Executive Summary: The Global Terrorism Phenomenon—What Do We Know, How Do We Know It, and What Do We Not Know—but Need to?

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Executive Summary: The Global Terrorism Phenomenon – What Do We Know, How Do We Know It, and What Do We Not Know - But Need to? (Editorial Board)

It would be comforting to be able to find some constants, some footholds in our understanding of terrorism. It is, in fact, the element of mystery as to what drives people to collective violence that makes us uncomfortable -- that fills us with terror. Researchers, policy makers, those who must combat terrorism, and the public hope for some simple formula for radicalization, a program or set of programs that will prevent groups of people from deliberately targeting other people in order to meet their needs (political, economic, social, etc). There is no magic formula within this paper collection, but there are a variety of perspectives that, either in isolation or when integrated, provide new ways to think about terrorism and potentially to inform decisions that will abate this global phenomenon, not exacerbate it.

This paper collection entitled, “Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats: Current Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives on Root Causes, the Role of Ideology, and Programs for Counter-radicalization and Disengagement,” seeks to add insights without needlessly repeating what has been heard and read elsewhere. What separates this paper collection from the many others on this topic is the multiplicity of perspectives represented, both domestic and international, that span the spectrum of social sciences. To do this, over forty authors were asked to provide perspectives on various aspects of terrorism: root causes, dynamics of Violent Non-State Actors (VNSAs), the role of ideology in terrorism, and potential solutions for counter-radicalization, deradicalization, and disengagement from terrorism.

This paper collection builds on and substantially augments the recent RAND publication entitled, “Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together.” The RAND report looked at root causes, why people become terrorists, support for terrorism, how terrorism ends, disengagement and deradicalization, and strategic communications using the approach of surveying relevant literatures and then synthesizing the information – in many cases in very helpful factor trees that distill and show interrelationships between key factors. This collection has a few survey papers bolstered by numerous empirical analyses as well as comprehensive papers on select topics (e.g., Pakistan) and papers by international authors expressing essentially “first person” perspectives on key terrorism issues, particularly ideology and counterterrorism solutions. This allows for greater “drill down” in some areas as well as an understanding on what current empirical research shows us about terrorism.

The viewpoint throughout is that terrorism, and indeed what we know about terrorism, is DYNAMIC. There is no formula (condition a + grievance b + group dynamic c + ideology d = collective violence) that applies. Terrorism is the result of interactions between human beings – who live in an environment with other individuals and groups, with a government that does or does not meet their needs and expectations, who interact on a daily basis with others, who they may increasingly identify with radicals based on a variety of reasons, who may have experienced trauma and/or perceived discrimination either first hand or indirectly (e.g., Internet videos), who may meet a charismatic leader and/or hear a resonant message that meshes with their psychological vulnerabilities. The message may frame their grievance in terms of an all-encompassing worldview that fosters a sense of a conflict they are currently experiencing as a “cosmic war” in which they can (and indeed must) participate in a noble fight against a
demonized enemy.\(^1\) It can start in a variety of ways and it can also end, as the recent RAND report outlined, in a variety of ways: the actors can change their minds about the ideology that justified their actions, give up or be arrested or killed or appeased by the government, or lose so many group members that it is no longer feasible or worth carrying on the fight. It is a (non-linear, complex, or even chaotic) fluid dance with many moving parts; thus, it cannot be expressed in simple “if-then” statements or simple causal diagrams. This paper collection also boldly steps into the deafening silence on the topic of “do ideology and/or religion motivate terrorism?” and provides some surprising thoughts on this controversial topic.

To frame the topic being addressed, we start with a definition of terrorism and an assessment of the current threat posed by terrorism, both internationally and domestically. There is a plethora of definitions for terrorism – a 1988 study by the U.S. Army counted 109.\(^2\) The two offered here are consistent with the key elements found in most definitions. Terrorism is defined by U.S. Law (U.S. Code Title 22, Ch.38, Para. 2656f(d)) as the “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents” and by the Oxford English Dictionary as “a policy intended to strike with terror those against whom it is adopted; the employment of methods of intimidation; the fact of terrorising or condition of being terrorised.” Fundamentally, terrorism occurs when non-state organizations employ violence for political purposes and when the target of that violence is civilian (or military in non-combat settings), and the immediate purpose is to instill fear in a population.

“Bumper sticker” insights from the overall paper include...

- No “one size fits all” in terms of a terrorist profile, radicalization trajectory, level of extremism, motivations, organization characteristics, and counter-terrorism responses or solutions
- Our understanding of terrorism can and should be based on empirical data, as well as case studies, to best inform strategy and policy
- Terrorism is not new, but new technology is a “game changer” in terms of motivation (e.g., Internet videos provoke experience of trauma, like in conflict zones), recruiting, training, potential lethality, and even tactics selection
- Root causes are necessary in terms of the susceptibility for the emergence of individuals or groups likely to use terrorism as a tactic, but not sufficient
- Group dynamics are necessary as are charismatic leaders or instigators, but not sufficient
- Credible messages and leaders/counselors are necessary for deradicalization/disengagement, but not sufficient
- Ideology is important at least as a way to frame issues and justify actions


• Individual solutions exist but must be tailored to the level of extremism and role (instigator, perpetrator, and supporter) and be combined to truly combat radicalization and terrorism

This collection is organized in five sections, each of which contains papers that address key aspects of the contemporary terrorist phenomenon and what is known about those that engage in terrorism: instigators, perpetrators, and supporters. The collection begins with an overview that sets the stage for where threats exist and are emerging. The next section reviews research on the root causes of terrorism and provides diverse views concerning the economic and political conditions and new information environments that foster terrorism. The next section on dynamics of violent non-state actors (VNSA) considers social networking and group dynamics that foster and support terrorism. Ideology is increasingly implicated in terrorism, and the section on Ideology and VNSAs covers diverse viewpoints on the role of ideology as a cause or consequence of terrorism. The final section provides several information and perspectives on the effectiveness of various counter-radicalization, deradicalization and disengagement programs and research on their likely effectiveness in combating or de-escalating violent activity. The first three sections provide important updates to the established literature on terrorism.

Prologue – Global Terrorism Overview

How serious is the current global terrorism phenomenon? Rik Legault’s (P.1) review informs us that while terrorist attacks since the turn of the century have become progressively more dangerous worldwide, with an increasing likelihood of death and injury in a terrorist attack, they are still very rare – 100 times rarer than homicides in the U.S. Attacks on the U.S. are more likely to be on foreign soil and target selection is primarily a function of proximity.

According to James Lutz (P.2), the greatest domestic (U.S.) threat is from extreme right wing groups, including radical environmental groups. He points out that the underlying issues that motivate white supremacist, anti-abortion, tax resistor, and animal rights groups have not gone away, nor have the groups. Furthermore, the election of an African-American president may fuel the grievances and fears of white supremacist organizations. While there have been a few homegrown militant Islamist terrorist cells spawned in the U.S., in New York, Virginia, New Jersey, and Florida, the groups that were serious and capable enough to plan and execute attacks appear to be the exceptions.

At the time of this writing, the situation in Pakistan is rapidly evolving. Bokhari’s paper (P.3) relates that the current conflicts in Pakistan are based on a central issue: the relationship between the state and religion and debate about the role Islam should play in society. Jihad, in Pakistan, initially focused on fighting the Indian army and the Hindu nation over the territory of Kashmir and shifted to focus sequentially on the Soviet enemy, freeing Muslim lands (including Palestine and Chechnya), and removing the “infidels” from Afghanistan. However, the current focus has switched to fighting the “apostate” Pakistani government and its institutions, directly questioning state legitimacy.

A number of disparate VNSA groups, with different leadership and different views on local and international issues, banded together in 2007 under the umbrella of the Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP). This coalition emerged over time as groups began to network together, resulting in better coordination and more effective targeting of key military and intelligence installations. The constituent groups in the TTP share a common enemy, the U.S., and are pro al Qaeda (AQ), but their tribal differences and disagreement on issues present fault lines and
potential vulnerabilities. Bokhari provides valuable background for understanding the varied faces of the Pakistani Taliban, and their often-competing allegiances. She describes key actors in the Pakistani Taliban movement - and details the successful creation of a nexus of cooperating VNSA organizations capable of challenging the central state authority of Pakistan.

In terms of the threat posed by AQ, Schweitzer (P.4) chronicles recent shifts in AQ activity from a decrease in violence in Iraq to escalating actions in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Al Qaeda is still viewed as the leader of the global militant jihad movement and the role model for affiliates. They focus on showcase attacks, using terrorism as “propaganda in action” as part of a global propaganda system that also effectively uses Internet and video production. Iraq has provided a useful distraction for AQ, diverting attention from post 9-11 pressure and stoking propaganda efforts centered on Iraq as an arena for the “war on Islam” and providing a training ground for the global jihad.

Afghanistan and Pakistan provide a base for joint planning between al Qaeda and the Taliban for attacks on Pakistani forces. Al Qaeda’s influence is notable in the increase in suicide bombings (e.g., Danish embassy bombing in Islamabad). Schweitzer notes as trends: the post 9-11 shift from a more centralized to a more distributed organization, the inspiration of loosely affiliated organizations to act, AQ activity in areas where the central government lacks full control and effective enforcement, the undermining of central Muslim states and the replacement of “heretical” regimes (e.g., Pakistan), and the continued use of dramatic mass-casualty attacks to establish preeminence. Schweitzer also details the anti-Israeli propaganda boost resulting from the latest Israeli incursion into Gaza (Operation Cast Lead) and increased efforts to penetrate the Israeli border with Lebanon as a likely launching point for an attack on Israel.

Invited Perspective Paper: LGen Honoré

Lieutenant General (Ret) Russel L. Honoré’s paper frames many of the issues in this collection. Based on his 37 years experience as a military commander, he has dealt first-hand with issues of inequality and political oppression, the conflicts these create, and how a transition to civilian government can mitigate social instability. Gen. Honoré first notes that terrorists themselves are not necessarily impoverished, marginalized, or driven by religious dogma. Especially with regard to beliefs, Gen. Honoré notes that “ideology doesn’t create extremists, it supports them.” Therefore, ideas, poverty, and social marginalization are not direct causes of terrorism. Islamic radicals come from societies where Western power and influence threatens those who have traditionally dominated. Their radicalized response is to justify the killing of innocents through the use of terrorist tactics.

Gen. Honoré explains that the antidote to radical terrorism is to provide the security and basic opportunity that people worldwide desire. Precision bombs kill innocents and play into terrorist rhetoric. Counter-ideologies often play into the hands of terrorists by giving the impression that outsiders are attempting to colonize and dominate. While U.S. actions may be necessary to initiate the transition to a sustainable civil society, such a transition must ultimately occur through the people themselves. If the U.S. and others are to be successful in security, stabilization, and reconstruction operations, then personnel must be fluent in the language of cultures in which they operate. Otherwise, setbacks and failures will occur.

In summary, Gen. Honoré argues that the way to combat terrorism successfully is to deny those who use terrorist tactics what they need: a population vulnerable to terrorist recruitment. This is done by realizing how people in other societies can provide for their own security and
political and economic opportunities in culturally appropriate ways, helping them to achieve this stability, and by leaving when the job is done.

Invited Perspective Paper – Captain Wayne Porter

Captain Wayne Porter (USN) argues that the United States is not fighting the war of ideas against militant jihadis effectively. He notes that the al Qaeda ideology is the focal point for like-minded extremists with a shared vision of establishing a caliphate that would be antithetical "to human rights, modern rule of law, freedom of expression and self-determination." He argues that combating this spreading ideology requires addressing the legitimate grievances of many Muslims around the world. He points out that to be effective, this cannot be done by Westerners acting alone, but must be done in partnership with moderate Muslims.

Section 1 – Root Causes of Terrorism

Researchers have long sought the root causes underlying terrorism, and this section presents new developments including empirical analyses and recent research highlighting findings from a variety of disciplines including political science, psychology, and neuroscience. The recent RAND counterterrorism report mentioned above covered this quite thoroughly and concluded that a systems approach that considers a multitude of factors operating in a context-sensitive manner is required for an understanding of the broad array of phenomena we classify as terrorism. This section offers restatement of previous findings, but takes a closer look at types of radicals, including a discussion of the key distinction between those that perpetrate (execute) violence and those that instigate it, types of radicalization mechanisms, and psychological factors. This section also identifies new factors that underlie the propensity for people to employ terrorist tactics, including the role of emotion in escalating violence and the relationship between neurobiology, crime, and violence.

Rieger’s paper (1.1) describing the “Anatomy of a Swamp” documents the results of empirical analyses based on Gallup World Poll data from 140 countries. The survey data on attitudes, beliefs, and opinions was used to develop a model to classify radicals and non-radicals. Two types of radicals were identified. Type One Radicals tended to be “intolerant” individuals with political grievance who lack confidence in national and local leaders due to unmet expectations for basic services, elections, and judicial systems who had also experienced hardship and tended to live in areas where fears about personal safety were common. Type Two Radicals tended to be victims of intolerance, downscale in terms of income, leader and ideology seeking, and espoused a willingness to sacrifice their lives for a cause. Countries with Type One or Type Two radicalism levels of at least three percent experience three times the amount of violent activity of those with lower levels of radicalism.

The next paper, by McCauley and Moskalenko (1.2), outlines a series of mechanisms for individual and group radicalization. Individual mechanisms, enabling an understanding of how individuals join a radicalized group, include radicalization through personal grievance (harm to self or loved ones), political grievance (strong identity with victimized group), the “slippery slope” resulting from increased identification with “in-group,” relationships (a family or loved one is radical), status or thrill-seeking, and “unfreezing” (the elimination of prior commitments that triggers the need for connection). Group level mechanisms, those that move a group to political radicalization and collective violence, include group polarization (the tendency for likeminded individuals to become more polarized (“us” versus “them”); radicalization resulting from competition either with the state, other groups, or within a group; and radicalization based
on the social reality power of isolation. McCauley and Moskalenko conclude, like the RAND study editors, that there is no one path to political radicalization and that graduation to illegal political violence depends, among other things, on culture, time, and place.

Lemieux’ paper (1.3) on psychological factors states that, although there are several psychology factors including trauma, humiliation, narcissism, and altruism that predispose them to violence and/or terrorism, it is the integration of individual level psyche, and that of small groups, that informs the “how” of terrorism. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the triggers that operate at an individual level in the appropriate intergroup and environmental (e.g., poverty and inequities) context and posits that identity (social, cultural, religious, and political) may be at the heart of understanding the motivations for terrorism. He further notes the sizable body of research that links in-group/out-group polarization, categorical thinking, and the dehumanization of “them” to an imperative to take action, intergroup violence, and terrorism. Psychology informs the understanding of how individuals process messages and how they are framed, a key in understanding the resonance with an ideology.

Speckhard’s paper (1.4) on contextual and motivational pathways to radicalization reinforces the importance of the need to understand radicalization as a process that engages on multiple levels: group (political grievance, and motivation for action), individual (vulnerabilities and motivations for involvement), ideology, and society. She highlights key differences in the ways violent radicalization occurs between those in conflict zones, often motivated by trauma and a desire for revenge (loss of homes, loved ones, jobs, and opportunities), and non-conflict zones, in which radicalization is highly contextual and varies according to local grievances (e.g., discrimination, socio-economic inequality, alienation, and marginalization) and which involves vulnerable individuals looking for adventure, sense of meaning, and/or belonging or protection. She states that, when coupled with a charismatic recruiter with messages of a potential mission, excitement, sense of meaning (a classic example of an “instigator” – see Mandel’s paper), the vulnerabilities of the individual mesh with the goals of a group. She states that exposure to violence (e.g., in homes or gangs) can effectively bring conflict zone effects into non-conflict zones and highlights an important difference in terrorism today – that modern technology, including the Internet, also serves as a mechanism for experiencing trauma and motivating revenge (as in a conflict zone).

Less discussed, but equally important, is the role of emotion in the escalation of hostility. Matsumoto (1.6) relates that group emotions serve as motivations for group behaviors, making attributions about in-group and out-group(s) and regulating social behaviors. As such, understanding key emotions such as anger and, specifically, the progression from anger to contempt to disgust is important in understanding the dissociation and breakdown of relationships and progression from aggression to hostility and violence. Tracking the change in emotions and understanding the mechanism by which hatred based on anger, contempt, and disgust is propagated (stories, narratives, and speeches made by leaders) across time provides a mechanism to look for and interpret intergroup behaviors and the propensity for hostility and collective violence.

Another field of research that is less often mentioned when discussing the root causes of terrorism are neurology and criminology. O’Connor (1.7) argues that a distinction should be made between grievance and unfairness, in that the latter is subjective, contingent on the reference group and sense of relative deprivation, and depends on the social setting. General
strain theory is unique in criminology in its emphasis on feelings of unfairness and grievance. Biosocial criminology, which draws on psychiatry, psychology, and medicine, has identified a number of factors related to violence including brain functioning (e.g., the correlation of criminal behavior with amygdala dysfunction combined with executive deficits), childhood development (e.g., traits that are strongly predictive of anti-social and violent behavior), and hormones/neurotransmitters (e.g., abnormally high levels of norepinephrine, acetylcholine, and endorphins result in the need for arousal, often through violence). Because unfairness, grievance, injustice, inequity, envy, and spite have been proven to have biological connections, it is imperative to consider both sociological and biological factors in understanding the propensity to engage in terrorism.

The empirical study of Victoroff and Adelman (1.5) found that perceived discrimination and employment status is a powerful factor in influencing individuals to justify violence. Their analysis of the Pew Muslim American Study data found that the belief that violence against civilians (i.e., terrorism) is justified to defend Islam was correlated with perceived discrimination for both European and U.S. Muslims. However, in the case of the European Muslims, direct experience of discrimination was the key factor, whereas for U.S. Muslims general discrimination (e.g., general suspicion or having been called names) was correlated with support for terrorism. They also found differences between European and U.S. Muslims on the question of whether unemployment was related to support for terrorism in that, for European Muslims worry about employment was correlated to support for terrorism whereas for U.S. Muslims, actual employment status was the key factor in support for violent behavior. Their results were compelling, albeit based on a small data set, and bear attention as well as providing focus for further research.

It is critical to make the distinction between instigators (originators of collective violence) and perpetrators (those who carry out violence) when considering the individuals who participate in terrorism. Mandel (1.8) identifies several key characteristics of instigators: non-interchangeability, their role as catalysts of violence and propagators of nationalism, and their possession of power across the spectrum (low/physical to medium/wealth to high/information grades). These characteristics speak to the uniqueness of the instigator role, their capability to accelerate and direct the focus of followers -- increasing their propensity to engage in collective violence, their ability to bridge the power gap between shaping the information space (people’s attitudes and reactions to events) to control over external and organizational resources, and their ability to create a compelling call for action by framing social identity and motivating individuals – often by reinforcing a sense of collective humiliation. Mandel posits that instigators of terrorism are motivated by threatened egotism and totalistic thinking (intolerance of ambiguity, undifferentiated views, and absolute confidence in the veracity and moral soundness of beliefs and belief in corruptness of alternative views).

While root causes are certainly important and necessary in that they underlie a susceptibility on the individual and group level to radical messages - a call for action to right a collective grievance or social injustice - they are not sufficient to explain why individuals engage in collective violence. The distinction and interplay between instigators and perpetrators of terrorism, in part, motivates the need to consider the dynamics of Violent Non-State Actors (VNSA), the topic of the next section. We need a more nuanced understanding of the roles of individuals and intra and intergroup dynamics to understand why terrorism arises in some places and situations and not in others.
One key insight researchers have gained through studies of terrorism is that the phenomenon is inherently dynamic. VNSA’s undergo a dynamic life cycle, individuals undergo a dynamic process of radicalization, the relations between VNSA and their state opponents are constantly evolving, and the networks through which VNSAs operate are dynamically shifting. The contributions in this section review a variety of VNSA dynamics.

Based on an empirical analysis of sixty-three incidents linked to al Qaeda (AQ), Sageman’s preliminary conclusions (2.1) are that only two of them can be properly attributed to AQ and that most are the work of autonomous local groups acting on their behalf, essentially constituting a leaderless jihad of “young people seeking thrills...trying to build a better world (and)...willing to sacrifice themselves for it.” He states that mobilization of these groups is not based on poverty, criminality, etc., but rather on friendship and kinship. Radicalization is based on a sense of moral outrage (e.g., rapes, killings, and unfair police actions), specific interpretation of the world (e.g., “the War against Islam”), resonance with personal experiences (social, economic, political, and religious factors – for example unemployment) and mobilization through networks (both face-to-face as in student groups, mosques, study groups as well as virtually via the Internet). He states that these new “terrorist wannabees” or a “leaderless jihad” cannot be controlled by AQ (since the members of the disconnected networks are unknown) and, since the appeal of the AQ social movement is limited due to the reality of its manifestations (e.g., limitations, problems associated with Taliban, Anbar Province), he concludes that the threat is self-limiting. However, he cautions that containment strategies must neutralize the main drivers of radicalization including the appeals to thrill/glory seekers and that all counter-terrorism messages need to use vocabulary carefully and be backed up by consistent actions.

As a counterpoint to the “leaderless jihad” argument, Hoffman (2.2) reasons that the terrorist violence in Mumbai was planned, premeditated, and executed by trained people operating under command and control and using sophisticated weapons and tactics in an extremely effective manner – thus, this event had all the fingerprints of an existing mature, capable organization with training camps, a headquarters, and leadership to plan and direct the operation, knowledge of surveillance tradecraft, and members with the ability to repel determined counterattacks, namely al Qaeda. He acknowledges that there are existing threats from homegrown terrorist groups (and mentions the foiled attacks in the Bronx and Fort Dix, New Jersey as examples), but emphasizes that the most consequential current threat is from an established terrorist organization with strong leadership; that is, al Qaeda.

Beasley (2.3) states that terrorism is a social movement tactic, the result of well-integrated individuals and organizations. She outlines three key sociological approaches to understanding how social movements arise: political process, resource mobilization, and framing. Political process theory posits that movements emerge in the presence of key factors: increased opportunity for participation in state systems, evidence of political instability, existence of splits within elites, and the presence of influential allies. She explains that responses to the opening of (political, etc.) systems are key in forecasting whether movements may use terrorism. For example, democratization may be interpreted as a sign of goodwill or as a system weakness, resulting in nonviolent mobilization or terrorism respectively. Resource mobilization holds that translation of grievances to action requires availability and use of organizational resources (e.g., membership, communication, and external support). Framing theory addresses
the production of meaning for potential and current social movement members, critical for recruiting and building solidarity among members by providing a rationale for mobilizing and increasing belief in group efficacy. Three framing types - diagnostic, prognostic and motivational - serve to establish that problems/guilty parties exist and movement participation is necessary for change to occur. The efficacy of framing is dependent on the framer’s knowledge of the target communities (e.g., the Taliban is adept at incorporating key narratives and poetry). These sociological approaches provide insight into mobilization tactics – the political process informs the perception of opportunities, resource mobilization informs the potential exploitation of opportunities, and framing informs the messages and understanding necessary for movement participants to act.

An empirical analysis by Perliger, Pedahzur, and Kornguth \(2.4\) highlights some key characteristics of terrorist groups based on incidents/attacks in the “fourth wave of terrorism” and identifies some epidemiological analogies and potential solutions for terrorism. David Rapoport identified four waves of terrorism since the late 1800s: anarchist groups, decolonization movements, guerilla groups, and the current groups who focus on achieving maximum casualties, operate primarily on a domestic level, and aim attacks at occupation forces, emphasizing nationalist and separatist ethnic goals. Perliger et. al’s research focused on organizational factors: year of (organization) foundation, guiding ideology (nationalist, religious, right/left wing, Islamic), and group structure (network or hierarchal). They concluded that there is a clear trend of proliferation of militant Islamic terrorism, that Al Qaeda groups have shifted from hierarchal structures to network structures, and that attacks are increasing in lethality (this echoes Legault’s assessment in the Prologue). They identify four basic organizational configurations involved in militant jihadi violence: paramilitary, AQ, sleeper cell, and homegrown networks. The configurations vary in structure, recruitment mechanisms, and member profiles. They compare the social network recruitment patterns of sleeper cells and homegrown networks to the dissemination of biological infection agents or metastases of cancer cells and the recruitment of new members through friendship/kinship in homegrown networks to the infection due to direct contact from proximate cells exhibited by viruses, bacteria, or tumor cells. Consistent with this epidemiological analogy, they counsel the need for robust countermeasures for infectiousness -- attacking the social identity of the terrorist group (a la a binding analogy) and access to mass media and communications critical for spreading ideas (ala altered metabolism), essentially focusing on the environments in which terrorism (like disease) thrives and blocking the key nutrients for its spread.

Beyond the identification of top-level trends based on organizational characteristics, Asal \(2.5\) identifies key factors that impact the decision made by an organization to turn to terrorism. He asserts that ideology is the most important factor behind an organization’s decision to use terrorism and hypothesizes that this is because ideology can lead to strong or weak “othering” of potential targets; that is, securing a positive identification of “us” at the expense of stigmatization of “them” or the “other.” Both nationalist and religious ideologies are correlated with a propensity to use terrorist tactics, although ideology can also serve as a constraint against targeting. Other key factors are organizational capabilities and resources (with a key one being external support) and state behavior (e.g., concessions or repression).

Ballard \(2.6\) provides a method for assessing organizational characteristics in order to ascertain their potential to use Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) or Weapons of Mass Victimization (WMV). The salient characteristics are Ideology, Knowledge, Management,
Audience, Social Distance, and Symbolic Value (IKMASS). Assessment of Ideology involves the identification of ideological fracture lines as potential indicators for the increased potential for violence. The Knowledge factor involves an evaluation of whether an organization can gather and comprehend the necessary information for deployment of WMV (e.g., fuel cycle, materials, etc.). Management includes assessment of the organizational longevity, size, level of effectiveness, ability to get funding, and the provision of logistics support. Audience involves an assessment of the organization’s understanding and use of “front stage” and “backstage” behavior. Social Distance involves the evaluation of the distance between the organization and the target population based on relative religious differences, racial/ethnic differences, cultural differences, and/or social/economic differences. Finally, Symbolic Value assesses the use of symbolic targets to convey a message.

Duval (2.7) educates the reader on the importance of network analysis as a method with which to analyze, detect, and monitor terrorist organizations and VNSA’s, essentially providing a way to describe and visualize the social structure of violent actors as networks, identify central actors and vulnerabilities, and ascertain the organizational structure (which clearly has some ramifications for their propensity to engage in terrorism) and avenues of recruitment. Network analysis has proven to be a useful tool; for example, Sageman used it to identify substructures in al Qaeda Central, Southeast Asia, Maghreb, and the “Core Arabs,” and it was instrumental in the hunt for Saddam Hussein and the “Virginia Jihad” network.

It is important to consider the impact of group behavior in decision-making processes since people who take part in collective violence are often acting out of broad community concern rather than acting from their own private motivations. Gupta (2.8) explores why some ideas, particularly radical political ideas, spread. He reminds us of the three broad forces discussed in Malcolm Gladwell’s 2000 book The Tipping Point: messengers, messages, and context. Political entrepreneurs translate grievances into actions by framing issues so that boundaries between “us” and “them” are clear, providing the impetus to overcome reticence toward collective action. Messengers, which include “mavens,” connectors, and salesmen are accumulators of knowledge, know and are known by lots of people, and attract followers, respectively. Osama Bin Laden demonstrates characteristics of all three. “Sticky” messages, those that endure and have impact, must be simple, concrete, credible, with contents that are unexpected, appeal to emotion, and contain a compelling storyline. The message that “Islam is under attack,” is simple, credible (especially when bolstered by pictures of occupied lands, civilian victims of conflict), unexpected (e.g., the dissonance caused by not being a political or economic power), evokes fear (based on the implicit understanding that fear is typically the primary motivator for collective action), and contains a storyline peppered with powerful references (e.g., “crusades,” “Hulagu Khan”). The context - sociopolitical, historical, and cultural - determines the “stickiness” of the message. In Rapoport’s “fourth wave of terrorism,” the context is an interpretation of recent events that points to the “timing being right”: the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, manifestation of millenarian vision in the form of the Iranian Revolution, and the victory in the Afghan War. Terror cells are born when radicalized members of a group find a way to act upon their convictions, when inspiration meets opportunity.

The paper from Shellman and Asal (2.9) looks at the dynamics between actors: Violent Non-State Actors, Non-State Actors, and government that affect inspiration and opportunity. This innovative empirical analysis goes beyond the standard studies of correlates of conflict (based on “static” factors which are measured annually) and builds on the work of Enders and
Sandler in which terrorists are assumed to be rational actors trying to maximize a shared goal (e.g., provoke media coverage, political instability, or generate fear) with constrained resources. This analysis that explores interdependencies and decisions by all key actors, enabling an analysis of direct and indirect effects and unintended consequences. For example, counterterrorism policies in India decrease armed attacks but increase bombings, essentially motivating a tactic change from overt attacks to covert due to increased police and military power. In addition to modeling only “terror” activities, modeling all Diplomatic, Information, Military and Economic (DIME) activities enable the systematic exploration of how government policies and tactics affect the choices and behaviors of VNSAs, other NSA’s or segments of the population. A consistent finding is that government repression is an important explanatory variable for terror attacks.

Two final papers in the Dynamics of VNSA Section provide some unique insights into the characteristics and strategies of terrorist organizations: one focused on terrorism and financial strategies and a second one on relationships and similarities between terrorists and criminals. Lemieux (2.10) points out that terrorist organizations not only seek short term funding to support logistics and operations but also engage in strategic financing to support long term activities such as recruitment, training, propaganda, maintenance of facilities, and community infrastructures. Terrorist organizations invest in economic development to maintain the allegiance of the community and to establish legitimacy by filling a gap created by a government failure to provide basic services. The appropriate model here is the “club model” of organizations (examples are the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna/Basque Homeland and Freedom (ETA), Irish Republican Army (IRA), Taliban, Hamas, and Hezbollah). They obtain donations from an extended network (radicals who share the same goals) and sympathizers. Funding strategies employed include capitalizing on opportunities from emerging markets, trade of legal/illegal good and services (often tobacco, gems, food), and acquiring and operating companies and non-profits (e.g., textile businesses and cattle ranches help to fund Hamas activities and Hezbollah’s obtains funds from cigarette smuggling between Virginia and New York which exploits breaches in market structures). In weak states, lootable resources (e.g., diamonds and drugs) and unlootable resources (e.g., oil and natural gas) fuel civil wars and domestic terrorism (e.g., Peru and Angola). Terrorist groups trade with a wide variety of partners, developing financial alliances, maintaining trade relations, and exploiting loose economic structures. It is extremely hard to enforce laws forbidding trade with terrorists as they are often hard to recognize and markets often do not discriminate. The potential impact of terrorism on markets is mixed – in places with resilient markets and low intensity terrorism, the recovery is faster; however, in places with limited foreign investment, the impact on the economy could be more severe.

Mullins and Dolnik (2.11) explore the overlap between terrorism and crime, since there are a number of similarities in organizational structure, systems of social influence, methods, motives and profiles. Terrorist organizations and organized crime often collaborate when it is mutually advantageous (e.g., drug cartels use of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, to guard cocaine plantations). Some terrorist organizations engage in both organized (e.g., Hamas, Hizbollah, FARC, Provisional Irish Republican Army, etc.) and petty crime (e.g., the Madrid bombers financed the operation with drug dealing and car thefts) as a way to generate funding and cut out middlemen. Criminals are often recruited by terrorist organizations. Both terrorists and criminals use similar methods (e.g., fundraising, intelligence techniques), have similar (profit) motives albeit different goals, and similar profiles (e.g., predominantly young
men). Social affiliations are the key route into both terrorist and criminal activities, and shared identity - belonging to a larger collective - is crucial for continuing participation. Membership in a criminal network is transient, whereas in a terrorist network members experience intense pressure to stay in order to sustain organizational size and maintain group stability. Disengagement strategies (for more on this see Section 4) need to address both the “push” (negative consequences of continued participation) with “pull” (attractive factors).

There are those who believe the key motivation underlying the current global terrorism phenomenon is ideology, particularly religious ideologies that are thought to advocate violence or legitimize terrorism, and there are some who believe that ideology is a mechanism useful for rationalizing violence that was motivated by grievances, etc. Regardless of whether ideology is, indeed, to blame for collective violence, there is no denying that the framing of radical messages often involves sophisticated communication strategies which artfully employ images, narratives, and ideological memes (e.g., cultural ideas, symbols, or practices) that resonate with susceptible individuals and/or groups. The next section provides some perspectives on the messages and strategic communication strategies of VNSA’s as well as thoughts on the role of ideology in terrorism.

Section 3 – The Role of Ideology in VNSA

Many studies of terrorism and VNSAs explain some variance in the data but invariably leave substantial areas of behavior unexplained. One commonly sees researchers invoke ideology as a causative factor to explain that variance. In this section, we present diverse views on how ideology may operate and whether ideology is a cause or consequence (symptom) of terrorism.

According to Dauber (3.1), terrorists use three forms of communication: discursive (language), visual (images), and symbolic acts (behaviors that send a message) often with the goal of changing public opinion and political will or to recruit, fundraise, or “rally the troops.” Common discursive communication mechanisms used to persuade include rhetoric, argument, and narrative frames. To fully understand the language, cultural referents need to be understood. Visual images are powerful due to the non-linear fashion in which they are absorbed. They have a visceral, powerfully emotional impact and, when in the news, are commonly regarded as objective truth. Symbolic acts are akin to terrorism “theater,” sending messages to multiple audiences simultaneously. Dates, locations (e.g., 9/11 attack on Pentagon is an obvious example), or the attack mechanism (e.g., anthrax attacks on politicians) can all be symbolic. New media and communications editing technology are contemporary “game changers” in terms of enabling more sophisticated influence messaging.

Despite the tendency to interpret the target audience of VNSA strategic communications literally (e.g., interpreting the target audience of Osama bin Laden’s videos to be solely the U.S. or the U.S. President), these communications can, and often do, have multiple target audiences. Harlow (3.2) identifies several potential target audiences: foreign publics, foreign policymakers, domestic audiences, existing VNSA group members, and potential recruits. Two aspects of VNSA’s suggest that the latter two are the true audiences of most strategic communications – the fuzzy boundaries of most VNSA groups and the types of activities in which they engage to reach decisions (at the same time they are evading capture, etc.). Bonafide groups have fuzzy edges best negotiated by public communication (i.e., broadcasting messages). These groups engage in task processes, relational activities, and topical focus activities to reach decisions. Large
broadcast type communications serve to maintain group relationships on a large scale or support problem solving and they are efficient for internal group communications.

The insightful paper by Paz (3.3) states that the Internet is used as a “soft power” vehicle for propaganda, indoctrination, publicity, and teaching, in part due to persecution and the difficulty in disseminating messages, and in part to promote transnational global solidarity. It is the best means for consolidating a spectrum of doctrines, new interpretations, and conveying the image of a large volume of activity. The first priority of militant jihadi websites is to target youth in order to indoctrinate them and build a collective identity. In this vein, the Internet is effectively a global madrassa or open university for militant jihadi studies. This has resulted in two contradictory developments: the appearance of a consolidation/solidarity (opinion, doctrine, etc.) process and, at the same time, the emergence of a growing number of debates (especially regarding more controversial activities such as targeting civilians, Islamic state in Iraq, etc.). The doctrinal sources of the militant jihadi Salafism on many radical websites are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Palestine. They emphasize the Takfir principle, the labeling of (and treatment of) infidels - Muslims who do not follow “correct” doctrines. Internet scholars have emerged, some of whom have considerable influence. Scholars like Al-Libi, who advocates “total jihad,” discussion of Algeria as a “model” for jihad, and videotapes from Iraq “hotwire” the imagination of radicalized youth. Contrary to those that criticize the pedigree of these websites, their function as a primary tool for open indoctrination dictates they must be credible and thus they are valuable for analysis.

Hairgrove and McLeod (3.4) provide a case study on Hizbut Tahrir (HT) and their use of strategic communications for recruiting, training, and to reinforce and solidify membership. HT is currently non-violent, but does not rule out their use of violence in the future, with the potential plan being the establishment of a Caliphate in Indonesia or in any of the mid-Asia “stans” essentially being a “green light” for the commencement of a violent “jihad phase” including attempts to overthrow non-Islamic governments. HT is adept at strategic communications, utilizing halaqa (small study groups) as a key method for recruitment and training with specialized indoctrination materials that can be downloaded. The group utilizes a variety of communication media/mechanisms including websites, translated books, magazines, cell phones, international conferences, music, demonstrations, and television. Their website is the fifth most popular in Indonesia, accessed actively during office hours.

Lia (3.5) argues that the key to al Qaeda’s (AQ) continuing appeal is three key factors: their propagation of a simple message that resonates strongly with deeply held grievances in the Muslim world, their powerful and captivating image as the world’s most feared organization – an attractive force on young people seeking thrills and meaning - and finally, AQ’s global character, open to virtually anyone irrespective of ethnic background or nationality as long as one can accept their radical ideology. The simple message, which focuses on foreign “Crusader” occupation, religious desecration of Islam’s holiest places, and economic imperialism and plundering of Islam’s natural resources (e.g., oil) resonates with Muslims because it rings of being true and plays on a list of widely shared grievances. Images are increasingly used by AQ due to new information technologies. Young people spend much of their time in cyber-space and are exposed frequently to powerful images. AQ is exceptionally adept at attracting mass attention to sensational acts and the U.S. response to 9/11 reinforced notions about Western aggression and the power of AQ to provoke the world superpower. Finally, the global reach and multinational and multiethnic character of AQ reinforces the credibility of its pan-Islamic
rhetoric, validated by the number of cooperative Muslim groups, some of whom have renamed themselves as AQ. The Internet has been key and its role in fostering AQ’s widespread appeal cannot be understated. It contains a huge volume of materials available to cater to the needs of sympathizers, recruits, operatives, and recruiters. The biggest AQ weakness is the internal schisms/dissent resulting from the use of controversial tactics and its unwillingness to prepare for a future transition to politics. Lia asserts that, at some point, the image will fade, as all extremist ideologies have a finite life span, and being a militant jihadi will cease being “cool.”

In addressing the issue of the role of ideology of terrorism, Zuhur (3.6) states that radical Islamic messages would not be compelling in the absence of: resistance to political or ideological domination by the West, failures of Western-style governments to create national loyalties and to meet needs, the shock of modernization, rural-urban migration, continued poverty, failures of social movements to right grievances, etc. All of these circumstances push radicals into activism and promote recruitment. Extremist ideology is attractive, in part, because other ideologies fail to attract or actually repel. Zuhur elucidates key aspects of the new jihad ideology include hakimiyya (true sovereignty of Allah as compared to nation-states or civil laws), Islamic society and upholding hisba (commending good, forbidding evil) by following shari’ah (enforcement of pious vs. materialistic, status-driven behavior based on group interpretation), the necessity for jihad (highlighting the doctrinal differences between justification for jihad in response to attack or to foster expansion of Islam versus insistence on the inevitability of jihad and necessity due to global conflict – also the debate regarding jihad as an individual [including women and children] or collective duty), occupation of Muslim lands (used as rationale for jihad as individual duty), martyrdom (linked with jihad and glorified through videos, poetry, songs, and internet postings), and takfir (labeling of governments as “infidels” and thus an object of jihad as a result of their weakness in being influenced by and subservient to western powers or due to their corruption). The best ideological responses to terrorism come from people who were part of a movement and recanted versus the government clerics (ulema). Clerics can back truces or an end to violence, but their influence varies. In areas where the opposition to the local Muslim government is strong, the involvement of clerics or former movement leaders is more likely to be effective.

Seitz (3.7) proposes a computational model of ideology in his paper based on the definition of a paradigm as the set of beliefs, values, and techniques shared by members and the concept of the role of ideologies as serving to reflect the consciousness of groups in various socio-historic circumstances, inform us about man, society, and the state, and provide direction for political action. Both paradigms and ideologies provide standards and criteria of legitimacy. The inputs for the ideology computational model would include conditions that foster VNSAs and weak and failed states (e.g., inequality of resources, rapid changes in the division of labor). The field of action of the model includes a group’s perception of other groups. Ideologies are essentially throughputs between environments and the field of action. This model could enable hyper-games in which ideologies were varied to reflect actors’ perception of different worlds with different forces at work, and adoption of different strategies for addressing problems and different fields of action utilizing different data structures to filter information and different inference engines. The field of action, inference engine and filtering lens could all be simulated with the field of action defining how information is given meaning and how the inferencing engine leads to new actions. This simulation model could represent propaganda, the minds of
terrorists, uncommitted people, how leaders use metaphors to frame events and communicate to followers, etc.

A provocative evolutionary psychology paper by Mort, Lawson, and Gous (3.8) discusses the role of ideology in motivating terrorism or violence as essentially a mechanism to rationalize violent behaviors resulting from an aggregation of cognitive mechanisms selected as a result of evolution that have been triggered by certain environmental cues. They state that religion, in and of itself, does not cause anything. Apparent examples of religiously motivated violence (e.g., pipe bombs exploding in Derry (Ireland), suicide bombings in Gaza, drowning of “witches”), upon inspection, often correlate with reported or apparent beliefs, motivations, or rationalizations that have a religious component. However, there is no evidence for religious beliefs causing violent behavior, rather, the evidence supports that explicit beliefs are often by-passed or undermined by folk psychological mechanisms. The connection between violent behavior and religious thought and behavior is likely the existence of common cognitive mechanisms.

Consistent with Mort et. al., Sandstrom (3.9) uses a cultural materialist paradigm to argue that due to the large variability between and within religions in terms of how followers behave, and the difficulty in separating religious behaviors from other behaviors or aspects of culture, religion should not be used to account for or explain behaviors. Rather he advocates the use of the cultural materialist paradigm to provide a causative explanation of human behavior based on material conditions and the context of people’s lives (e.g., economic deprivation, military conquest, political repression, market dynamics, and blocked social mobility).

The next section focuses on programs to counter radicalization and terrorism or to deradicalize or disengage radical individuals and groups, assess key elements and their efficacy. These programs in various ways seek to address environmental (root cause) factors, psychological factors and ideological understanding and commitment with individuals and groups.

Section 4 – Existing and Proposed Deradicalization and Disengagement Programs

Most studies of VNSA neglect or minimize attention to efforts to counter radicalization or prevent terrorism through education, counseling, and social services, as well as the programs aimed at disengagement or deradicalization. In this collection, we highlight studies of counter radicalization and disengagement/deradicalization programs in order to bring attention to this frontier of combating terrorism. The issue of deradicalization is complicated by the confusion between deradicalization, which involves re-orientation of a person’s political views, and disengagement, which involves the abandonment of violence alone. Researchers and practitioners debate the possibilities of both and these competing views are discussed in this section. This section will highlight some of the issues, as well as some potential solutions, in this area of counter-terrorism efforts.

Jongman (4.1) provides a comprehensive look at radicalization, counter radicalization, and deradicalization from the perspective of the Netherlands, a microcosm in which we can view the effects of demographic/ethnic changes, government policies, and responses on radicalisation. He details how recent events, including several assassinations, have heightened tensions with non-indigenous segments of the population, particularly Muslims. The 2006 elections reflected general dissatisfaction with the national government and was key in the subsequent formation of a new non-indigenous party which has a platform that supports abolishing the mandatory integration course (for immigrants), pardon for asylum seekers who have lived in country at least

20

UNCLASSIFIED
five years, and entrance of Turkey into the European Union, etc. The flip side of this is the recent swell of support for parties who seek to exploit undercurrents of frustration by pushing an agenda to limit immigration, asylum, etc.

In response, the Dutch launched a tailored (e.g., focus on youth and prevention of radicalisation) phased campaign to reduce tensions and intolerance. A new National Counter Terrorism Coordinator, who is responsible, in part, for an annual threat assessment, made numerous changes in organizational coordination processes (e.g., CT Infobox effort collocated agencies to foster the reduction of tensions and intolerance), and in increased Internet surveillance for awareness and early warning of potential attacks. The arrest and trial of members of the Hofstad group, a homegrown terrorist group foiled when a member assassinated a controversial filmmaker, Theo Van Gogh, resulted in a number of changes to antiterrorism legislation, including redefinition of crimes (including membership in a terrorist group) and criminals (including supporters/financiers of terrorism) and judicial, law enforcement, legislative, and intelligence reforms that focus on pre-emption and anticipation versus reaction.

The view of the Dutch government is that a holistic approach is warranted for terrorism, one that deals with the underlying grievance causing the violence (e.g., poverty, alienation, marginalization, and segregation) – a hard-learned lesson from violence events in the 1970s related to grievances held by the Moloccan immigrant community. This approach is based on a more nuanced understanding of radicalization and is broader than simply regarding terrorism as a law enforcement problem – resulting in new ways of counterterrorism coordination and cooperation within the Netherlands. Their strategy is to focus on prevention of radicalization in Muslim youths and abolishing “hotspots” to accomplish three goals: prevent attacks, be adequately prepared for a large attack, and pay attention to the causes of terrorism. Some policies, like restrictive immigration and asylum policies have unintended consequences: more illegal immigrants. The four cities in which the majority of Muslims live, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht, all have tailored initiatives to improve relationships between groups and deal with socio-economic problems and counter segregation.

Jongman talks about various national and local level metrics to assess the efficacy of government counterterrorism efforts including national surveys assessing the level of fear of terrorism and feeling of security and reduction in social problems in urban “hotspots” (including school dropout and poverty rates, rates of dependence on social security, segregation levels, and crime). Biggest current worries are the lack of integration of African first and second-generation immigrants in the Netherlands (especially Somalis, who are clannish and tend to be more lonely/alienated), the Moroccan community (responsible for majority of crime and violence problems), and the threat of retaliatory attacks by al Qaeda in the Netherlands.

Flannigan (4.2) examines how VNSAs employ social welfare services to win hearts and minds. Community services, education, health, and provision of social services are tools that terrorist organizations use to gain acceptance in their community. The amount of power that a terrorist organization gains from providing services is related to the availability of these services elsewhere. Provision of services can be radicalizing, increasing support and numbers of recruits and serving to silence those in the community who oppose the terrorist activities. Hezbollah is widely respected for its charities and social services, in spite of its violent activities. Terrorist organizations sponsor community services as a way to socialize and recruit new members. They are more likely to be engaged in providing services when they are not clandestine or have
military arms. Strategies for preventing deradicalization or radicalization due to service provision include political inclusion (which prevents service provision by minority providers), proactively providing aid where violent organizations have not gained a foothold, and moving a community to passive support/genuine acceptance and active participation. It is also good to support legitimate state actions in effective community service provision (e.g., Hezbollah’s provision of services after the bombardment of southern Lebanon) or ensure that other apolitical mainstream organizations are able to provide quality services.

Community services were critical in preventing radicalization in Brixton (south London). In Lambert’s (4.3) paper, he details a program in which community police and Salafi managers of the Brixton mosque collaborated to counter street crime and prevent petty criminals and other vulnerable individuals in the area from becoming involved in terrorism as foot soldiers. Recruiters and propagandists for al Qaeda, including Abdullah el Faisel, were active in the area and offered high status and religious rewards to black Muslim converts, but they met their match in Abdul Haqq Baker et. al. in that they had both religious authority as well as “street” credibility. These clerics explained their position and role by saying that they “don’t disagree with the grievances, but explain how Islam tells you to act responsibly.” The program was (and continues to be) successful, despite the fact that two extremists, Richard Reid and Zacarias Moussaoui (the former an impressionable petty criminal radicalized in prison and motivated to revenge U.S. government policies, the latter an extremist expelled from the Brixton mosque and motivated by trauma related to a friend’s death in Chechnya), did arise from these communities. Indeed, the program tried to deal with both individuals, but they were too radical already and could not be turned back from their extremist paths.

Al-Huda’s paper (4.4) educates the reader about the power of religion in serving to counteract radicalization and extremism and to bring about resolution and reconciliation through peace building (establishing sustainable peace by addressing root causes of conflict through dialogue, institution building, political and economic transformation, and reconciliation) and peacemaking (reducing tension, resolving, managing and/or mediating conflict, and negotiating and/or find common ground). Religious leaders are the key actors in peacemaking and can serve as mediators, observers, protectors, advocates, educators, and conflict resolution specialists (e.g., Maha Ghosannada, who led a march in Cambodia that demonstrated popular support for elections, and the “Amman Message,” a statement designed to educate about Muslim peace and the irresponsibility of Muslims to judge others as “takfir” that was developed by Muslim scholars throughout the Middle East). Peacemaking involves a variety of methodologies (e.g., forgiveness, recognition of pain, public confession, addressing the image of “other,” and use of arts to express mutual respect) to reconstruct relationships, reconcile parties, negotiate agreements, and reconstruct a vision of peace. Islamic peacemaking is based on the fundamental principles integral to Islam, which espouse non-violence, peace, sacredness of human life, equality, and the pursuit of justice. To counteract radicalism and prevent or reduce recruitment, it is important to leverage resources including qudi (religious judge who interprets/enforces shari’ah), urf (customary conflict/dispute resolution practices), mukhtar (third party mediators), wasta (intermediaries to represent parties), hudna (truces), and atwah (compensation to victims). In order to counter radicalization or enable deradicalization, there is a need to understand the identification of communities with either victim or hero/savior, engage radicals with respect, giving the right to express reservations, fears, uncertainties, and grievances and make sure non-violent leader’s voices are heard.
A paper written by a UK imam (4.5) seeks to dispel the myths and misconceptions that people commonly have about Salafi Islam. He writes anonymously due to his support of counter and de-radicalization efforts. He states that Salafi Islam has been wrongly blamed as the cause or motivation for terrorism when, in fact, the perpetrators were not following the dictates of Salafi Islam or even attending Salafi mosques or study groups. He argues that Salafi Islam is, in fact, a protective factor and that “the more strict and serious the Salafi, the less likely that person will fall into radicalization.” He educates the reader that Salafi Islam is non-political, that Salafis frown on political parties or groups, holding clandestine or secret meetings, pledging allegiance to heads of organizations or political parties, or staging revolts or rebellions. He points out that Salafis take into account the benefits and harms of actions and do not agree with the targeting of innocent people. The issue is the confusion between Salafi and militant jihadi or extremist narratives. Militant jihadi organizations effectively use Salafi narratives or claim to be Salafi as a means to gain legitimacy or be perceived as authentic. Numerous well-known, credible Salafi scholars have taken stances against terrorism, extremism, and political agitation stating (these are) “...extremely great crimes the world over....”

Speckhard’s paper (4.6) on prison and community based disengagement and deradicalization is encyclopedic, describing several community based counter radicalization programs and surveying the prison disengagement or deradicalization focused “rehabilitation” programs. She starts by stating that there are a variety of strategies that need to be employed singly or in combination to disengage or deradicalize an individual or group: one must delegitimize ideologies, tailor strategies to address the recruiting conduits, disengage recruits from active roles (e.g., intimidation, arrest, amnesty), deradicalize/rehabilitate through prison programs, and prevent radicalization at the societal level focusing on vulnerable populations (e.g., youth, gangs, military members).

She describes street programs in the Netherlands and the UK focused on working with youth, through dialogue and outreach, to prevent the spread of radical militant jihadi ideologies. The UK program categorizes extremists and interdicts potential militant jihadis, mobilizing social services to address their needs. The prison “rehabilitation” programs in Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt, UK, Yemen, Turkey, and Iraq (U.S. program) are described, including their unique features (e.g., Singapore’s low recidivism is, in part, due to the size of the island and their ability to monitor prisoners after release; Egypt and Malaysia use brutal treatment and even torture to motivate compliance). Of special interest is the description of challenges faced by the author in planning and implementing a U.S. deradicalization program (with both ideological and psychological components) for Iraqi prisoners/detainees. She summarizes key features that are important for successful prison programs addressing militant jihadis. Paramount is the ability to establish rapport between the prisoner and a credible mentor/leader (i.e., a highly regarded cleric, imam, psychologist, or team member or someone who has “walked the walk” such as a former militant jihadi). Speckhard emphasizes the importance and efficacy of using both religious and psychological treatment to challenge the legitimacy of militant jihadi ideology and address psychological motivations, vulnerabilities, and traumas to reorient the individual toward a nonviolent identity and solutions. Likewise, family involvement during and after release from prison, economic incentives for the prisoner and their family (e.g., jobs, cash, cars), and monitoring and follow-up are important.

Gunaratna’s paper (4.7) describes the Singapore prison rehabilitation program. He emphasizes that operational terrorists can only be delegitimized by ideological and theological
refutation; thus, the Singapore Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) staff is 50 percent Muslim of which 25 percent are clerics or scholars. Singapore believes that detainee rehabilitation and community engagement are strategic tools to safeguard the next generation of youth from radicalization. The prison program, based on a partnership between the government, Muslim community, and academia, differentiates between leaders, members (ala instigators and perpetrators), and supporters/sympathizers and tailors the treatment to each category. The ulama (scholars) are at the core of the program strategy, helping to dismantle the justification for violence. All detainees are classified in terms of high, medium, and low risk. The “high risk” group includes spiritual leaders; thus, prominent scholars are needed to challenge the beliefs and ideological understanding of these detainees. Even so, this group is most likely to return to violence. “Medium risk” individuals include operatives who are active ideologically but can more often be rehabilitated. Active and passive supporters of terrorism are labeled as “low risk” and they, in general, are not as knowledgeable about ideology. Public education and awareness campaigns are used to complement the prison rehabilitation program.

Boucek’s paper (4.8) provides more detail on the Saudi prison disengagement “Counseling Program,” the first and longest running program of its kind. This program is a unique Saudi solution in that it incorporates traditional Saudi methods of conflict resolution and conflict management and leverages extended social networks (recognizing the importance of treating families, not just the prisoner) and time honored methods of social control making use of “family honor” and social hierarchies. Ideally, the program helps those with takfiri (declaration of other Muslims as apostates) beliefs to repent and abandon terrorist ideologies. In fact, the program focuses on those individuals responsible for terrorist propaganda or providing support or logistics assistance – those with “blood on their hands” are currently barred from the program.

The program engages the prisoners in religious debates to correct an “incomplete understanding of Islam” and provides psychological counseling. In addition, the program provides a salary for the prisoner’s family, finds jobs, housing, provides job training, and start-up funds for released prisoners to start businesses. The released prisoners must continue to meet with religious scholars and they are encouraged to settle down and marry. The prisoner’s family is responsible for the prisoner after release. Half of those participating in the Counseling Program renounce their radical beliefs and are released. Overall, the Saudi program claims an 80-90 percent success rate.

**Conclusion**

We may not, as a research community, agree on the nature of the global terrorism threat, but we can certainly agree a serious threat exists, domestically and internationally, and must be reckoned with, using a portfolio of solutions based on a rich contextual understanding of the people involved in it.

There is no “one size fits all,” no simple formula or easy answers in understanding terrorism; however, there has been substantial progress in increasing our understanding of terrorism, in part due to increased availability of large databases and thus increases in empirical research. This research is starting to shine a spotlight on the critical dynamics that fuel terrorism: the interaction between an individual or group and their environment (including the government behaviors/policies/responses and the importance of the perception of group and/or government legitimacy), interactions and roles within the group and with other groups, interactions between messages/worldview/ideology and group behaviors (including recruiting.
and mobilization), and the role of emotion and neurobiology and the effects of new technologies including those that exploit the ability of visual images to impact individuals at a more visceral, emotional level (especially as a trigger for increased radicalization and call for action). A variety of techniques and tools are available to enable an analyst, planner, or decision maker to understand, for a given situation and set of actors, what the salient factors, interrelationships, and dynamics are, the impact of missing information and/or assumptions, and identify potential levers for solutions at the societal, institutional, organizational, and individual levels.

The key in understanding the role of ideology is to know that ideology, including religion, serves as a resonator which, in the presence of an vulnerable individual or group, frames grievances and impels action as the only appropriate response to right an injustice or inequity within an (often apocalyptic) worldview. However, it is also important to know that religion does not cause terrorism, since religious behaviors are inconsistent and subject to interpretation. Many of the violent behaviors associated with terrorism are, in fact, likely due to human susceptibilities triggered by environmental cues. Any behaviors, including terrorist behaviors, must be viewed through a contextual lens (i.e., underlying conditions such as repression and relative deprivation). However, this does not mean that ideology should be ignored. The worldview, beliefs, and language in which they are expressed are critically important in understanding and effectively countering radicalization and terrorism. Also a caution is in order - loosely or erroneously applying labels to a terrorist threat, for example “Salafi Islam” for the militant Islamist terrorism threat, over simplifies and inappropriately generalizes, diverting the focus from the real, more complex problem. Further, too broad or inappropriate labels in many cases serve to alienate those constructive voices (e.g., Salafi clerics) who could serve as powerful agents for counter radicalization and deradicalization or disengagement.

A number of solutions exist for countering terrorism or radicalization, disengagement from terrorism, or deradicalization, but they are not “one size fits all” either. Solutions must be tailored to the level of extremism, organizational role, culture, age, etc. Counterterrorism programs, to be successful, need to be executed by credible (ideologically and street-wise) individuals who, individually or in combination, consider all the needs/vulnerabilities (familial, ideological, psychological), perceptions and worldview of the individual and or group. Law enforcement, those engaged in prevention and rehabilitation and their communities, need to work hand-in-hand to foster a real, lasting change.

back to top