trends 2001-2007

by Clark McCauley and Jennifer Stellar

Abstract

The terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001 brought increased attention to Muslims living in the United States. Results from four national polls of Muslim Americans conducted between 2001 and 2007 indicate that Muslim Americans feel increasingly negative about the direction in which America is heading and increasingly see the war on terrorism as a war on Islam.

Introduction

Since the events of September 11th, 2001, substantial research has been devoted to the thoughts and feelings of Americans towards Muslims living in the United States. A recent analysis of polls conducted in the U.S. from 2000 to 2006 showed that a relatively tolerant atmosphere of American sentiment towards Muslim Americans immediately after September 11th gave way to increasing feelings of concern and distrust as time passed [1]. In this report we analyze polls of Muslims living in the United States in order to determine what changes have occurred since 9/11 in U.S. Muslims' views of America and Americans [For the methodology utilized, see Appendix].

Results

We searched the four polls described in the Appendix to find where the same or substantively similar questions were used in more than one survey. The Tables note where items or responses were not identically worded. We considered ten repeated items and divided them into four content areas.

Political participation and satisfaction

With the Global War on Terrorism coming to the forefront in domestic politics as well as foreign policy, Muslim voters are bringing their voices into the public arena. The Pew Center estimates the population of U.S. Muslims of voting age at 1.4 million. In areas of high concentration, Muslims have the potential to have significant impact on elections. Polls in 2001, 2004, and 2007 indicate that the majority of Muslims are registered to vote (79%, 82%, 67%).

Table 1. *Are you registered to vote?* (percentages)

| | Zogby 2001 N=1781 | Zogby 2004 N=1846 | Pew 2007 N=1050 |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Yes | 79 | 82 | 67 |
| No | 21 | 17 | 30 |
| NS, DK, Refused | 1 | 1 | 3 |

It appears that Republican registrations may have fallen (17%, 18%, 9%, 7%) as more Muslim Americans identified themselves as independents or in alignment with minor parties such as the Libertarians (21%, no data, 24%, 35%).

Table 2. *What is your political party?* (percentages)

| | Zogby 2001 N=1781 | Zogby 2002 N=531 | Zogby 2004 N=1846 | Pew 2007 N=1050 |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Democrat | 40 | 36 | 40 | 37 |
| Republican | 17 | 18 | 9 | 7 |
| Independent/Minor Party | 21 | -- | 24 | 35 |
| NS, DK, Refused | 33 | 46 ^a | 28 | 21 |

^a Zogby reports Independent, Other, and Refused as 35%, No Response as 11%.

A disturbing trend is the growing Muslim dissatisfaction with “the way things are going in American society”. Polls in 2001, 2004 and 2007 show that dissatisfaction grew sharply (38%, 61%, 55%).

Table 3. *How satisfied are you overall with the way things are going in American society today?* (percentages)

| | Zogby2001 N=1781 | Zogby2004 N=1846 | Pew2007 ^a N=1050 |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Satisfied | 52 | 35 | 37 |
| Unsatisfied | 38 | 61 | 55 |
| NS, DK, Refused | 10 | 4 | 8 |

^a Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today?

Importance of Islam

Polls in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2007 show that the importance of Islam in the lives of Muslim Americans has remained consistently high for the great majority of Muslims (79%, 81%, 82%, and 72% say “very important”).

Table 4. *Would you say the role of Islam in your life is very important, somewhat important or not very important?* (percentages)

| | Zogby2001 N=1781 | Zogby2002 ^a N=531 | Zogby2004 N=1846 | Pew2007 ^b N=1050 |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Very important | 79 | 81 | 82 | 72 |
| Somewhat important | 16 | 13 | 14 | 18 |
| Not important | 5 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| NS, DK, Refused | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

^a Original scale from 1= not important to 10 = very important. Responses converted: 1-3 = Not important; 4-6 = Somewhat important; 7-10 = Very important.

^b How important is religion in your life? Responses converted: not too important and not at all important = Not important.

The same polls show that about half of Muslims (54%, 51%, 54%, 40%) attend mosque at least once a week. Note the stability of Zogby results (54-54%) in contrast to the lower report of weekly mosque attendance from **Pew2007** (40%); the lower percentage in the Pew poll is consistent with our suggestion in the Methods section that the Pew poll may have better represented Muslims who are less religious.

Table 5. *On average, how often do you attend the mosque for 'Salah' and 'Jum'ah' Prayer?* (percentages)

| | Zogby2001 N=1781 | Zogby 2002 ^a N=531 | Zogby2004 N=1846 | Pew 2007 ^b N=1050 |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| More than once a week | 31 | 22 | 29 | 17 |
| Once a week for <i>Jum'ah</i> prayer | 24 | 29 | 25 | 23 |
| Once or twice a month | 10 | 11 | 10 | 8 |
| A few times a year, especially for <i>Salah</i> | 14 | 16 | 16 | 18 |
| Seldom | 9 | 11 | 9 | 16 |
| Never | 11 | 11 | 10 | 18 |
| NS, DK, Refused | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

^a *Approximately how often do you attend a mosque for prayer?*

^b *On average, how often do you attend the mosque or Islamic center for Salah and Jum'ah prayer?*

It is also worth noting that the religiosity of Muslim Americans is only slightly higher than that reported in national surveys of all Americans. Polls taken between 1996 and 2004 show 59% - 64% of Americans saying that religion is very important in their lives, and 38% - 43% saying they attend religious services at least once a week. [2].

Perception of Bias and Discrimination

The belief that Islam and Muslims are unfairly portrayed in the media shows some indication of decline: 77% believed this in 2001, 76% in 2004, and 57% in 2007. Explanation of change toward a more positive view of the media between 2004 and 2007 is not obvious – perhaps due to growing media criticism of the war in Iraq as the presidential election approached -- but the important result is that consistently over the years more than half of U.S. Muslims feel the media are biased against them.

Table 6. *Do you think the media is fair in its portrayal of Muslims and Islam?* (percentages)

| | Zogby2001 N=1781 | Zogby2004 N=1846 | Pew2007 ^a N=1050 |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Yes fair | 13 | 17 | 26 |
| No biased against | 77 | 76 | 57 |
| Biased in favour/Depends | -- | -- | 6 |
| NS, DK, Refused | 10 | 7 | 11 |

^a*Do you think that coverage of Islam and Muslims by American news organizations is generally fair or unfair?*
 Response converted: Unfair = Biased against.

In contrast, report of personal experience of discrimination shows some indication of a peak in 2004: 26% reported discrimination in 2002, 40% in 2004 and 27% in 2007. Again, explanation of this variation is not obvious. Increase from 2002 to 2004 may be a function of the phrasing of the Zogby items, which asked about discrimination experienced since 9/11.

Table 7. *Aside from restrictions on religious expression at work, have you yourself suffered anti-Muslim discrimination, harassment, verbal abuse, or physical attack since Sept. 11?*

| | Zogby 2002 N=531 | Zogby 2004 ^a N=1846 | Pew 2007 ^b N=1050 |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Yes | 26 | 40 | 27 |
| No | 74 | 59 | 71 |
| NS, DK, Refused | 0 | 1 | 1 |

^a*Have you personally experienced discrimination since September 11th?*

^b*And thinking more generally - NOT just about the past 12 months - have you ever been the victim of discrimination as a Muslim living in the United States?*

Any experiences of discrimination between 2002 and 2004 would contribute to an increased reporting of discrimination. However, this interpretation contributes nothing to understanding the drop from 40 to 27 percent reporting discrimination in 2007; indeed the **Pew 2007** item asks about “ever” being a victim of discrimination in the U.S., suggesting that, if anything, the **Pew2007** percentage should be higher than the **Zogby2004** percentage.

Despite this uncertainty about variation over time, there is an important consistency in finding that at least a quarter of U.S. Muslims report personal experience of anti-Muslim discrimination.

It is worth noting that the percentages of Muslims reporting experience of discrimination (26%-40%) are below the 46% of African-Americans who reported in 2007 that they were victims of discrimination [3]. Nevertheless, Muslims in the U.S. report significant levels of discrimination.

War on Terrorism

Polls in 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2007 show that Muslim American support for U.S. military action in Afghanistan decreased (52%, 53%, 35%, 35%).

Table 8. *Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the U.S. military action against Afghanistan? (percentages)*

| | Zogby 2001 ^a N=1781 | Zogby 2002 ^b N=531 | Zogby 2004 ^a N=1846 | Pew 2007 ^c N=1050 |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Support | 52 | 53 | 35 | 35 |
| Oppose | 43 | 42 | 53 | 48 |
| NS, DK, Refused | 6 | 6 | 11 | 17 |

^a Responses converted: support and somewhat support = Support; somewhat oppose and oppose = Oppose.

^b U.S. military action in Afghanistan after Sept 11 was justified under the circumstances. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree? Responses converted: strongly agree and somewhat agree = Support; somewhat disagree and strongly disagree = Oppose.

^c Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan? Responses converted: right decision = Support; wrong decision = Oppose.

Events between 2002 and 2004 may explain the shift in sentiment. The entrance of the opposition forces into Kandahar and the end of the Taliban authority in that region in December of 2001 appeared to open an opportunity for democracy and stability in Afghanistan. However, Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan and stagnation in the war in Iraq may have contributed to increasing doubts about U.S. military operations in Afghanistan.

In Gallup polls conducted in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2007, national samples of Americans were asked whether the “U.S. had made a mistake in sending military forces to Afghanistan.” The percentage saying it was a mistake increased (9%, 6%, 25%, 25%) [4]. Thus opposition to the war in Afghanistan is consistently at least 25 percentage points higher for Muslim Americans than for other Americans.

Table 9. *Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the war in Iraq?* (percentages)

| | Zogby 2004 ^a N=1846 | Pew 2007 ^b N=1050 |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Support | 13 | 12 |
| Oppose | 88 | 75 |
| NS, DK, Refused | 6 | 13 |

^a Responses converted: *strongly support and somewhat support = Support; somewhat oppose and strongly oppose = Oppose.*

^b *Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force against Iraq?*
Responses converted: *right decision = Support; wrong decision = Oppose.*

Only **Zogby2004** and **Pew2007** inquired about Muslim opinions toward the war in Iraq, but the great majority of respondents (88% and 75%) opposed this war and few supported it (13%, 12%). In contrast, *USA Today*/Gallup polls (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/106783/opposition-iraq-war-reaches-new-high.aspx>) show that the percentage of Americans saying that the U.S. “made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq” ranged between 40% and 50% in 2004, rising to about 60% in 2007 [5]. As for the war in Afghanistan, Muslim opposition to the war in Iraq is consistently higher than for other Americans, at least 15 percentage points higher.

A central question for U.S. Muslims is whether the US is fighting a war against terrorism, or whether the Global War on Terrorism is a war on Islam. Muslim Americans show a striking decrease in belief that the US war is against terrorism (from 67% in 2001 to 26% in 2007), and a parallel increase in the belief that the war is actually about Islam (from 18% in 2001 to 55% in 2007).

Table 10. *In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, do you feel the U.S. is fighting a war on terrorism or a war against Islam?* (percentages)

| | Zogby 2001 N=1781 | Zogby 2002 ^a N=531 | Zogby 2004 ^b N=1846 | Pew 2007 ^c N=1050 |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Terrorism | 67 | 41 | 33 | 26 |
| Islam | 18 | 31 | 38 | 55 |
| Neither/Both | -- | 20 | -- | 2 |
| NS, DK, Refused | 16 | 7 | 29 | 17 |

^a Some describe the U.S. worldwide response to the Sept. 11 attacks as a war on terrorism. Others say it is a war on Islam. Which do you think is more accurate?

^b Do you feel the U.S. is fighting a war on terrorism or a war against Islam?

^c Do you think the U.S.-led war on terrorism is a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism or don't you believe that?

Responses converted: sincere effort = Terrorism; don't believe that = Islam.

Conclusion

Polls of minority groups are made difficult and expensive by the need to screen out majority members from random sampling of respondents. Muslims make up about one half of one percent of the U.S. population, a very small minority for which ordinary sampling methods are prohibitively expensive. Nevertheless we found four national polls of U.S. Muslims conducted between 2001 and 2007, and looked for trends over time for items that were repeated or substantially the same across polls.

The four polls show both stability and change in U.S. Muslims. Results stable over time include large majorities registered to vote, large majorities saying that Islam is very important in their lives, large majorities opposing the war in Iraq, and a simple majority reporting attendance at mosque at least once a week. Indications of small changes included switching from Republican to Independent parties, a possible peak in personal experience of discrimination around 2004, and a possible decrease in perceived media bias against Muslims between 2004 and 2007.

Large and consistent changes over time – too large in our judgment to be attributed to any kind of sample variations – were found for three issues. Satisfaction with the way things are going in the U.S. declined from 52% in 2001 to 35% in 2004 to 12% in 2006. Support for U.S. military action in Afghanistan declined from 52% - 53% in 2001 and 2002 to 35% in 2004 and 2007. Perception of the war on terrorism as a war on Islam increased from 18% in 2001, to 31% in 2002, to 38% in 2004, and to 55% in 2007.

Interpretation of these changes cannot be made with confidence, but tentatively we suggest that all three of the large changes can be linked with the Global War on Terrorism. GWOT was the most salient U.S. government policy between the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the Pew poll in 2007. Increasing dissatisfaction with the way things are going in the U.S. was likely linked with increasing opposition to the war on terrorism. In turn, a major element of GWOT in these years was the continuing U.S. military action in Afghanistan; Muslim Americans moved toward increasing opposition to this intervention. In the context of very high and stable Muslim opposition to the war in Iraq, the major shifts in the opinions of Muslim Americans reported here may signal reduced willingness of Muslim Americans to cooperate in the war against terrorism.

We began by noting that polls assessing American opinions about Muslims since 9/11 indicate a lack of understanding coupled with growing distrust of Muslim Americans (*1*). The polls we have reviewed indicate that at least half of Muslim Americans feel the media are biased against Islam and at least a quarter feel victimized by anti-Muslim discrimination. Those seeing the war on terrorism as a war on Islam have increased and included about half of U.S. Muslims by 2007. Taken together, the polls of American opinions about Muslims and the polls of Muslim Americans suggest that there may be difficult times ahead for Muslims in America. Perhaps President Obama, himself the son of an African Muslim, can halt or reverse these unhappy trends.

Interpretation of these changes cannot be made with confidence, but tentatively we suggest that all three of the large changes documented here can be linked with the Global War on Terrorism. GWOT was the most salient U.S. government policy between the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the Pew poll in 2007, and increasing dissatisfaction with the way things are going in the U.S. was likely linked with increasing opposition to the war on terrorism. Specifically, the most salient elements of GWOT in these years were the continuing U.S. military action in Afghanistan that began in 2001, and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In addition to high and stable opposition to U.S. military forces in Iraq, U.S. Muslims show increasing opposition to U.S. forces in Afghanistan and increasing perception of the war on terrorism as a war on Islam. Thus it seems likely that increasing dissatisfaction with the way things are going in the country and increasing doubts about the war on terrorism are both reflecting opposition to U.S. forces in Muslim countries. Consistent with this interpretation, analyses not reported here show significant correlations between opposition to the Iraq war and seeing the war on terrorism as a war on Islam. In other words, individuals opposed to U.S. forces in Iraq are more likely than other U.S. Muslims to see a war on Islam.

Finally, we note that increasing doubts about the war on terrorism cannot easily be attributed to the actions of Al Qaeda. In our results, it is increasing disagreement with U.S. actions in Afghanistan that most obviously parallels increasing percentages seeing the war on terrorism as a

war on Islam. But there is little doubt that framing the war on terrorism as war on Islam is useful for AQ, as this framing represents sympathy for AQ's professed goals of defending Islam even if sympathizers do not agree with AQ's attacks on civilians and martyrdom missions. A war on Islam is the "simple populist message" identified by Brynjar Lia as an AQ 'selling point' for Muslims in many countries [6]. From this perspective, the appeal of AQ is in part a function of Muslim perceptions of U.S. actions. This is a dynamic perspective in which AQ's brand or image depends as much on U.S. actions as on AQ's actions.

APPENDIX on Methodology Utilized

We reviewed four national polls of U.S. Muslims conducted between 2001 and 2007, including brief description of their sampling methods, then discussed some of the issues raised in comparing results across these polls. Three narrower polls of U.S. Muslims were not included in our analyses: Zogby International's 2003 Detroit Arab American Survey (<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/cocoon/ICPSR/STUDY/04413.xml>), Zogby's 2006 Four-State Arab-American Survey (<http://www.truthout.org/article/how-arab-americans-will-vote-2006>), and Zogby's 2007 Arab-American Identity Survey (<http://www.aaiusa.org/page/-/Polls/AAIIdentity2007Final%20Report.pdf>). These three polls did not aim for national surveys of U.S. Muslims.

Four Polls of U.S. Muslims 2001-2007

Zogby2001: The American Muslim Poll (n=1781) was conducted in November and December 2001 by the Muslims in American Public Square (MAPS), supported by the Pew Research Center (<http://pewresearch.org/about/>) in collaboration with Zogby International (<http://www.zogby.com/>). In this and other polls considered here, all respondents were 18 years of age or older. A telephone list was created by matching the zip codes for 300 Islamic centers nationwide against their respective local telephone exchanges; listings of common Muslim surnames were then identified from the local telephone exchanges and a random sample of names were called using Random Digit Dialing (RDD). This approach under-represents African-American Muslims, many of whom do not have Muslim names. Thus, an additional sample of African American Muslims was obtained in face-to-face interviews conducted 7 - 9 December 2001 at locations in New York, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, GA, and Detroit, MI. The percentage of African-American respondents was weighted to reflect 20% of the American Muslim population.

Zogby2002: The Hamilton College Muslim American Poll (n=521) was designed by Sociology Professor Dennis Gilbert and a team of Hamilton students and supported by the Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center. It was conducted in April 2002 in collaboration with Zogby International. A national call list was created by software that identifies common Muslim names in telephone

listings, an approach that, as already noted, probably underweights African-American Muslims (<http://www.hamilton.edu/news/MuslimAmerica/MuslimAmerica.pdf>). Published results were gender-weighted to correct for 60/40 representation of men and women, but results presented in this paper are unweighted.

Zogby2004: The American Muslim Poll (n=1846) was conducted in August and September 2004 by Muslims in the American Public Square (MAPS) supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts in conjunction with Zogby International. Telephone interviews were carried out with a nationwide sample of American Muslims using the same methods as for Zogby2001 - except that no additional face-to-face sample was included.

Pew2007: The Muslim Americans Survey (n=1050) was conducted by Schulman, Ronca, and Bucuvalas Incorporated (SRBI) between January and April of 2007, according to the specifications of the Pew Research Center. Telephone interviews were conducted in English (83%), Arabic (11%), Urdu (3%), and Farsi (3%). The sampling frame had three parts: two RDD samples and one re-contact sample. The first sample came from a sample frame that ranked U.S. counties by percentage Muslims (using data from government surveys, commercial lists of Muslim names, and self-identified Muslims in previous Pew RDD national polls). RDD within the top three quartiles of counties produced 354 completed interviews. The second sample began with a list of 450,000 households thought to contain at least one Muslim, purchased from Experian, a commercial credit and market research firm. Analysis of names by Ethnic Technologies, another commercial firm, produced a sampling frame from which RDD produced 533 completed interviews. The third sample re-contacted all Muslims identified in previous Pew national surveys 2000-2006, producing 163 completed interviews. The complexities and advantages of this multiple-strata polling are detailed in pages 57-71 of the Pew Research Center report, *Muslim Americans: Middle class and mostly mainstream*. (2)

Comparability of Surveys

Although there have been other polls of U.S. Muslims since 9/11 (see for instance Council of American-Islamic Relations poll, http://www.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/American_Muslim_Voter_Survey_2006.pdf), we believe that the four polls reviewed here provide the best available foundation for comparisons over time. The ideal of comparison over time would be repeated random samples from the same sampling frame, with the same poll items used by the same polling organization for the same sponsor. Frame and organization are linked because the polling organization produces the sampling frame, and two organizations will seldom produce the same frame, even for the same target population of interest. Similarly, sponsorship is important because the preferences of those supporting a survey can make a difference in the sampling frame and the items used. Thus it is important to note that the four surveys examined here all involved either Zogby International or the Pew Research Center, who

together produced the first survey of interest, *Zogby2001*.

The two polls that come closest to an ideal comparison over time are **Zogby2001** and **Zogby2004**. Both were conducted by telephone by Zogby International in association with Muslims in the American Public Square (MAPS) and the Pew Foundation. Both aimed at a national sample and used a sample frame based on Muslim names. The only difference was the addition of face-to-face African-American interviews to **Zogby2001** but not **Zogby2004**. Similarly, **Zogby2002** was a national Muslim survey using name identification to create the sample frame, although it was sponsored by Hamilton College rather than the Pew Center.

Finally, **Pew2007** was a national poll that differed from all the Zogby polls in joining three different sample frames, interviewing in four languages, and developing a painstaking approach to estimating the population and distribution of U.S. Muslims (1.4 million Muslims 18 years old or older). This 'gold standard' of Muslim surveys cost over one million dollars. It may have reached less religious Muslims than the Zogby surveys, which began in 2001, as already noted, with the zip codes of 300 Islamic Centers.

Statistical and Substantive Significance of Differences over Time

Statistically, the standard error for a percentage in a sample of 1000 is about two percentage points, and responses to the same item in two independent random samples of $n=1000$ are significantly different ($p<.05$) if the percentages differ by more than about five percentage points. The complex sampling frames used in Muslim polls suggest larger standard errors for percentages; for instance the Pew Research Center (2007, p. 57) estimates a standard error of 2.5 percentage points for **Pew2007** percentages. Using this estimate, percentages from two samples of 1000 differ significantly if the difference exceeds about 7 percentage points. Using a more conservative criterion of substantive significance, we ignored in this article differences between surveys of less than ten percentage points, and focus especially on consistent trends over time that amount to change of 15 percentage points or more.

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Notes

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- [4] Gallup.com, (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/116233/afghanistan.aspx>).
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BOOK REVIEW

Peter Waldmann. *Radikalisierung in der Diaspora. Wie Islamisten im Westen zu Terroristen werden* [Radicalization in the Diaspora. How Islamists become Terrorists in the West] Hamburg, Murmann Verlag, 2009. 248 pp. ISBN 978-3-86774-052-4.

Reviewed by Alex P. Schmid

Terrorism research tends to concentrate heavily on certain groups (like al-Qaeda), certain techniques (like suicide bombings) or certain themes (like radicalization). With so many researchers covering the same narrow grounds and using similar data, many new monographs tend to have less and less added value. There are exceptions and Peter Waldmann's new book is one of them. *Die Zeit*, Germany's quality paper, has noted what insiders knew for some time, namely, that his analyses belong to the very best writings on the subject of terrorism. However, he publishes mainly in German and Spanish and therefore he is less well known in the English-speaking world. His latest book on terrorism, his fifth, tries to answer the question why Muslim migrants who came to the West to improve their standards of living turn against their host societies and why some of them even attack their hosts with terrorist tactics. He attempts to interpret religious radicalism on the basis of the dilemmas arising from migrants' experiences in diaspora situations. His focus is, on the one hand, on the countries of origin of those migrants who turned violent and, on the other hand, on the specific migration policies of the host countries, especially the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Germany. That is a novel angle in the literature; so far the type of national integration policies vis-à-vis immigrants and the "style" with which immigrants have been dealt with by the governments of host countries have hardly been objects of investigation in the search for root causes. As a sociologist (Waldmann is emeritus professor at the University of Augsburg), he looks at the phenomenon of diasporas from the micro-, meso- and macro-levels. Interpreting the migrants' situation as a *challenge* (in the sense of Arnold Toynbee) he discusses three basic *responses* of migrants vis-à-vis host societies: full assimilation, conditional integration or rejection of the 'decadent' West, coupled with an exaggerated idealisation of the home country's traditions.

Radicalisation is, then, one possible response to the psychic dilemma produced by life in the diaspora situation, an answer to the problem of a split identity and lack of recognition by the host society. Only about 10 percent of the migrants show radical tendencies; far fewer become violent extremists. The latter, however, tend to gravitate towards the formation of "ideological groups" similar to the late 19th century Anarchists. Waldmann shows that four characteristics of such groups (identified first by Vladimir Nahirny in the 1950s for Russian Anarchists), also apply to contemporary *salafist* extremists in the diaspora: (i) total devotion to common ideas or a common faith, (ii) a dichotomous world view that sees "them" and "us" in black-and-white terms, (iii) a de-individualisation of group members due to the commitment to the cause, and (iv) a

renunciation and systematic suppression of all spontaneous feelings of affection in favour of ideologically predetermined stereotypes (p.64). Waldmann then links the situation of violent radical Muslims in Western diaspora situations to the historical role of migration in the Muslim world, beginning with the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina and his victorious return to his root society. With this historical analogy in mind, Western countries hosting Muslims are seen by jihadists chiefly as a convenient launch pad for the reconquest of the lost homeland (p.76). For Bin Laden this is primarily Saudi Arabia, for Ayman Al Zawahiri this is Egypt while Afghanistan or 'Londonistan' were staging grounds for engineering a revolution at home. Assimilation or integration are not the goal of Muslim immigrants in the diaspora who turned radical. Waldmann then differentiates and qualifies this general picture by discussing the experiences of different generations and classes of migrants and their children, synthesizing a broad array of recent sociological research on various levels of analysis.

While Waldmann's volume is not based on new case study work of his own, he offers perceptive comparisons between state responses, a broad, sociologically and historically informed, perspective of diasporas, and a critical but nuanced questioning of existing dominant interpretations of radicalism. Together, these provide depth and richness to this remarkable volume. *(Reviewed by Alex P. Schmid)*

New Literature on Terrorism and Political Violence:

Monographs and Edited Volumes published in 2009, selected by Gillian Duncan (CSTPV, University of St. Andrews)

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