ISLAMIST RADICALIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN JIHADIST IDEOLOGUES

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
San Diego State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
in
Homeland Security

by
Kristen Rose Coar
Summer 2013
SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

Thesis of Kristen Rose Coar:

Islamist Radicalization in the United States and the Influence of Western Jihadist Ideologues

__________________________
Cezar Ornatwoski, Chair
Department of Homeland Security

__________________________
Jeffery McLllwain
Department of Homeland Security

__________________________
Jean Twenge
Department of Psychology

6/14/13
Approval Date
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my ever patient husband for his endless and enthusiastic support.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Islamist Radicalization in the United States and the Influence of Western Jihadist Ideologues

by

Kristen Rose Coar

Master of Science in Homeland Security
San Diego State University, 2013

As the terrorist threat continues to become increasingly homegrown, a key way to combat it is to develop an understanding of how radicalization in the United States works and to formulate ways to prevent potential radicalization from morphing into violent extremism. This thesis has examined domestic Islamist terrorism and terrorism-related activity over the last 12 years in conjunction with the Western jihadist propaganda that extols and propels such activity from two of the most verbal and respected (in radical circles) American terrorist ideologues: Adam Gadahn and Anwar al-Awlaki. Taken together, a pattern of radicalization emerges, revealing the process of how those living legally in the United States and who are immersed in American culture can turn violently against their neighbors for the purpose of destroying the country and the Western way of life in the name of Allah. The process examined in this thesis exposes weak spots in the radicalization of Americans that can be targeted to both decrease the pool from which terrorist propagandists “recruit” and decrease the motivation of potential terrorists for continuing down the path of violent jihad, effectively helping to combat terrorism in America.
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 MORAL OUTRAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Outrage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Outrage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Outrage Infused by Rhetoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 IDENTIFICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Appeals of Identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling the Appeals and Reinforcing Identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification on the Internet and in Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 CHOOSING A SIDE IN A BIPOLAR WORLD WAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing Sides in a Polarized World and the War on Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rhetoric of a Bipolar World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Terrorists Choosing Sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 DECIDING TO ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of Inciting Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rhetoric of Inciting Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radicalization in Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 POST-ATTACK PRAISE AND JUSTIFICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Praise and Justification are Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rhetoric of Praise and Justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Thesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I offer my sincerest gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Cezar Ornatowski, who has supported me throughout my thesis with his patience and knowledge while allowing me the room to work in my own way. Without his guidance and persistent help, this thesis would not have been possible. One simply could not wish for a better or friendlier supervisor. In addition, I wish to thank Dr. Ornatowski for his substantive suggestions, many of which have become incorporated into the analysis, especially those regarding the development of identity and the concept of negative identities.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Jeffrey McIlwain and Dr. Jean Twenge, who inspired and supported me through this process from the moment I first stepped into each of their classrooms and through writing this thesis. Their breadth of knowledge in, dedication to, and enthusiasm for Homeland Security and Social Psychology, respectively, is simply astounding.

I felt motivated and encouraged after every meeting and every class with each of these amazing individuals. Without their encouragement and guidance this project would not have materialized.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This is a wake-up call for Muslims in America. Today, American Muslims are being killed in Yemen, and tomorrow, they're going to be killed in New York and Los Angeles. Get ready for the holocaust.

-Adam Gadahn

At approximately 1:30 pm CT on November 5, 2009, Major Nidal Malik Hasan, an Army psychiatrist, opened fire on the Soldiers Readiness Processing Center at Fort Hood, Texas. Hasan, who was dressed in uniform, shouted “Allahu Akbar” (“God is Great”) and proceeded to shoot for a 10 minute-period killing 12 soldiers, one civilian, and injuring more than 30 others.1 Sergeants Mark Todd and Kimberly Munley both responded to the scene and exchanged fire with Hasan. Sgt. Munley was wounded and witness reports confirm that Sgt. Todd shot and disabled Hasan, ending the rampage.2

In 2011, the White House National Strategy for Counterterrorism said, “Plots directed and planned from overseas are not the only sort of terrorist threat we face. Individuals inspired by but not directly connected to al-Qaida have engaged in terrorism in the U.S. Homeland. Others are likely to try to follow their example, and so we must remain vigilant.”3 After the United States invaded Afghanistan and started targeting al Qaida leaders and finances with a tenacity it hadn’t previously shown, al Qaida lost a lot of its direct power over global terrorist activities. In response, there was a devolution of the jihadist threat from one primarily based upon al Qaida the group to one based upon a wider jihadist movement. In fact, the last ten years has clearly shown a global shift in terrorism toward more decentralized, semi-autonomously radicalized, violent jihadist individuals or groups who

---

2 Ibid.
strike in their home countries. As the terrorist threat continues to become increasingly homegrown, a key way to fight it is to develop an understanding of how radicalization in the United States works and to formulate ways to prevent potential radicalization from morphing into violent extremism.

American jihadist ideologues play a central role in the radicalization process in America. They have spread and continue to spread al Qaida’s brand of extreme Salafi ideology domestically by matching the content and delivery of their propaganda to specifically target those living legally in the United States, eventually galvanizing these potential homegrown terrorists into acting violently against their neighbors in the defense of Islam. This thesis will analyze the works of Anwar al-Awlaki and Adam Gadahn, two American “Islamic scholars” and pro-al Qaida ideologues, and how they goad or lead the targets of their rhetoric through the process of violent Islamist radicalization For the purposes of this paper, radicalization will be defined as the process of transforming individuals from rather unexceptional and ordinary beginnings into terrorists with the willingness to use violence and kill for political ends. It is not a single decision that is made in a vacuum; it is a self-sustaining process that takes place over time, events, and multiple decisions as part of a global extremist Salafi movement.

Each chapter will analyze a step in the radicalization process and show how it is reflected in the rhetoric of Anwar al Awlaki and Adam Gadahn. The first step is moral outrage at seemingly unjust circumstances and events outside of one’s control. These moral outrages can stem from many different sources including racial and religious discrimination, economic inequality, and U.S. military operations overseas. The greater the tragedy, the greater the moral outrage will be. One must make sense of the violations or causes of moral outrage. This attempt to put moral outrage into a context that one can understand and that affects one personally brings us to the second step in the radicalization process: identification with radical Islamist, often Salafi, ideology. Chapter Three will examine the rhetorical themes and devices used by Adam Gadahn and Anwar al Awlaki that appeal to young

---


American men as they try to make sense of their moral outrage. Following identification, one must choose a side, a choice that becomes ultimately one between good and evil. Chapter Four will show how the ideologues’ rhetoric uses the radical Islamist ideology to create a rigid bipolar world that is split between those who submit to and defend Islam and those who seek to destroy it.

The only moral choice to make is to defend Islam, a choice that must be logically followed with action. Chapter Five will evaluate how one gets from choosing a side to deciding to act and why that act is often bloody and violent. Chapter Six will show how the propaganda of praise and justification that comes after a terrorist attack is necessary to sustain the radical Islamist social movement and rounds out the radicalization process by invigorating the next round of potential terrorists. All in all, attacks and plots perpetrated by small cells and individuals have been on the rise in the U.S, and this trend will likely continue as more individuals are inspired by the appeals of jihad and the words of ideologues such as Anwar al Awlaki and Adam Gadahn. Only by understanding how people become willing and fanatically desirous of following the path of violent jihad in the United States can we hope to stem the flow and eventually stop it. This thesis aims at a better understanding of the radicalization process and concludes with recommendations on how to combat the further spread of violent jihad within the United States.

**Literature Review**

According to Joseph Truman in *Communicating Terror* (2010), rhetoric can be defined as the manner in which symbols are used to affect, influence, and persuade people. Throughout the years, advocates of terrorism have skillfully used rhetoric to recruit people to their cause and justify their actions. However, regardless of the particular terrorist organization or their particular goals and motivations, their propagandists tend to rely on common themes and devices to spread their ideas and persuade their audiences. The reason

---


for these similarities is that the outstanding feature of terrorism is its violence, whether actual or threatened.\(^8\)

Typically, violence, especially when perpetrated against supposedly innocent civilians, contravenes societal norms, contending unreservedly against the established order. Thus, terrorists need to prove, often through disputation, that the system they are fighting against is illegitimate and ultimately evil. In the case of Islamist terrorists, the West is the enemy. According to Chaim Perelman in *The Realm of Rhetoric* (1982), “the aim of argumentation is not to deduce consequences from given premises; it is rather to elicit or increase the adherence of the members of an audience to theses that are presented for their consent.”\(^9\) For Islamist terrorists, the thesis presented to the audience is the existence of a bipolar world where the terrorists are the ones fighting for goodness and justice. They use terms such as scapegoat, devil, monster, and animal. The system, which is perceived to be the West and which is represented by America, is huge, ambiguous, and difficult to perceive as it seeks to deceive in every way.\(^10\) On the other hand, terrorism is represented as praiseworthy and just in its opposition of this illegal and criminal system, thus, reinforcing an absence of neutrality where there are only two opposing choices and where absence of action is an act against change, and therefore against the side of justice and ultimately God.\(^11\)

The bipolar world of good versus evil is a very powerful and resonating message for those who accept the premises of Islamist terrorism. According to Sonja Foss, “the inducement that characterizes rhetoric takes place through the process of identification.”\(^12\) Identifying with the radical Islamist ideology is an acceptance of the violent jihadist premises. As they ally themselves with various properties and substances, they share substance with whatever or whomever they associate and simultaneously separate themselves

---


\(^10\) Leeman, 48.

\(^11\) Ibid., 50-52.

\(^12\) Sonja Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 4th ed. (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 2009), 63.
from others with whom they choose not to indentify.¹³ So, the stronger one identifies as a part of the extremist Salafi movement, the stronger they accept the premises of terrorism. According to Marc Sageman, this identification process can lead to the development of a social identity, in which the feeling of belonging to the global jihad can be grafted on to the sense of belonging to the now religiously and politically activated clique.¹⁴ Additionally, there is a strong sense of moral outrage directed at the West and, America in particular, that provides the impetus for identification with extreme Islamist ideology.¹⁵ This is especially true when the moral outrage is due to apparent crimes against Muslims, both globally and locally. Jihadist ideology provides an easy and simple-to-understand avenue of interpretation for the outrage and anger directed at America. It is interpreted as part of a larger war waged by the West against Islam and often resonates with personal experiences of discrimination as victims of a wider war.¹⁶

A lot of experts have done a great deal of research on terrorism, rhetoric, and terrorist rhetoric. And each of them holds a piece of the puzzle to understanding Islamist radicalization in the United States. Joseph Truman explains how one can exhort potential terrorists to action and later justify that violence, but he doesn’t adequately cover how individuals come to accept the premises of violent jihad that are necessary to accept the bipolar world of terrorist rhetoric and the glorification of terrorist attacks. Marc Sageman, on the other hand, brilliantly describes the identification process through the interpretation of moral outrage and the subsequent acceptance the terrorist premises. He does not, however, satisfactorily explain how one can go from acceptance and identification to violent action, relying too strongly on effects of peer pressure. Taken together, in addition to a great many other sources, this thesis will attempt to uncover the rhetorical mechanisms of Islamist radicalization in America.

¹³ Foss, 63.
¹⁵ Ibid., 31.
¹⁶ Ibid.
METHOD

My sources for pursuing the rhetoric of Islamist radicalization in the United States can be arranged into four different categories. First, I examined American terrorists and the evolution of homegrown terrorism since the attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11). These sources include the documents and transcripts of legal proceedings, government documents, press, and scholarly articles, and Internet articles involving terrorists in the United States and their affiliation to the global Salafi movement. I favored transcripts of court proceedings subject to cross-examination and reports of court proceedings that were collected extensively by non-profit research organizations such as the Nine Eleven Finding Answers Foundation and the Congressional Research Service. These and other profit and non-profit research organizations such as Stratfor Global Intelligence Inc., the Middle East Forum, Jihad Watch, and the Council on Foreign Relations, also provided many scholarly articles on the topic of terrorism in America and its proponents. In addition, Marc Sageman provided a very thorough examination of the global Salafi movement based on statistics and scientific method in his Understanding Terror Networks (2004) and Leaderless Jihad (2008). In addition to scholarly articles and unbiased research, I used news coverage of terrorist attacks and terrorism-related court cases from CNN, Huffington Post, NPR, New York Times, ABC News, and BBC News. While biased and somewhat inflammatory at times, these sources showed how strongly terrorist attacks could become a rhetorical act in and of themselves and did not strip away any of the emotion in their reporting, as can sometimes happen in scholarly work. This is important, because emotion and feelings such as moral outrage, play a vital role in the radicalization process. The bulk of my research explores modern homegrown terrorism and potential terrorists in the United States in order to grasp how people who have spent most of their lives in America can become susceptible to radical propaganda and turn to terrorism.

After researching terrorism in the United States, I sought to get a better understanding of the power of rhetoric. Sonja Foss, 17 Chaim Perelman, 18 Kenneth Burke, 19 and Edwin

17 Foss, 1-444.
18 Perelman, 1-162
Black\textsuperscript{20} provided a good foundation in the methods of rhetorical persuasion and analysis. Third, I investigated what kind of analyses had already been done on rhetoric and terrorism. Joseph Truman,\textsuperscript{21} Micheal Waller,\textsuperscript{22} and Richard Leeman\textsuperscript{23} provided good starting points for my investigation into radicalization in the United States and where rhetoric and terrorism overlap. These sources describe how terrorist rhetoric uncompromisingly divides the world into two opposing sides, one good, grounded in Islam, and one evil, represented by the West and how violent jihad becomes the morally incumbent response to such evil. “The rhetoric of terrorism is characterized by a bipolar, exhortive discourse. First, dividing the world into the good terrorist verses the inhumane system portrays the terrorist’s violence as a legitimate response. Second, given this stark division, the purpose of the terrorist’s rhetoric becomes that of exhorting the body politic to action against that system.”\textsuperscript{24} Comprehending this foundation of terrorist rhetoric was essential in determining the radicalization process.

Finally, based on my research into terrorism and terrorists in the United States, I chose rhetorical artifacts from Anwar al-Awlaki and Adam Gadahn, two of the most popular and respected Western terrorist ideologues in jihadist circles, to compare against homegrown radicalization. Both al-Awlaki and Gadahn were born in the United States. They both also spent a large portion of their youth and adult lives in America and their words can reach Americans in ways and numbers that Middle Eastern leaders and ideologues such as Osama bin Laden may never have achieved. Al-Awlaki’s “44 Ways to Support Jihad” (2009) and “A Call to Jihad” (2010) and Gadahn’s “Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice” (2009) and “A Call to Arms” (2010) all verbally express, reflect, and amplify the process of Islamist radicalization in America. In addition, I examined Gadahn’s “Muslims Should Fight America Even If It Is Not at War with Islam” (2012), a poorly titled speech he gave in response to al-Awlaki’s death by American drone attacks, as a very poignant, relevant, and contemporary


\textsuperscript{21} Truman, 30-60.

\textsuperscript{22} Micheal Waller, \textit{Fighting the War of Ideas like a Real War} (Washington D.C.: Institute of World Politics Press, 2007).

\textsuperscript{23} Leeman, 40-60.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 46.
example of radicalizing rhetoric. When seen side-by-side, Western jihadist rhetoric and actual cases of homegrown terrorism reveal a very distinct pattern or process of radicalization. My research will describe this process and how Gadahn and al-Awlaki have specifically targeted the American audience in their propaganda in order to spread and enflame the radicalization process and violent ideology of Salafi extremism in the United States.
CHAPTER 2

MORAL OUTRAGE

Brothers: as the days pass since the Gaza Holocaust, we might forget some of the pain and bitter memories arising from three weeks of murder and destruction. However, we must never forget these facts about our reality and the reality of the regimes, even if they be painful and bitter. Otherwise, it won’t be long before we suffer a new massacre and another holocaust.

-Adam Gadahn

Radical Muslims represent a minority within the Muslim community. However, Islam has grown into a worldwide religion with more than 1.6 billion followers – nearly a quarter of the world’s population.\(^{25}\) Even a small percentage of that enormous number can represent a large threat. So, despite being a relative minority and even outcasts within the overarching Muslim community, why are extremist interpretations of Islam so attractive to many young Muslims? Marc Sageman’s evidence-based research argues that moral outrage is the impetus that propels individuals onto the path of violent jihad. Out of his sample of over 500 proven and admitted terrorists, over 90% recall feeling a strong sense of moral outrage and anger at the perceived injustices perpetrated against both themselves and Muslims across the world before they took up al Qaida’s cause.\(^{26}\) My own research supports this conclusion. Chapter Two will discuss the evolution and role of moral outrage directed at America and the West as a significant starting point in the Islamist radicalization process and show how it has been manifested both in cases of terrorist-related activities in the United States and in American-targeted jihadist rhetoric.


\(^{26}\) Sageman, Leaderless Jihad.
**PERSONAL OUTRAGE**

According to Edwin Black, terrorists begin with frustration and hopelessness directed at the system. Whether real or imagined, there is believed to be active oppression directed by the system at the individual, causing hopelessness, frustration, and anger. In radical Islamist ideology, the system is both the U.S. government and the American or Western way of life. Those who have spent time in prison and have literally had their freedom taken away by the U.S. government, as well as racial and ethnic minorities, including immigrants, who face regular social and economic discrimination, are prime targets for terrorist ideology and rhetoric. The cause of justice against the inhumanity and unfairness of the West is extremely appealing to these groups of people. Indeed, a careful review of violent jihadist plots or attacks in the United States since 9/11 shows that the majority of the perpetrators involved had spent time in jail, were a minority, were immigrants, or were some combination of all three factors. “Those, as a whole, who feel like society has the least to offer them are the most likely to join [jihad].”

The primary mastermind behind the 2006 plot to attack New York’s John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) was an unemployed Guyanese-American, Russell Defreitas, who worked as a cargo handler at JFK Airport until he was laid off in 2001. Michael C. Finton (a.k.a. Talib Islam), who attempted to detonate what he believed to be one ton of explosives packed in a van which he parked outside of the Paul Findley Federal Building in Springfield, Illinois on September 23, 2009 converted to a radical Salafi branch of Islam while serving his sentence for aggravated assault and aggravated battery in 1999. Antonio Martinez attempted to remotely detonate an SUV that he believed to be full of viable explosives outside of a military recruiting office in Catonsville, MD. He was a 21 year old naturalized

---

27 Black, 53.
28 Bjelopera, 74-143.
29 Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 118.
U.S. citizen from Nicaragua, a petty thief, and a recent convert to Islam. Before the attempted attack, he wrote on his Facebook page that he was “just a yung brotha from the wrong side of the tracks who embraced Islam.” And as a final example, in the most prominent post-9/11 example of domestic violent jihadist activity inspired in prison, Kevin James, Levar Washington, Gregory Patterson, and Hammad Samana were arrested and charged in August 2005 for their participation in a plot to attack Jewish institutions and other targets in the Los Angeles area, including synagogues, the Israeli Consulate, Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), U.S. military recruiting offices, and military bases. All of these American terrorists had their own reasons to feel angered by life in the United States before deciding to wage war in their backyards and against their neighbors. The discrimination, both real and perceived, faced by minorities and immigrants and the subjugation during time spent in prison can create a feeling of oppression and moral outrage that makes for a population vulnerable to Islamist radicalization, especially when combined with the limited knowledge of Islam that is often seen in the newly converted.

**COMMUNAL OUTRAGE**

While moral outrage over apparent injustices against the individual opens the door to radicalization and eventually terrorism, it is not until personal injustices are felt alongside and in the same light as crimes against fellow Muslims that potential terrorists truly become susceptible to violent jihadist ideology. Communal moral outrage at crimes against Muslims, both locally and globally, can be grafted onto the anger already in place against the system, especially when the aggressor in both cases is strongly associated with the United States. And unfortunately, there is no shortage of incidents or sentiments that reflect poorly on the relationship between America and Muslim communities around the world. In a 2009 study of 102 New York Muslims published in *Traumatology* (Vol. 15, No. 3), hate-fueled incidents were common. Twenty-five percent of participants reported verbal assaults, 22 percent reported workplace discrimination, 19 percent reported unprovoked interrogation by

---


34 Bjelopera, 21.
government agents and 19 percent reported physical assaults. In addition, according to the Pew Research Center, the number of Americans with favorable views of Islam dropped from 41 percent in 2005 to 30 percent in 2010, displaying a prevalent anti-Muslim trend in the United States. Being a Muslim in the United States is viewed adversely by 70 percent of the population, and often results in large-scale abuse and discrimination by neighbors and fellow Americans. On the other hand, concerning government action against Muslims, since 9/11, there have been many abuses by U.S. law enforcement agencies, especially the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement during the virtual round-up of Muslims for previously unenforced immigration violations after 9/11, against Muslim Americans. In fact, many people, both Muslims and non-Muslims, see the U.S. PATRIOT Act as modern day McCarthyism and legal intolerance of Islam. Despite all of this, the greatest perceived act of American injustice against Islam and Muslims around the world was the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the following years of war both there and in Afghanistan. A solid three quarters of Muslim Americans, who are mostly mainstream, reject US policy in Iraq. Indignation, frustration, and resentment at American “crimes” and “discrimination” against Muslims feed the already burning fire of anger that these would-be jihadists have for the system. These feelings provide a basis or starting point for interpreting and eventually responding to that anger and outrage according to radical Salafi interpretations of Islam.

Tarek Mehanna and Abou-Samra, who were arrested in 2009 by the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) for circulating al Qaida propaganda to other Americans, pursuing training in overseas camps operated by designated terrorist groups, and providing material support to the al Qaida movement, felt that the best recruiting tools were videos that depicted the suffering of fellow Muslims. In addition, Kaukab Siddique, the leader of the Baltimore-based radical Islamist group Jamaat-al-Muslimeen (JaM), regularly rails against U.S. abuses of Islam and Muslims to rally followers to his anti-Israeli cause. In an open letter

36 Ibid.
37 Sageman, Leaderless Jihad, 92.
38 Ibid., 91.
to U.S. Muslims in 2009, he said, “In this country, the Qur'an was put in the latrine, the Prophet was abused and insulted, Salman Rushdie has become a semi-star, Ayesha Siddiqua was targeted for abuse, our leaders are in prison, and wars are launched against the Muslim world,” and, “We live in the country which funds and arms the terrorist entity known as Israel, which was carved out of Palestine by force of arms.”\footnote{Kaukab Siddique, \textit{What Can US Muslims do to Counter Israel}? last modified May 1, 2009, http://www.ummah.com/forum/showthread.php?196793-What-can-U-S-Muslims-do-to-Counter-Israel-by-Kaukab-Siddique.} Major Nidal Hasan, the Fort Hood shooter, was frustrated and angry at his poor treatment in the U.S. Army and at the illegitimacy of the wars in the Middle East. His cousin said that he had faced harassment over his "Middle Eastern ethnicity" and had been trying to leave the army for some time.\footnote{“Profile: Major Nidal Malik Hasan,” BBC News, last modified November 12, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8345944.stm.} And Colonel Terry Lee, who worked with the gunman, said that Major Hasan often got into arguments with military colleagues over their support for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.\footnote{“Profile: Major Nidal Malik Hasan.”} All of these radical Islamists felt pain, frustration, and anger vicariously through their fellow Muslims and eventually acted on these feelings.

**MORAL OUTRAGE INFUSED BY RHETORIC**

Since 9/11 there have been many reasons for Muslims in America to be dissatisfied with the United States, and the moral outrage involved plays a major role in the Islamist radicalization process, especially when in the hands of American terrorist propagandists such as Adam Gadahn and Anwar al-Awlaki. From both a personal and a communal perspective, Gadahn and Awlaki provoke strong negative emotions and overwhelming fury in susceptible members of their audiences. The following will analyze how Gadahn and Awlaki’s jihadist rhetoric conforms to the Islamist radicalization process while enforcing and increasing the moral outrage that potential terrorists feel for their home countries.

In a 2010 address, \textit{A Call to Jihad}, al-Awlaki says, “To the American people I say, ‘Do you remember the good old days when Americans were enjoying the blessings of security and peace, when the word terrorism was rarely invoked, and when you were
oblivious to any threats?"  

Appealing to personal frustrations with the system that are relatable to every American, he continues, “No long lines, no elaborate searches, no body scans, no sniffing dogs, no taking off your shoes and emptying your pockets.” Similarly, in a 2012 speech titled Muslims Should Fight America Even If It Is Not at War with Islam, Gadahn says, “I think America, and Barack Obama in particular, have now shown their true colors for all to see. Even American citizens are now targets for the CIA and for the drone strikes.”

By choosing incidents of injustice and frustration that are already accepted as truth, uncontroversial, and easy to relate to, such as airport security and the assassination of U.S. citizens without trial, American-targeted terrorist rhetoric opens the door to a potential terrorist’s existing anger.

As I have already shown, those vulnerable to the extremist Salafi ideology that facilitates terrorism already harbor strong personal feelings of injustice and victimhood. From mutual anger and frustration at America, where strong negative feelings are already at play, jihadist propagandists can especially relate to certain members of their audiences. They use community terms such as “brother”, “ummah”, and “the world-wide Muslim community” and provoke shared outrage at ever more contentious offenses perpetrated against Muslims at the hands of the common enemy, an enemy that eventually evolves into a vague and yet encompassing representation of “America” that is often described as “Obama,” “the West,” or in terms relating to the historical Crusades. That outrage is then grafted onto one’s existing anger at the system, the final product of which has two main results. First, it dramatically increases overall moral outrage at America by adding a virtually endless list of injustices of terrible and amplified severity to one’s own motivation for such anger. Second, it acknowledges a common enemy between those already susceptible to extremist Salafi ideology and the radical jihadist movement. Both al-Awlaki and Gadahn successfully provoke communal moral outrage at presumed crimes against Muslims around the world and relate these crimes to their audiences in ways they can easily understand.

---


Al-Awlaki uses visceral terms and graphic wording in small and easily digestible portions to inflame moral outrage in his audience. In *A Call to Jihad*, he says, “America thought it could kill and invade, occupy and plunder, and conspire without bearing the consequences of its action. 9/11 was the answer of the millions of people who suffered from American aggression.”

Most people, especially potential terrorists, feel like the Man has worked against them at some point in their lives. Without even mentioning Islam or Muslims, he brilliantly relates to his audience and links personal and shared injustices across the world in two simple and easy to understand sentences. After grabbing the attention and stoking the anti-American fire, he further triggers the desired communal moral outrage at international U.S. crimes, “What we see from America is the invasion of countries, we see Abu Ghraib, Baghram and Guantanamo Bay, we see cruise missiles and cluster bombs and we have seen in Yemen the death of 23 children and 17 women. We cannot idly stand in the face of such aggression and we will fight back and incite others to do the same.”

He uses words that create a sense of inhumane oppression: “invasion,” “cruise missiles,” “cluster bombs,” and “aggression” draw a picture of a heartless enemy, especially when the death of 23 children and 17 women is mentioned in the same context.

Like al-Awlaki, Gadahn also stokes audience anger at the United States. In his 2010 *A Call to Arms*, he uses emotionally wrenching and horrifying terms such as “holocaust” and “massacre” to lay out the supposed “truth” of perceived American injustices against Muslims. He says, “The aggression against Gaza represents a new holocaust and another massacre in the continuing series of criminal massacres which the members of the Zio-Crusader alliance are waging against brothers of ours in Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Somalia, Palestine, and elsewhere.” In the same speech he also says, “You have seen the truth about Obama in the Gaza Holocaust which he approved, and in Muslim Palestine which

---

45 Al-Awlaki, "A Call to Jihad."
46 Ibid.
he wants Judaized,” and “[Obama] threatened to send more forces of the Cross to increase the spilling of the blood of the Muslim people in it.” “Holocaust,” “bombed,” “threatened”, and “spilling of blood” are words and phrases used to trigger outrage at the United States for crimes against Muslim Palestine and the Muslim people. The “Zio-Crusader” enemy is posited as abstract, general and capacious to the effect that anybody at any time can fill this role at which anger can be directed, whatever the perceived cause. Under these constructed circumstances, how could one not be upset by such “atrocities” against one’s “brothers” around the world?

Western jihadist ideologues such as al-Awlaki and Gadahn, understand the Islamist radicalization process and the important role that both personal and communal moral outrage at the United States, recognized empirically and in case studies of American terrorist activities, play in the making of a domestic terrorist. Their propaganda reflects this understanding as it exacerbates hatred of the West and of America, rhetorically “bundling” or “packaging” together disparate reasons for anger with a “bundling” of potentially disparate targets into the “open” category of “zio-crusader” alliance, and eventually linking hatred based on personal reasons and life experiences to hatred for more communal reasons such as U.S. abuses of Muslims in Abu Ghraib. Chapter Two discussed how personal and communal moral outrage directed at America and the West a significant starting point in the Islamist radicalization process and showed how it has been manifested in both cases of terrorist related activities in the United States and Western targeted jihadist rhetoric.

---

48 Gadahn, ”Let’s Continue.”
49 Ibid.
CHAPTER 3

IDENTIFICATION

The source of your honor and greatness is your Islam, your perseverance, your Jihad, your fighting on Allah’s order and your belonging truly and truthfully to the Ummah of Islam.

-Anwar al-Alwaki

Those who have strong feelings of moral outrage at the West, as discussed in Chapter Two, will often seek ways in which to interpret their feelings. In a 2011 paper published in *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (Vol. 3, No. 1), 138 Muslims living in the United States were surveyed about their lives in America. In response to different discrimination occurrences, participants used both religious and non-religious coping mechanisms. Extreme or jihadist Salafi ideology, one stream of the broader Salafi movement, provides a simple and straightforward interpretation of their moral outrage that gives them comfort of both community and action, and justifies their anger. The general goal of this revivalist understanding of Islam is to create a “pure” society that applies a literal reading of the Quran and adheres to the social practices that prevailed at the time of 7th century Arabia. Extreme and is largely characterized by an extreme intolerance and hostility towards unbelievers and those perceived to be attacking Islam. For some whose outrage and anger are great and compounded by both personal and communal experiences, identifying with radical Islam puts the world in order, creates a community of fellow brother suffers, and ultimately provides a solution to the injustices of the world.

Chapter Three first examines how individuals in the United States interpret their moral outrage at America through identification with violent Islamist extremism and eventually domestic jihad. Then, I show how American-targeted jihadist rhetoric from Adam Gadahn and Anwar al-Awlaki sell the appeals of the radical Islamist interpretation of moral

---

50 Clay.

outrage to their audiences. Finally, I demonstrate how the identification step in the process of Islamist radicalization has been manifested in American terrorists since 9/11. Identification provides a vocabulary of thoughts, actions, emotions, and attitudes for codifying and thus interpreting a situation. Identifying with radical Salafi ideology in order to interpret existing moral outrage can codify how one will react and interpret future situations on his or her way down the path of jihad, potentially leading to violent attacks in the end.

**THE APPEALS OF IDENTIFICATION**

The radical Islamist movement, following mass movement theory, attracts disassociated and alienated people through the strength of its direct ideological appeals to the justice and glory of Islam and the injustice and wretchedness of the system. Even for those who grew up in Islam, experiencing and identifying with extremist Salafi ideology is like seeing the world in a whole new light, and is often followed by a quick, decisive, and dramatic increase in devotion. Under this progressive identification or conversion, Islam becomes the sole way to restore dignity and gain a sense of spiritual calling while instilling order and promoting the values of the moral high ground. Making sense of the world and their new place in it, these new converts accept their new faith in deeper and more stringent ways as time goes by. One may even start to notice “new” phenomena that had been previously ignored in the flux of experience that only becomes discovered when one’s selecting, ordering, and magnifying “lens” is calibrated according to the radical Islamist framework, a framework that makes these phenomena both present and salient. This process thus accrues new “observations” from both past and present experiences that, as they accumulate, serve to confirm the framework, in a self-strengthening cycle. As each realized violation and cause for moral outrage is put into a context that affects one personally and according to radical Islamist ideology, one’s identification with the extremist Salafi movement becomes stronger.

---

52 Foss, 64.

53 Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 119.

54 Ibid., 91.

55 Ibid., 117.
While both old and new events are made to fit in the new ideology, the support of social networks with similar beliefs will significantly increase one’s identification with radical Islam. Unfortunately, following the disruption of existing social circles, often a large factor or result of an individual’s original dissatisfaction with the system, those vulnerable to terrorist ideology are often looking for new social affiliations who share their new vision of the world. These like-minded people will share ideas and beliefs that reinforce those beliefs and participate in rituals that build faith and generate group solidarity and further integration into the radical Islamist movement.  

The community and social networks found in the movement are both major appeals and major indoctrination factors. Both mosques and social networking sites on the Internet serve many functions in the transformation of young alienated Muslims into global Salafi Muhahedeen. Radical Islamist ideology is an appealing way of interpreting moral outrage against the United States and social networks within the movement act to reinforce and strengthen one’s identification with and loyalty to the movement.

**SELLING THE APPEALS AND REINFORCING IDENTIFICATION**

The radical Islamist movement consists of participants who share the same vision of the world and a rhetorically created communal identity that allows them to place themselves, their grievances and operations in response to these grievances, in a wider, shared perspective. While the extremist Salafi ideology has many appeals for those already harboring moral outrage against the United States, terrorist propaganda targeted at the West significantly helps to sell the Salafi interpretation over similar interpretations of a less extreme nature and solidify these new emerging identities in the audience along the hard lines of Islamist radicalization. Unfortunately, in regard to new converts to radical Islam, in their eagerness to demonstrate their commitment to their new religion, they are all too willing to almost blindly accept the words of any Arabic speaker or recognized authority who claims

---

56 Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 109, 117.
57 Ibid., 109.
special expertise as representative and legitimate voice Islam. Gadahn and al-Awlaki expertly use this naivety to influence their audiences through different rhetorical techniques that solidify one’s identification as a part of the global Salafi movement.

First, in all of the propaganda examples below, both Gadahn and al-Awlaki robustly use inclusive verses divisive words to make their audiences feel as if they are already a part of the global Salafi movement. Kenneth Burke argues that many purely formal patterns can readily awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy or identity in us. For instance, passages built about a set of oppositions (“we do this, but they on the other hand so that; we stay here, but they go there; we look up; but they look down,” etc.) it invites participation regardless of the subject matter. So, when referring to the audience, Gadahn and al-Awlaki do not use individualizing terms such as “you”. Instead, they use terms such as “a Muslim,” “Muslims,” “ummah,” “us,” and “we,” verses they “they” and “them.” These “us verse them” terms are used to make the audience feel included as both a victim of the supposed global war on Islam and as an obligated jihadist. In addition, when referring to those other than the audience such as active terrorists or actual victims of perceived tragedies, terms such as “brother” and “brothers” are used. The use of inclusive words further solidifies the audience’s identification with the proactive radical Islamist ideology preached by terrorist ideologues, providing a new identity that is “brave” or “positive,” in the sense of being a part of the “solution” as opposed to passively suffering, for the audience that transcends their “oppressed” identity.

When making an argument, the status of fact and truth is not guaranteed indefinitely unless one accepts the existence of an infallible authority or deity whose revelations are incontestable and who could guarantee these facts and truths. The infallibility of Allah and Islam is the incontestable basis or premise from which terrorist propagandists attempt to persuade their audience that their interpretation and response to moral outrages, or the radical Islamist ideology, are correct, good, just, and necessary. Propagandists use this authority in two main ways. First, they invoke Allah and Islam before nearly every speech and article.

---

59 Burke, 58.
60 Perelman, 24.
“inviting” God into the text to become part of the “proof” in a rhetorical sense and arguing the case for jihad and the extremist Salafi movement. Second, they inextricably tie together jihad and Islam, making the assumption for the audience that if you love Allah you must also, by default, love jihad. The following are examples of Gadahn and al-Awlaki using the uncontestable power of the supreme deity Allah to back their rhetoric and one’s identification with radical Islam and the anti-American jihad.

In *Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice* (2009), Gadahn opens his speech with an invocation of Allah. He says, “All praise is due to Allah. We praise Him and seek his aid and forgiveness, and we seek refuge in Allah for the evil in ourselves and from our bad deeds. He whom Allah guides cannot be led astray, and he who is led astray cannot be guided. I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.”

61 A Call to Arms (2010) begins similarly with a religious quote: "I seek refuge in Allah from Satan the Accursed. In the Name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful: O you who believe! Fight the unbelievers who are closest in proximity to you and let them find harshness in you; and know that Allah is with those who fear Him." Al-Awlaki does not stray from this trend. In *A Call to Jihad* (2010), he launches his address, “All praises due to Allah and may peace and blessings be upon the messenger Mohammed, his family and companions. Peace be upon those who follow the guidance.” In addition, he concludes *44 Ways to Support Jihad* (2009) with an invocation to both Allah and the mujahideen, or jihadist fighters. He says, “In the end, we ask Allah to guide us to the straight path and to make us of those who listen to the words and follow the best of them. We ask you O Allah to make us among the mujahideen and to grant us victory over your enemies. Ameen!”

Each time, both propagandists not only bring Allah and all his authority to bear on their following or subsequent arguments, their quotes and summons also involve acting correctly according to the rules or “guidance” of

---

61 Gadahn, "Let’s Continue."


63 Al-Awlaki, "A Call to Jihad."

that supreme authority. By commandeering the power and justice of the supreme being of their audiences, Gadahn and al-Awlaki give an uncontestable weight to both their Salafi interpretation of Islam and the tragic events happening around the world, solidifying and marking as just one’s identification with said interpretations.

Beyond simply invoking Islam and the guidance of Allah in the context of their speeches, both Gadahn and al-Awlaki tightly link this supreme authority to jihad as an individual obligation of every Muslim. Therefore, if one wishes to identify with Islam, according to the extremist ideology that is enacted in and through the texts of jihadist ideologues, one must take up jihad against the enemy. The idea of resistance against the United States becomes an integral part of the audience’s new identity. In *Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice* (2009), Gadahn says, “the source of your honor and greatness is your Islam, your perseverance, your Jihad, your fighting on Allah’s order and your belonging truly and truthfully to the Ummah of Islam.”65 After the Fort Hood shooting, Gadahn continues to solidify the bond between Allah and jihad by singling out Major Nidal Hasan, an American terrorist, in his *A Call to Arms* (2010) speech: “Courageous Brother Nidal didn't give the orders of men priority over the orders of Allah, nor did he fear the wrath of men more than the wrath of Allah.”66 Anwar al-Awlaki is even more direct, in *A Call to Jihad* (2010), saying “And I eventually came to the conclusion that jihad against America is binding upon myself just as it is binding on every other able Muslim.”67 Before that, in *44 Ways to Support Jihad* (2009), he says, “Jihad is the greatest deed in Islam and the salvation of the ummah is in practicing it,” and “Again, the point needs to be stressed: Jihad today is obligatory on every capable Muslim. So as a Muslim who wants to please Allah it is your duty to find ways to practice it and support it.68 And in regard to fellow terrorists, he says, “It is therefore our Islamic duty to stand up for the ones who are defending us and our religion.”69 Jihadist propagandists such as Gadahn and al-Awlaki base their speeches or arguments on the

65 Gadahn, "Let's Continue."
66 Gadahn, "A Call to Arms."
67 Al-Awlaki, "A Call to Jihad."
68 Al-Awlaki, "44 Ways to Support Jihad."
69 Ibid.
infallibility of a Allah and Islam when they explain what it means to be a good Muslim and rail against the West. They prove the authority and obligation of their interpretations of world to those looking for guidance, further solidifying one’s identification with the extremist Salafi ideology and global jihad.

An additional and uniquely Westernized way in which jihadist rhetoric convinces potential American terrorists to identify with the global Salafi movement is the use of quasi logic. Quasi-logical arguments are based on the structure of reality and the arguments that establish this structure. It always presupposes adherence to non-formal theses which alone allows the application of the argument.70 In the identification phase of the radicalization process, Gadahn and al-Awlaki argue from the basic premise that Allah is God and His word is law. From here, they attempt to lead their audiences further down the path of radical Islam through a seemingly logical progression. Thus, since Allah is great, you must hate America, or support jihad, or any other idea or action with which terrorist propagandist want their audiences to identify. Quasi-logical arguments attempt to look like true logic, and are very appealing to Western audiences. Gadahn’s Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice (2009) argues against working with governments to effect change.

Political maneuvering, futile negotiations and establishment of governments of national unity which contradict the constants of our faith and Shari’ah are things which everyone is capable of doing, and are not things which noble, defiant heroes do, and there is nothing in them which distinguishes Muslims from the rest: on the contrary, they place the secularist traitor on par with the Muslim Mujahid. So avoid them, for they are impurities of the Devil’s own making.71 In addition, Gadahn’s reference to “noble, defiant heroes” helps to define the kind of identity his followers seek to adopt in their acceptance and adherence to radical Islam. Through this “revolutionary” rhetoric, audience members sacrifice their identity of “oppression” and anger with one of supposed heroism where their suffering is “noble” and their anti-social outbursts are “acts of defiance and justice,” and raise themselves out of perceived helpless frustration and obscurity into honored positions of special importance.” It thus makes ordinary people

---

70 Perelman, 50.
71 Gadahn, "Let's Continue,"

feel that they do not belong to the “system” or with the “herd” and do not need to follow the rules binding on others who are not “special.”

In *A Call to Arms* (2010), Gadahn examines Nidal Hasan’s planning of the Fort Hood attacks, saying, “I believe Brother Nidal realized that Islam neither calls for nor approves of hasty, reckless and poorly planned actions, and that’s why he acted with caution and took the necessary steps in order to avoid repeating the mistakes others have made in operational and procedural matters.”

Al-Awlaki uses quasi-logical reasoning to support the radical Islamist interpretation of events: that jihad is correct and obligatory, that America cannot possibly win its supposed war against Islam, and that America will soon start rounding up American Muslims in detainee camps. He says, “Since Jihad is the greatest deed after believing in Allah and is the most needed - yet most neglected - act of worship today, it is necessary for you to join a group that has Jihad as its main objective,”

“How can Obama expect to win when Bush couldn’t with the full and unlimited backing of the people. There is a recession now, too. Therefore America cannot win. The tables have turned and there is no rolling back the worldwide jihad movement,” and, “Yesterday America was a land of slavery, segregation, lynching and Klu Klux Klan and tomorrow it will be a land of religious discrimination and concentration camps. Don’t be deceived by the promises of preserving your rights from a government that is right now killing your own brothers and sisters.”

The only “logical” way of understanding Islam and one’s moral outrage at the United States is through the extremist Salafi ideology, which reinforces one’s identification with said ideology.

Terrorist propagandists also promote and increase identification with radical Islamist ideology by never presenting valid alternate versions of their truths; their way is the only way. This monopoly on information and interpretation protects the meeting of the minds between the propagandist and his audience and draws the attention of the audience to the chosen ideology or identity. As long as the multiplicity of possible interpretations is not

72 Gadahn, "A Call to Arms."
73 Al-Awlaki, "44 Ways to Support Jihad."
74 Al-Awlaki, "A Call to Jihad."
75 Ibid.
taken legitimately into account and the interpretation given has no rival, there is no inclination to dissociate the data from the construct. A major part of this monopoly on interpretation involves both branding America as evil and inhumane and jihadists as good, holy, and just. Branding is the art of conditioning an audience to associate a given product, person, or idea with a desired cognitive or emotional response. Whenever anything associated with the United States is mentioned, it is mentioned in relation to negative words such as “devil,” “deceitful,” and “evil.” And words such as “honest,” “brave,” and “courageous” are used whenever discussing terrorists. Terrorist propagandists do not even use the term “terrorist” to describe their brothers in arms, preferring terms such as “holy warrior” and “mujahideen.” Similar to surrounding oneself with like-minded individuals, this monopoly on how to understand Islam, the world, and one’s place in it all, as presented in terrorist rhetoric, reinforces one’s identification with the global Salafi movement.

The following will show how al-Awlaki and Gadahn use absolutist terms, hyperbole, and branding to support the singular interpretation of radical Islamist ideology and monopolize the identity of their audiences. In regards to moderate Islam, Gadahn says, in Let's Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice (2009), “The most truthful of speech is the speech of Allah, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad; and the worst of affairs are innovations [in religion]; and every innovation [in religion] is a heresy; and every heresy is misguidance; and all misguidance is in the Fire.” In the same speech, he also says, “Don’t respond to the calls of the defeatists/deserters/demoralizers, nor the proposals of the secularist betrayers of their religion and sellers of their homeland and people,” He presents the extremist Salafi ideology as the only legitimate version of Islam, going so far as to say that accepting any other version will land the audience in Hell. In A Call to Arms (2010), Gadahn takes one breath to label a terrorist as heroic and an “ideal role-model for every repentant Muslim in the armies of the unbelievers and apostate regimes,” and negatively brands the West, “The fact is, the heroic Fort Hood operation opens up a host of new innovations"
opportunities for discussion of the hypocrisy, hubris and less-than-wholesome aspects of the Western Crusader culture.”

Al-Awlaki follows the same recipe in 44 Ways to Support Jihad (2009), “As a rule of thumb, we should never side by word or deed against our brothers in Islam especially the ones who have given up their lives for Islam and we should never side by word or deed with the disbelievers who are the enemies of our most beloved, Allah subhanahu wa ta’ala,” enforcing the idea that his audience should never stray from the correct path of Islam, as defined by al-Awlaki. Additionally, he says, “We are transparent and open in proclaiming our message to the world. Our objective is to bring Islam back to life, we seek to remove the tyrannical and parasitical rulers of the Muslim world and replace them with men of god who know the difference between right and wrong, good and evil,”

Al-Awlaki’s message and mission are characterized by openness, transparency, and life and by men who know the difference between right and wrong, unlike that of the enemy. Terrorist propaganda such as the examples above helps solidify the audience’s identification with radical Islam and prepares them for the next step in the radicalization process: choosing a side in the worldwide battle between good and evil.

Finally, in all of the propaganda examples above, both Gadahn and al-Awlaki robustly use inclusive words to make their audiences feel as if they are already a part of the global Salafi movement. When referring to the audience, they do not use individualizing terms such as “you.” Instead, they use terms such as “a Muslim,” “Muslims,” “ummah,” “us,” and “we.” These inclusive terms are used to make the audience feel included as both a victim of the supposed global war on Islam and as an obligated jihadist. In addition, when referring to those other than the audience such as active terrorists or actual victims of perceived tragedies terms such as “brother” and “brothers” are used. The use of inclusive words further solidifies the audience’s identification with the radical Islamist ideology preached by terrorist ideologues.

80 Gadahn, "A Call to Arms."
81 Al-Awlaki, "44 Ways to Support Jihad."
82 Al-Awlaki, "A Call to Jihad."
IDENTIFICATION ON THE INTERNET AND IN ACTION

Since 9/11, there have been many studies on those who identify with radical Islam and follow that extreme ideology to its logical conclusion. The following examples from both convicted terrorists and law enforcement agencies will show that Western jihadist propagandists play a large role in drawing individuals to the extremist Salafi movement. In addition, these examples will show that the Internet plays a massive role in the identification process, in regards to both propaganda and social networking. It makes speakers such as al-Awlaki and Gadahn easily available to American audiences and spreads their messages on a scale previously impossible. The Internet also provides easy access to like-minded social networks for those who find radical Islamist ideology appealing, as discussed earlier, reinforcing their identification with terrorist ideology. However, the lack of details from this point in the radicalization process in U.S. cases, coupled with the fact that they were disrupted at a relatively early stage, somewhat obscures the direct manifestation of the radicalization process.83

According to the Congressional Research Service, a “spiritual sanctioner” or charismatic figure typically plays a central role in the indoctrination or identification process by quickening the formulation of individual or group beliefs regarding violent jihad.84 For example, Faisal Shahzad, a naturalized U.S. citizen and Connecticut resident originally from Pakistan, confessed in 2010 to the arresting officers that he had attempted to detonate a car bomb in Times Square. He thanked “Imams who are spreading the dawa and talking about jihad, especially in English.” “Because of them,” he said, “I am here.”85 Through the Internet, al Qaeda and affiliated groups and individuals operating in even the most remote areas overseas have had the ability to reach their intended audience in the U.S. to recruit and indoctrinate.86 Western jihadist ideologues such as al-Awlaki and Gadahn do not lose their abilities to reach an American audience after they flee the United States. If anything, sending

83 Silber and Bhatt, 56.
84 Bjelopera, 14.
messages from more Islamic or conflict-ridden zones such as Yemen, makes their messages even more legitimate to their listeners. For example, it is known that Antonio Martinez, mentioned in the previous chapter for his attempt to bomb a military recruiting office, spent time online looking at jihadist videos on the Revolution Muslim website and on YouTube, and referred to al-Awlaki as his “beloved sheikh.” Revolution Muslim is a New York City-based radical Islamist group, which, although small, has circulated extremist ideology to a large English-speaking audience via its web site, featuring lectures by al-Awlaki and other radical clerics.

Besides providing a direct access to unfiltered radical ideology and a medium from which terrorist propagandists can easily spread their message of jihad, according to a report by the New York Police Department in 2007, the Internet also serves as an anonymous virtual meeting place for groups of like-minded and conflicted individuals to form virtual relationships and discuss and share the jihadi-Salafi message they have encountered. In 2007, both Frank J. Cilluffo, the former Director of the Homeland Security Policy Institute, and Sam Rascoff, a former New York Police Department terrorism specialist, commented on the social networking power of the Internet. Cilluffo, said that the Web has supplanted mosques as a recruitment venue, especially as terrorists try to draw Westerners into their organizations. And in reference to the lack of direct al Qaeda recruitment in the United States, Rascoff said, “there is a sense that these guys are radicalizing on their own [through self selecting social networks on the Internet].” Unfortunately, al Qaeda’s brand of extremist Salafi ideology resonates with those looking to interpret different moral outrages they feel towards America, even those who grew up or spent most of their life in the United States. Micheal Finton, mentioned in a previous chapter for his attempt to blow up the Paul Findley Federal Building in Springfield, Illinois, was described as being exceedingly anti-American by coworkers at the Richland Community College newspaper, who also said that

87 The Nine Eleven Finding Answers Foundation. Plot to Bomb a Maryland.
88 Ibid.
89 Silber and Bhatt, 8.
90 Bjelopera, 22.
91 Ibid.
he discussed his religion and the oppression of Muslims continually.\textsuperscript{92} Identifying with radical Islam provides an understanding of why they harbor these feelings of anger and frustration in the context of America as a global problem and provides the vocabulary to express these grievances. The progression of searching, finding, adopting, nurturing, and developing this extreme belief system to the point of internalizing it as one’s own belief system, often under the influence of terrorist ideologues and the anonymity of the Internet, describes the identification step in the Islamist radicalization process. The following chapter will discuss how this identity supports terrorism’s understanding of a bipolar world and a global war against Islam.

\textsuperscript{92} The Nine Eleven Finding Answers Foundation. \textit{Attempt to Attack the Paul.}
CHAPTER 4

CHOOSING A SIDE IN A BIPOLAR WORLD WAR

So, brothers, be with the people of truth who ally themselves to the truth and its people, and don’t be with those who have betrayed Allah and Islam and betrayed their trusts and allied themselves to falsehood and stood with those who make war on Allah, His Messenger and the believers.

-Adam Gadahn

So far, this thesis has shown how potential terrorists interpret their anti-American moral outrage through identification with extremist Salafi ideology, a radical understanding of Islam that promotes violence against unbelievers and all other enemies. Viewing the world and global conflicts from this newly-formed framework will lead to the belief that the West is waging a war against Islam in a diametrical bipolar world, where the forces of good and evil are conducting all out war and the very survival of Islam is a stake. Following extreme Salafi ideology’s rigid doctrines, which suggest that violence is a viable and legitimate means to defend Islam from perceived enemies, even if means attacking one’s own government and sacrificing one’s own life, the follower must choose a side in this war and the path to terrorism is ultimately paved.93 Chapter Four will demonstrate how and why the acceptance of a bipolar world and choosing the supposed side of Islam are necessary in the radicalization process, followed by how terrorist propagandists promote this message.

CHOOSING SIDES IN A POLARIZED WORLD AND THE WAR ON ISLAM

Identification is important to propagandists, because it provides the premise from which they can launch their arguments for the audience’s consent. The aim of argumentation is not to deduce consequences from given premises; it is rather to elicit or increase the adherence of the members of an audience to theses that are presented for their consent.94 For

93 Silber and Bhatt, 17.
94 Perelman, 9.
them, persuasion becomes the de facto result of increased identification. Terrorist propagandists make three main arguments that follow and build on their audiences’ identification with the extreme Salafi movement. Rather than expressing purely positive content, identity needs a that-which-it-is-not, an “other” that helps to anchor the sense of the “self.” Solidifying the “evil other,” the first argument is that the world is characterized by a global bipolar struggle between good and evil, where Islam is good and the West, specifically America, is evil. The second argument is that the West is actively working towards the destruction of Islam. To persuade the audience, terrorist ideologues must choose points of departure from theses already accepted by their audiences. They transfer to the conclusion, a diametrical bipolar world, the adherence accorded to the premises, which in this case, is identification with radical Islam. From here, the third argument and culmination of the third step in the radicalization process demands that audience members must choose to side with goodness and those who actively oppose the injustice of the West and the United States if they wish to maintain their identification with “God” and the extremist Salafi movement and avoid cognitive dissonance, completing the third step in the Islamist radicalization process.

According to Sayyid Qtub, the father of modern radical Islam, mankind was on the brink of a precipice and the world was devoid of vital values necessary for its healthy development and real progress. He believed that Western civilization could not provide this guidance, for it had no such values and that only Islam possessed them. In order to promote radical Islam’s idea of a bipolar world, the illegitimacy of the system must be “proved.” Using classic occidental themes, terrorist propagandists maintain that the West, under the guise of progress, has lost both its way and its very humanity. According to these themes, the West has thrown aside the values of faith, honor, and tradition in favor of material wealth and technological advances that further mechanize society. It has thus become deceitful, criminal, greedy, and amoral. In addition, representatives of the system, those in power and leadership

---

95 Foss, 63.
97 Perelman, 21.
98 Sageman, Understanding Terror Networks, 9.
positions, in pursuit of their own material advancement, use and take advantage of the rest of the population, who are too caught up in their own comfort and decadence to resist or even notice their virtual enslavement. Per radical Islamist ideology, occidental criticisms of the West are embodied in America, making the United States completely illegitimate, inhumane, and ultimately evil. To those who already feel oppressed by the system and identify with the extremist Salafi movement, these ideas are accepted and adhered to easily, quickly, and with ever increasing strength.

One hundred percent contrary to the illegitimacy of America, according to terrorist propagandists, is the goodness and justice of Islam. Everything that America is, Islam and the global radical Islamist movement is not. Sticking with occidental themes used to characterize that which is good and necessary to counter the system, the radical Islamist movement is honest, brave, just, generous, and moral, a simple point-by-point opposition. Islam holds to intrinsic and communal values such as faith and family that have been left behind in the individualistic and materialism-driven West. In this construction of a bipolar world, which cleanly divides the world into good and evil, violence becomes good and legitimate, because it responds to an evil illegitimate system. According to radical Islamist ideology, there is no grey area between the bipolar world’s extremes. The absence of neutrality is complete, and choosing not to act or support action, or jihad, against the system is siding with the West, otherwise known as the great Satan. In the “choosing a side” phase of the Islamist radicalization process, terrorist propagandists persuade their audiences of fundamental ideas, each of which builds off previously accepted theses, starting with one’s identification with extreme Salafi ideology. Islam and America diametrically oppose each other in a rigid bipolar world where America is the embodiment of evil and Islam is the champion of goodness and justice, and the audience must choose a side in this battle, because neutrality means siding with the devil. The only good and moral choice is to side with Islam and those who fight the system as strongly, uncompromisingly, and violently as possible. In the radicalization process, this is where potential terrorists accept the existence of a diametrical

99 Leeman, 53.
100 Ibid.
bipolar world and choose to become an active part of jihad against America in response to that acceptance.

As part of the bipolar world created in terrorist ideology, the idea that the United States is actively waging an inhumane and criminal war against Islam further demands that one who identifies with radical Islam chooses to side with anti-American jihadist forces. First, terrorist ideology is more likely to be adopted if the idea that there is a war against Islam resonates with one’s everyday experiences, which radicalization process makes virtually inevitable. Understanding that America is waging a war against Islam becomes the simple conclusion from both personal and communal outrages experienced and interpreted through radical Islam thus far.

In addition, through identification with the jihadist Salafi interpretation of Islam, a war against Islam and Muslims worldwide can increase the likelihood of developing a social identity, in which the feeling of belonging to the global jihad against America can be grafted on to a radical Islamist identity, encouraging one’s adherence to the bipolar world and the goodness of the fight against the perceived tyranny of the West. Terrorist propagandists lead their audiences down this path of radicalization from moral outrage to identification with extremist Salafi ideology to siding exclusively with the Islamists terrorism, and use deliberative reasoning to gain adherence to progressively more radical identifications and arguments. They advise and dissuade, and finally recommend what seems the most useful, which happens to always be the next step in the radicalization process. The audience’s new identity and fanaticism give life strict structure, moral superiority, and specialness that may not have been had before, and further decreases the barriers to violence that may have previously been in place. This new identity as part of the global jihad, where “identity” is largely a dynamic concept, becomes something one acts out and something that is a function of one’s relationship with and place in both the West and the radical Islamist movement.

---

102 Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 156.
103 Perelman, 11.
THE RHETORIC OF A BIPOLAR WORLD

Through one’s identification with the extremist Salafi interpretation of Islam, terrorist propagandists such as Adam Gadahn and Anwar al-Awlaki seek to persuade their audiences that a bipolar world of good versus evil exists, that the survival of Islam is at stake, and that they must choose to side with those who oppose America and practice the “true” version of Islam. A cluster analysis of Gadahn’s and al-Awlaki’s speeches shows how they use negative and positive emotionally wrenching words to describe respectively the United States and its allies and the radical Islamist movement and its members to create a diametrical bipolar world in the minds of their audience members. In addition, as was seen in the rhetoric aimed at audiences in the previous identification phase of Islamist radicalization, terrorist propagandists use quasi-logical arguments to achieve similar ends. Finally, Gadan and al-Awlaki appeal to the human desire for in-group membership to increase their audiences’ adherence to the idea of an all-out war between Islam and the West, where the terrorists are the forces of good and America is the evil enemy.

In *Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice* (2009), Gadahn depicts actions of the American-Israeli alliance and Jews as “the savagery of the brothers of monkeys and swine which manifested itself in the ugliest of forms; and so ugly were their crimes that they were condemned by groups and individuals among the Jews, usually bereft of fairness and human emotions.” Both demonizing and dehumanizing, he uses words and descriptions such as “savagery,” “monkeys,” “swine,” “ugly,” and “bereft of fairness and human emotions.” In contrast to these negative associations, regarding Palestinian terrorists, Gadahn says, “And I can almost swear that were this defiant people’s perseverance and heroism to be distributed to the Muslim Ummah in its entirety, it would suffice it for confronting its enemies for years on end.” “Defiant,” “heroism,” and “perseverance” are used in association with those who oppose the “savagery of the brothers of monkeys.” As one can see in *Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice* (2009), through the creation and acceptance of a diametrical bipolar world at war, the identity of Gadahn’s audience and potential terrorists becomes increasingly characterized by their opposition to the West. The bipolar world becomes rhetorically

---

105 Gadahn, "Let's Continue."
106 Ibid.
incorporated into his audience’s new identity through a new identity defining bipolar relationship, where the “negative” relationship is characterized by opposition to the “West”, as the “negative pole”, along with the “positive” relationship to others who are like-minded, as the relationship’s “positive” pole.\footnote{Ornatowski, 39-61.}

Though al-Awlaki tends to not use as many descriptive words as Gadahn, he still uses specific terms and desired associations to increase his audience’s acceptance of this step in the Islamist radicalization process. In 44 Ways to Support Jihad (2009), he says, “The kuffar today are conspiring against us like never before. So could we be heading towards the great battle between the Romans and the Muslims?\footnote{Al-Awlaki, “44 Ways to Support Jihad.”} According to radical Islamist ideology, a “kuffar” is a non-believer and can be killed. The term has very negative connotations that are especially amplified when used in conjunction with negative words such as “conspiring.” In regards to the “battle between the Romans and the Muslims,” al-Awlaki both associates the West with enemies of the past and places historical glories, victories, and actual war in the present tense, thus “ennobling” the cause and giving it a “historic” dimension and significance. These two simple sentences mark the West as a long standing enemy who is targeting Islam and whose people are worthy of death. In A Call to Jihad (2010), al-Awlaki says, “We are fighting for a noble cause. We are fighting for God and you are fighting for worldly gain. We are fighting for justice because we are defending ourselves and our families and you are fighting for imperialistic goals. We are fighting for truth and justice and you are fighting for oppression.”\footnote{Al-Awlaki, “A Call To Jihad.”} He creates an in-group versus an out-group situation through the use of “we” and “you,” where “you” is everyone who is not a “we.” In pursuit of an opposing bipolar world, the in-group, or radical Islamist movement, is associated with “noble causes,” God,” “justice,” “defense,” “family,” and “truth,” while the out-group is characterized by words such as “imperialistic,” “worldly gain,” and “oppression.”

Finally, Gadahn’s A Call to Arms (2010) provides some of the most prolific examples of using specific positive and negative terms to increase one’s association of evil to America and good with the radical Islamist movement and to deepen one’s adherence to a bipolar
world at war. First, Gadahn positively addresses the Fort Hood shooter, Nidal Hasan, saying, "The Mujahedeen brother Nidal Hasan has shown us what one righteous Muslim with an assault rifle can do for his religion and brothers in faith, and has reminded us of how much pride and joy a single act of resistance and courage can instill in the hearts of Muslims everywhere."

110 He associates this terrorist with positive terms such as “righteous,” “Muslim,” “faith,” “pride,” “joy,” “resistance,” and “courage.” After this endorsement, he further associates the Fort Hood shooting and Hasan with positive attributes before transitioning to the complete demonization of the West. He says, “Defiant Muslim heroes like Major Nidal Malik Hasan… and the heroic Fort Hood operation opens up a host of new opportunities for discussion of the hypocrisy, hubris and less-than-wholesome aspects of the Western Crusader culture.”

111 Using words such as “defiant,” “hero,” and “heroic” in association with the radical Islamist movement and in opposition of words such as “hypocrisy,” “hubris,” “less-than-wholesome” for America, Gadahn presents the idea of Islam and the West and diametrically and fundamentally opposing forces where America is the evil enemy, increasing his audience’s acceptance of this argument.

Further marking the United States as the malicious adversary in A Call to Arms (2010), Gadahn describes American personnel as the “thugs of Blackwater, the depraved guards of Abu Ghraib, and the homicidal gang-rapists of al-Miqdadiyah.”

112 “Thugs,” “depraved,” “homicidal gang-rapists,” and “mindless” are all words that evoke negative images and emotions as they are associated with both America and its military actions in the Middle East. In addition, these examples support the generalization that terrorist ideologues already want to “prove,” becoming examples in a quasi-logical inductive sequence where generalizations are made from few very selective specific instances. In the same speech, he discusses the American military courts, Western culture, and America’s alliance with Israel: “The crusader military court of inquisition, a show trial whose outcome is not in question,” “Western decadence, depravity, immorality and atheism, lawless enemies,” and “the savage,

110 Gadahn, "A Call to Arms."
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
heartless and bloody Zionist Crusader assault. “Crusader,” “inquisition,” “show trial,” “decadence,” “depravity,” “immorality,” “atheism,” and “lawless” are all used in a few short sentences describing American military action in the Middle East. It is a force-fed buffet of extremely negative attributes where all of these “instances” are part of the quasi-logical inductive chain. To the audience, America is everything that is bad or wrong; it is evil. All of these terms are powerful enough on their own and ring true for those who are already interpreting their world according to radical Islam. However, Gadahn applies a force multiplier to strengthen the association by using them in a discussion about the American military in the Middle East, a huge source of moral outrage for potential terrorists. Used in this way, imagery and emotion become more important than facts and concepts and the audience’s world-view boils down to a constant fight between good and evil.

In the identification phase of Islamist radicalization, terrorist propagandists use inclusive and group oriented words such as “we” and “brother” to make their audiences feel as if they were already a part of the global Salafi movement. Following identification, al-Awlaki and Gadahn take this “inclusion” a step farther and work to create both an in-group and an anti in-group out group in the context and support of a bipolar world at war. I have already shown how al-Awlaki uses “we” versus “you” dichotomies to create an in-group versus out-group identification. Furthermore, in A Call to Jihad (2010), he says, “Today with the war between Muslims and the West escalating you cannot count on the message of solidarity you may get. The West will eventually turn against its Muslims.” Following traditional rhetorical understanding for identification, where one allies oneself with various properties and substances, in this case radical Islam, and simultaneously separates oneself from others with whom they choose not to indentify, al-Awlaki provides his audience with an out-group, the West, with whom one should not identify and goes a step further by making it an enemy out-group. Even if one lives in the West, al-Awlaki tells his audience members not to be fooled into thinking that they are actually a part of the West. He tells them

---

113 Gadahn, "A Call to Arms."
114 Sageman, Leaderless Jihad.
115 Al-Awlaki, "A Call to Jihad."
116 Foss, 64.
that they are separate and that, no matter what they are told, the West will turn on them, because, ultimately, it is at war with each of them. In *44 Ways to Support Jihad* (2009), he explicitly emphasizes this opposing separation, saying,

> The hatred of kuffar is a central element of our military creed. We need to realize that Allah will not grant us victory as long as we still have some love towards his enemies in our hearts. The spiritual condition of total loyalty towards Allah and total animosity towards his enemies was a necessary precursor to the judgment of Allah between His prophets and their disbelieving nations. Never was victory attained by the Prophets of Allah and their people until their loyalty towards Allah was complete and their disassociation with the kuffar was complete.\(^{117}\)

He is telling his audience that there is no compromise in the bipolar world; if one claims to love Allah, one must hate the non-believers with whom all Muslims are at war. His audience must understand that there are two opposing sides in the bipolar world and that the only righteous choice one can make is to join the ranks of those who fight against the ungodly West. The audience members’ choice is made for them as they more strongly adhere to al-Awlaki’s polarizing augments for an in-group and an enemy out-group.

Similarly, Gadahn places those Muslims who do not adhere to his extreme interpretation of Islam in the enemy out-group category alongside America and the West. In *A Call to Arms* (2010), he comments on those Muslims who speak out against terrorism, demanding his audience not to listen to the “evil influence of the anti-Jihad, pro-Crusade Shaykhs and Muftis who attempt to legitimize the killing of Muslims in using the flimsiest pretexts and excuses imaginable.”\(^{118}\) He mirrors this sentiment in *Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice* (2009), saying, “So, brothers, be with the people of truth who ally themselves to the truth and its people, and don’t be with those who have betrayed Allah and Islam and betrayed their trusts and allied themselves to falsehood and stood with those who make war on Allah, His Messenger and the believers.”\(^{119}\) He is telling his audience members that they are either with him or against him and that they must be with him, because to be with anyone else is to “stand with those who make war on Allah.” Both Gadahn and al-Awlaki clearly define the in-group of righteousness and the out-group of evil to increase their audiences’

\(^{117}\) Al-Awlaki, “44 Ways to Support Jihad.”

\(^{118}\) Gadahn, "A Call to Arms."

\(^{119}\) Gadahn, "Let's Continue."
adherence to the most radical and violent interpretation of Islam where extreme resistance against the enemy out-group is a requirement for being a part of Allah’s in-group.

Finally, besides descriptive associations and the creation of an enemy out-group, terrorist propagandists use quasi-logical arguments and dialectical reasoning to get the audience on their side. In this, it is necessary to clearly distinguish analytical reasoning from dialectical reasoning, the former dealing with truth and the latter with justifiable opinion. As Aristotle tells us, dialectical reasoning presupposes premises that are constituted by generally accepted opinions with the purpose of gaining acceptance of other theses, which could be or are controversial.\textsuperscript{120}

So, from one’s acceptance of the extremist Salafi interpretation of Islam and basic anti-American sentiment, agreements that are not questioned and that are used to develop the follow-on argumentation,\textsuperscript{121} terrorist propagandists persuade their audience to accept the existence of a bipolar world at war with Islam and to choose to be a part of resistance, as they see it. They take a quasi-logical and reductionist approach, including selective inductive logic, by ascribing simple causes and implied remedies to complex events.\textsuperscript{122}

In \textit{Muslims Should Fight America Even If It Is Not at War with Islam} (2012), Gadahn argues that America is at war with Islam, saying, ”America is crystal clear about its opposition to Islam as a political system, to Islam as a ruling system, to Islam as \textit{shari'a} – and \textit{shari'a} is the essence of Islam. So, how can America say that it is not at war with Islam?”\textsuperscript{123} From the radical Islamist premise that politically enforced shari’a is at the heart of Islam, Gadahn leads his audience to the conclusion that America’s stance against shari’a is an indication of the war against Islam. Previously, in \textit{Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice} (2009), he says, “There should be no doubt that Obama approved the Jewish crime and supported it, as evidence by his administration beginning to receive security, intelligence and state department briefings the day after his election last November.”\textsuperscript{124} From the premise of

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{120} Perelman, 2-3.
\item\textsuperscript{121} Perelman, 50.
\item\textsuperscript{122} Sageman, \textit{Leaderless Jihad}.
\item\textsuperscript{123} Gadahn, ”American Al-Qaeda Operative.”
\item\textsuperscript{124} Gadahn, ”Let’s Continue.”
\end{itemize}
the illegitimacy and evil nature of Israel and Jews, he again provides “evidence” that America is at war with Islam by “proving” President Obama’s support for Israel.

Using a combination of quasi-logic and dialectical reasoning, al-Awlaki also puts his audience at war with the West. In *44 Ways to Support Jihad* (2009), al-Awlaki says,

> The danger of the Western media stems from the fact that it puts on the cloak of truth and objectivity when in reality it is no more than the mouthpiece of the devil. Can’t you see that the Western media is constantly trying to underplay the atrocities committed by the West while exaggerating the violations – which are few and far in between - committed by Muslims? Can’t you see how the Western media succeeded in presenting the awlyaa’ (friends) of Allah, the ones who are fighting in His cause, as the followers of evil, while it presents the Pharaoh of this day and his armies as the army of good?125

From an anti-American premise and based on his interpretation or opinion of how events have been portrayed, he argues that Western media is deceitful and the “mouthpiece of the devil.” In addition, he uses dialectical reasoning concerning the media’s success and to compare the “atrocities” of West with the exaggerated “violations” committed by Muslims, based on radical Islamist interpretations of world events, to emphasize terrorism’s diametrically bipolar world. Furthermore, in *A Call to Jihad* (2010), al-Awlaki says, “With the American invasion of Iraq and the continued aggression against Muslims I could not reconcile living in the US and being a Muslim…How can you have loyalty to a government that is leading the war against Islamic Muslims?”126 He argues that the American invasion of Iraq and continued aggression against Muslims, major causes of moral outrage in his audience, creates opposing sides where loyalty is definitely not owed to the United States.

**AMERICAN TERRORISTS CHOOSING SIDES**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the lack of details from this point in the radicalization process within American borders, coupled with the fact that most domestic terrorist plots were disrupted at a relatively early stage, can significantly shroud the demonstration of the radicalization process. However, there is still evidence of the importance of an anti-American bipolar world and the “war against Islam” in the

---

125 Al-Awlaki, "44 Ways to Support Jihad."

126 Al-Awlaki, "A Call to Jihad."
radicalization process and in spurring potential terrorists on to violent acts in their home country. In fact, the rhetoric of a “war against Muslims” seems to be consistently used as a radicalization tool. For example, on September 24, 2009, a superseding indictment charged Daniel Boyd, 22, a U.S. citizen and North Carolina resident, and Hysen Sherifi, 24, a native of Kosovo and a U.S. legal permanent resident living in North Carolina, with conspiring to murder U.S. military personnel in a plot targeting the Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Virginia. A search of Sherifi’s home yielded a “call to jihad” book and a tape labeled “can democracy survive the war between jihad and mcworld.” Additionally, according to testimony, Boyd said that he believed that the FBI “has it in for all Muslims,” and did not recognize the government of the United States as legitimate. He considered himself to be a Muslim first and then an American. Another example is Michael Finton, who attempted to attack the Paul Findley Federal Building in Springfield, Illinois. In February 2009, Finton told a Confidential Informant that he would rather die as a martyr than live in the U.S. and mentioned how the economic impact of an attack on the federal building in Springfield, Illinois could possibly reduce the amount of money the government had to “fight Islam.” Terrorists are clearly recognizing the United States as an enemy of Islam that needs to be fought and choosing violent jihad as part of a global movement as the way to express this need.

While the previous chapter went into depth explaining the relationship between the identification phase of Islamist radicalization and the Internet, terrorist ideologues on the Internet also have strong influence in the “choosing a side phase” of radicalization. The interactivity one experiences online blurs the lines between readership and authorship in ways that previous generations of terrorists and sympathizers who encountered these ideas with pamphlets, newspapers, and newsletters simply did not experience. This blurring possibly encourages people who interact in terrorist forums to more easily see themselves as


128 Al-Awlaki, “A Call to Jihad.”


130 Ibid.

131 The Nine Eleven Finding Answers Foundation. *Attempt to Attack the Paul.*
part of broader jihadist movements and not just casual readers or online spectators. And they may eventually engage in more substantive activity—actual propagandizing, financial support, or joining a terrorist network. Interacting online with terrorist propaganda can make the audience feel as if the ideas that they are reading are their own and as if they are already part of the global jihadist movement, or have already chosen a side.

Chapter Four described the third step in the Islamist radicalization process: choosing to side exclusively with the global Islamist terrorism movement, which is the side of Islam according to terrorist propagandists, and is largely due to the acceptance of a diametrically bipolar world where America is evil and terrorists are good. It showed how and why the adherence to these arguments is the necessary next step in the Islamist radicalization process. Jihadist ideologues such as al-Awlaki and Gadahn recognize the importance of choosing a side and the world-view that makes such a choice necessary, as evidenced by heavy support in their rhetoric. These polarizing ideas are also seen in domestic terrorism cases and exacerbated online. Once a potential terrorist has decided that America is the evil enemy and has chosen to side with those engage in violent jihad against America, it is not often long before choosing a side becomes a decision to act.

132 Bjelopera, 21.
CHAPTER 5

DECIDING TO ACT

Again, the point needs to be stressed: Jihad today is obligatory on every capable Muslim. So as a Muslim who wants to please Allah it is your duty to find ways to practice it and support it.

-Anwar al-Awlaki

According to a study done by the New York Police Department on Islamist radicalization, the process of radicalization is defined by the progression of searching, finding, adopting, nurturing, and developing extreme Salafi ideology as a belief system to the point where it acts as a catalyst for a terrorist act.\textsuperscript{133} While there is no doubt that progressive identification with and adherence to ever more extreme and violent anti-Western interpretations of Islam act as a catalyst and enable terrorist behavior, which is what this thesis has so far discussed, it does not define the radicalization process on its own. A catalyst does not trigger a reaction; it either lowers the threshold for the reaction and/or makes the reaction stronger once ignited. The mechanisms behind how a new jihadist moves from the acceptance of terrorist ideas to actually attempting a violent attack against his neighbors and fellow citizens are vital to understanding the radicalization process and creation of domestic terrorists in the United States. Terrorist ideology is like drenching oneself in gasoline. Chapter Five discusses what lights these potential terrorists on fire.

METHODS OF INCITING ACTION

With each step in the Islamist radicalization process, potential terrorists interpret the world from progressively more extreme and violent viewpoints. By this point, once they reject the West as the evil global enemy and accept the “mujahedeen” as their brothers in arms against the United States, most previously existing social or moral barriers to violence have been lowered. Fear of the law, getting caught, how people will react, or hurting

\textsuperscript{133} Silber and Bhatt.
innocents no longer matter much in comparison to the ideology, making one even more susceptible to propaganda and speeches coming from that ideology and its ideologues. The epideictic genre of oration, which praises or blames and relates to the worthy and the unworthy, is seen throughout terrorist rhetoric and the radicalization process and is especially important for inciting action. The epideictic genre’s role is to intensify adherence to a value, in this case the necessity of terrorist attacks, adherence without which discourses that aim at provoking action cannot find the lever to move or inspire their listeners. It basically primes the audience for action-based rhetoric. Terrorist propagandists focus on the worthiness of terrorism. They reiterate how Allah demands jihad, how it is obligatory on every able Muslim, how those who fight will be rewarded, and how those who do not will be punished. In an epideictic discourse, the speaker who seeks to create a unity around certain values, as in a funeral oration, can then take advantage of the created emotion to incite action. Terrorist propagandists focus on the worthiness of terrorist attacks through values such as honor, obligation, and manliness and the subsequent unworthiness of inaction in conjunction with moral outrage that is constantly swirling around potential terrorists to incite action.

Beyond providing a foundation for the epideictic discourse on the worthiness of terrorism, the existing and somewhat smoldering anti-American anger that made radicalization possible can be intensified so much by terrorist propagandists that it becomes a trigger for action all on its own. Exhortative rhetoric stirs the audience’s emotion as its primary persuasive force, to the point where emotion can be said to produce the belief, in this case that the audience member himself must act, instead of the reverse. Additionally, to exhort the audience to act immediately, the terrorist must intensify emotions as much as possible. In the past, vivid descriptions, hyperbole, and graphic metaphors were the primary means by which rhetors could exaggerate the desired feelings of their audiences.

134 Perelman, 19.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid., 20.
137 Black, 60.
138 Ibid., 54.
And while terrorist propagandists still use these methods in their speeches to great success, easily available images and videos on the Internet that depict both the suffering of Muslims and terrorism’s violent revenge are having more and more of an impact in stirring emotions and inciting action.

In addition to epideictic and exhortive strategies that incite violence in their audiences, terrorist propagandists take a deliberative approach. They advise and dissuade, and finally recommend what seems the most useful. While justification will become a step in and of itself in the radicalization process and is ultimately necessary for perpetuating the process, it and quasi-logical advice also play a very critical role in convincing one to take action against America, especially for those accustomed to the supposed logic prevalent in Western society. The enemy is described as a powerful malignant force that justifies both a powerful emotional response and a brutal reprisal. Quasi-logical arguments are used to portray violence as a response or an answer to this existing violence. The terrorist act is thus revealed as a logical, moral product of the inhumane system. The deliberative method also involves providing practical advice on how one should carry out an attack against the United States from within its borders. To take the next step, many nascent terrorists need some guidance, someone to take them to the next level of violent radicalization. This advice, in addition to spurring one to action, provides direction, purpose, and focus that may have previously been lacking, removing one of the last potential barriers to violence at this point in the radicalization process.

Terrorist propagandists have many available tools that they use to incite action. All of these tools, however; continue to play on consistent themes from throughout the radicalization process in order to instigate the step towards violence. The worthiness of the terrorists’ fight in the global battle between good and evil, moral outrage directed at America, and Western-targeted arguments based on quasi-logic have been with the audience every step of the way. While previous steps have aimed at increasing one’s adherence to the extremist

139 Black, 54.
140 Leeman, 46.
141 Black, 57.
142 Sageman, Leaderless Jihad, 84.
Salafi interpretation of Islam, at this point the focus is redirected towards the instigation of action.

**THE RHETORIC OF INCITING ACTION**

Adam Gadahn and Anwar al-Awlaki use the supposed worthiness of jihad to incite terrorist action in their audiences by focusing on how jihad pleases Allah, how it is the obligation of every Muslim to engage in jihad, and how there are divine rewards for those who take action against America and punishments for those who abstain. These appeals are especially alluring to the audience for two reasons. First, data shows that modern terrorists are generally idealistic young people seeking dreams of glory fighting for justice and fairness. Second, at this point in the radicalization process, one’s complete loyalty is to the radical Islamist movement and ideology. Both moral duty and divine reward resonate strongly.

In *A Call to Arms* (2010), Gadahn says that he is “calling on every honest and vigilant Muslim in the countries of the Zionist-Crusader alliance in general and America, Britain and Israel in particular to prepare to play his due role in responding to and repelling the aggression of the enemies of Islam.” In the same speech, he also says, “O you who believe! Fight the unbelievers who are closest in proximity to you and let them find harshness in you; and know that Allah is with those who fear Him.” He directly tells his audience to “play his due role [in jihad]” and to “fight the unbelievers who are closest to you,” using both moral obligation and the invocation Allah to push against his audience’s barriers to violence. Gadahn also follows these themes in *Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice* (2009). He says, “My Muslim brother: Jihad is neither the personal property nor the exclusive responsibility of any single group, organization or individual. Instead, it is the personal duty of every able-bodied Muslim on the face of this earth.” He then says, “Disowning the enemies of the Islamic faith who collude in the spilling of our blood, and performing Jihad against them

---

144 Gadahn, "A Call to Arms."
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
until Allah’s word is supreme, isn’t just at the heart of our Islam, but is also one of the
demands of manliness and chivalry, which takes precedence over all imagined interests and
worldly ties.\footnote{147}{Gadahn, ”Let’s Continue.”} His audience member hears that waging violent jihad is so worthy that it is
his personal obligation to engage in such activities and that his very manliness depends on
such action. In promoting terrorist acts and their worthiness, al-Awlaki invokes Allah and
reaches its height when you yourself are engaged in this conflict [the conflict between good
and evil which has existed since the time of Adam].”\footnote{148}{Al-Awlaki, ”44 Ways to Support Jihad.”} He is basically saying that one is not
fully experiencing Islam or not fully devoted to Allah until one takes part in the conflict
against the West.

In addition to appealing to duty and the pleasure of Allah, Gadan and al-Awlaki lure
their audiences to action with promises of divine rewards for action and punishments for
inaction. In \textit{A Call to Arms} (2010), Gadahn dons the airs of a used car salesman, saying,
“This is the golden, once in a lifetime opportunity to reap the rewards of Jihad and
martyrdom.”\footnote{149}{Gadahn, ”A Call to Arms.”} And any mention of reward is usually soon followed by threats of
punishments for avoiding jihad. In the same speech, he says,

\begin{quote}
I believe that Brother Nidal realized that the insults, accusations, imprisonment,
loneliness and other difficulties that one might face during or after one's mission
are insignificant when compared to the punishment Allah has threatened - in
numerous places in the Quran and Hadeeth - for those who abandon compulsory
Hijra and Jihad despite them having access to the necessary ways and means.\footnote{150}{Ibid.}
\end{quote}

Al-Alwaki mirrors this zero compromise carrot/stick argument in \textit{44 Ways to Support Jihad}
(2009). He says, “The Messenger (saaws) says: ‘Whoever sincerely asks Allah to award him
with martyrdom would be given the rewards of martyrs even if he dies on his bed.‘” (Related
by Muslim)\footnote{151}{Al-Awlaki, ”44 Ways to Support Jihad.”} Out of context, this quote may not seem like it’s a reward for action. Yet, al-
Awlaki then says, “But you need to be careful not to be merely paying lip service. A person
who truly asks for shahadah would respond to the call of Jihad whenever he hears it and

\begin{itemize}
\item [147] Gadahn, ”Let’s Continue.”
\item [148] Al-Awlaki, ”44 Ways to Support Jihad.”
\item [149] Gadahn, ”A Call to Arms.”
\item [150] Ibid.
\item [151] Al-Awlaki, ”44 Ways to Support Jihad.”
\end{itemize}
would eagerly search for death in the path of Allah.”

Later in his speech, he threatens those who choose inaction, saying, “Whoever does not fight, sponsor a fighter, or take care of the family of a fighter, will be afflicted with a disaster before he dies, (Abu Dawud) and “The Messenger of Allah says: ‘Whoever dies and has not fought or intended to fight has died on a branch of hypocrisy.’” (Related by Muslim)

Gadahn and al-Awlaki use divine reward and punishment and religious obligation to incite their audiences to actively engage in terrorism.

Gadahn and al-Awlaki also use exhortative rhetoric to increase the moral outrage and anger of their audiences to the point where any remaining barriers to violence are broken down and one is spurred to kill. Since vivid description intensifies emotions, terrorist propagandists use striking imagery, hyperbole, poetic rhythm, and graphic metaphors to describe the “evil” West and the perceived American crimes against Muslims before telling audience members to attack. In A Call to Arms (2010), Gadahn says,

My dear brothers in Islam: with America and 25 of its NATO allies beginning to deploy a further 37,000 occupation troops to Afghanistan, and with armed American drones now violating Islamic airspace and terrorizing Muslim populaces from Miran Shah to Mogadishu, and with the American war president and his rabid British poodle plotting fresh aggression against the Yemen, and with the United States consolidating its cruel treatment of our brothers in Islam at new or newly expanded Muslim-only concentration camps in Illinois, Bagram and elsewhere, it is rapidly becoming clear that this already hot global battle is about to get even hotter.

Referencing violent jihad, he says in the same speech, “Don't wait for tomorrow to do what can be done today, and don't wait for others to do what you can do yourself.” In Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice (2009), Gadahn describes the situation in Palestine, a hot source of anger and frustration for those who completely identify with the extremist Salafi interpretation of the world, saying, “The aggression against Gaza represents a new holocaust

\[152\] Al-Awlaki, “44 Ways to Support Jihad.”

\[153\] Ibid.

\[154\] Ibid.

\[155\] Black, 54.

\[156\] Gadahn, “A Call to Arms.”

\[157\] Ibid.
and another massacre in the continuing series of criminal massacres which the members of the Zio-Crusader alliance are waging against brothers of ours in Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Somalia, Palestine, and elsewhere,\textsuperscript{158} and, “How can words do justice to a vigilant Muslim people which for decades has been sacrificing everything precious and dear in defense of its religion and blood, patiently and seeking its reward; taking lightly killing, destruction and displacement; and neither fazed by adversities nor by treason and desertion.”\textsuperscript{159} The bleak picture he draws is of a powerful and inhumane enemy trampling and murdering the brave and valiant Muslim people of Palestine. To his audience, something must be done! Gadahn then fires up his audience even more with interactive poetry of glory-driven metaphors saying, “Do we desire from unbelief victory and honor? And ask a scoundrel to shield us from disaster? Do you hope for sympathy from unbelief? Never! And does a lamb enjoy life among wolves? So unsheathe the swords of Jihad and arise. For victory is only through the march of armies.”\textsuperscript{160} He plays the part of the coach before a big game, pumping his terror team up to the point of hyper rage, before telling them to get out on the field and play.

While al-Awlaki tends not be as prolific as Gadahn, he still makes the same points with the same goals of using emotion to incite his audience to action. In \textit{A Call to Jihad} (2010), he says, “America thought it could threaten lives of others. Kill and invade, occupy and plunder, and conspire without bearing the consequences of its actions…How many more body bags are we willing to receive?”\textsuperscript{161} After stirring up his audience, he plays on their shared identity to incite action, saying “And God willing we will…fight to the last man against whoever stands in our way,”\textsuperscript{162} and, “We cannot stand idly in the face of such aggression and we will fight back and incite others to do the same.”\textsuperscript{163} He says “we,” and for

\textsuperscript{158} Gadahn, "Let's Continue."
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{161} Al-Awlaki, "A Call to Jihad."
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
audience members who identify with that “we,” it is as good as telling them to “fight to the last man,” and to “fight back.”

Besides playing on common values and emotions, Gadahn and al-Awlaki take a more deliberative approach towards getting their audiences to engage in terrorist acts. First, they make quasi-logical arguments, so their audience thinks that terrorism is a logical and rational choice, rather than a radical or extreme one. In A Call to Arms (2010), Gadahn says, “Allah subhaanahu wa ta’ala has given you faculties of reason, judgment and choice within the guidelines of Islam, and it is for you - like your heroic Mujahid brother Nidal Hasan - to decide how, when and where you discharge this duty.” The “duty” must be a terrorist act as implied by the analogy to the Fort Hood shooter. The audience members should use faculties of reason to make that connection and when planning their own attacks. In Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice (2009), Gadahn rationalizes terrorist attacks as being against Israel’s military engagements in the Middle East. He says, “The Jewish enemy doesn’t abstain from striking us wherever possible, and the recent attacks on the Muslims’ realms in the Sudan, and before that in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and elsewhere, are merely links in the chain of attacks which target us in the heart of our realms. So is it logical after that for us to abstain from striking their interests wherever possible?” The successive use of the terms “chain” and “logical” reveals, in effect, the inductive, quasi-logical “chain” of inferences from instances to incitement. Following this quasi-logical theme of rationalization for spurring attacks, in A Call to Jihad (2010), al-Awlaki says, “Nidal Hasan was not recruited by al Qaida. Nidal Hasan was recruited by American crimes and this in what America refuses to admit… And the more crimes America commits the more mujahedeen will be recruited to fight against it.” Any audience member at this point in the radicalization process would see that a terrorist attack is the “logical” next step.

Finally, to aide and push budding terrorists into taking the step towards actualizing an attack, Gadahn and al-Awlaki provide practical advice on planning, tactics, material, and target challenges new terrorists or those on the fence may face. In A Call to Arms (2010),

---

164 Gadahn, "A Call to Arms."
165 Gadahn, "Let's Continue."
166 Al-Awlaki, "A Call to Jihad."
Gadahn exploits the success of Nidal Hasan as a sensible mentor for attacks in the United States. He says,

For example, Brother Nidal didn't - as far as we know - discuss his plans over government-monitored-and-controlled telephone and computer systems, nor did he confide his secrets to recent acquaintances - or even long-time acquaintances - whose professed loyalty to Islam and Muslims and apparent eagerness to defend their faith and brethren may or may not be as strong or as genuine as it appears. Brother Nidal wasn't taken in by the provocateurs who infiltrate the Masjids and Muslim communities of America with hidden microphones in order to entrap Muslims eager to perform the duty of Jihad. And Brother Nidal didn't unnecessarily raise his security profile or waste money better spent on the operation itself by traveling abroad to acquire skills and instructions which could easily be acquired at home, or indeed, deduced by using one's own powers of logic and reasoning.¹⁶⁷

Gadahn provides reasonable advice and warnings while referencing a past success to encourage his audience. In Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice (2009), he says, “Zio-Crusader interests everywhere are legitimate targets for us, and by striking them, we aggravate the enemy’s wounds, bleed his crumbling economy, lighten the load for our brothers the Mujahideen in the land of Ribaat, and bring victory and conquest closer – with Allah’s permission.”¹⁶⁸ Gadahn uses the logic of a fungibility argument for choosing targets in the United States. Additionally, Al-Awlaki’s 44 Ways to Support Jihad (2009) is an entire manual devoted to explaining how one can support violent jihad in the United States, even if one is not directly participating in an attack. In one example, he says, “As Sheikh Abdullah Azzam puts it: ‘Men are in need of Jihad and Jihad is in need of money.’ By fundraising for the mujahedeen you are also fulfilling a sunnah of Rasulullah (saaws) which he would often practice before going out for a battle.”¹⁶⁹ Even though the manual offers non-violent advice, al-Awlaki is clear that the support is for violent engagements. Besides referencing fundraising as a practice before battle, he says, “Whoever sponsors a fighter in the cause of Allah has fought. This includes all the expenses of the mujahedeen including his travel expenses. This gives a chance for the rich and the poor to receive the rewards of Jihad, the

¹⁶⁷ Gadahn, "A Call to Arms."
¹⁶⁸ Gadahn, "Let's Continue."
¹⁶⁹ Al-Awlaki, "44 Ways to Support Jihad."
poor by fighting and the rich by sponsoring them.”

And, “Physical fitness is part of the preparation for Jihad. What Jihad needs is not body builders. What Jihad needs is mujahedeen who have the ability to walk for long hours, to run for long distances (important for guerrilla warfare), to sprint (important for urban warfare), and to climb mountains.”

Terrorist propagandists such as Gadahn and al-Awlaki lead their audience members progressively through the Islamist radicalization process, where each step taken, from moral outrage to identification to choosing a side, makes it easier to take the next step. By the time the audience has fully accepted the terrorist ideology and chosen the side of violent jihad, most barriers to violence have been sufficiently lowered or removed altogether. Terrorist propagandists push against these remaining barriers until they eventually break through and there is nothing between the new terrorist in their audience and following their violent ideology to its conclusion.

**RADICALIZATION IN ACTION**

So far, Chapter Five has discussed how terrorist propagandists incite their audiences to violent action against the United States. Extremist Salafi ideologues such as Gadahn and al-Awlaki act as catalysts throughout the Islamist radicalization process, progressively lowering one’s barriers to violence. Following in Osama bin Laden’s footsteps, they are eventually able to channel the rage over western expansion and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan into terrorist activities.” In fact, al Qaeda and al Qaeda associated spokesmen have been calling for lone-wolf and guerilla-style attacks to be carried out in the United States, arguing that “individual jihad” is every Muslim’s obligation since their networks were disrupted in the Middle East. And, unfortunately, they have had some success.

Al-Awlaki, with his mix of scripture and vitriol, has helped lure young Muslims into a dozen plots, including his role in prompting the attempted airliner bombing on Dec. 25,

---

170 Al-Awlaki, “44 Ways to Support Jihad.”

171 Ibid.


intelligence officials say. He also cheered on the Fort Hood gunman. Before the November 5, 2009 gun rampage at Fort Hood, TX, Hasan purportedly exchanged dozens of e-mails with al-Awlaki. While, it remains publicly unknown how the contact influenced Hasan, al-Awlaki issued a statement dubbing Hasan a hero after the attack. A final example is Faisal Shahzad, who is charged in the attempted bombing in Times Square. He told investigators that Mr. Awlaki’s prolific online lectures urging jihad as a religious duty helped inspire him to act.

Even when homegrown terrorists have not openly communicated with or explicitly credited Western jihadist propagandists, statements following attacks tend to mirror the violence-inciting rhetoric described above. They are undeniably using extremist Salafi ideology and rhetoric from the action phase of the radicalization process to describe and express their grievances. The previously mentioned Daniel Boyd, who pleaded guilty to conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists, and conspiracy to commit murder, maiming and kidnapping overseas said, “If Muslims leave Jihad, Allah will humiliate them until they return to their Deen…when you leave Jihad, you leave Islam. What is wrong with you that you don’t fight for the cause of Allah.” Additionally, Abdulhakim Muhammad, formerly known as Carlos Bledsoe, was accused of killing Pvt. William Long, 23, and wounding Pvt. Quinton Ezeagwula, 18, at a military recruiting center in Little Rock, Arkansas in 2009 and pled guilty in 2011. After his attack, Muhammad expressed rage that U.S. military personnel had allegedly desecrated the Quran and raped and murdered Muslims. He said, "For this reason, no Muslim, male or female, sane or insane, little, big, small, old can accept or tolerate.” He added, “U.S. soldiers are killing innocent Muslim men and women. We believe that we have to strike back. We believe in eye for an eye. We don't

175 Bjelopera, 15.
believe in turning the other cheek.\textsuperscript{179} And in comments made shortly after his arrest, Muhammad explained to Little Rock Police Detective Tommy Hudson that “he was mad at the U.S. Military because of what they had done to Muslims in the past.” A Little Rock Police Department document revealed that, after admitting to the shootings, Muhammad that he “recently viewed a video pertaining to subversive activities which spurred him to commit this act.\textsuperscript{180} Muhammad’s example shows the power and influence of both terrorist rhetoric and propaganda media often viewed on the Internet, such as violent videos of Muslim suffering and terrorism in action.

Terrorists publish rhetoric and media online that displaces culpability for their violent actions, which they commonly describe as inevitable responses when faced with overpowering enemies such as the West. They understand that the Internet normalizes behaviors such as violent terrorist attacks that may be considered unacceptable or inappropriate in real-world environments,\textsuperscript{181} making it easier for audience members to initiate their own strikes against America. Younis Tsouli, known on the Internet as “Irhaby007,” served as an Internet jack-of-all-trades for the radical Islamist movement, registering over 180 web site domains in Europe and the United States. As the Crown Prosecution Service noted, Tsouli and his co-conspirators used those websites to publish daily statements and films of the murder of coalition forces, police, officials and civilians together with footage of the beheading of hostages.\textsuperscript{182}

The decentralized nature of modern domestic terrorism necessitates charismatic and easily understood ideologues to both propagate the extremist Salafi ideology and guide potential terrorists along the path of radicalization. Chapter Five has shown the tools, methods, and themes that terrorist propagandists such as Gadahn and al-Awlaki use to trigger violent attacks from their audiences once radicalization has been sufficiently developed. And investigations of actual terrorist plots and attacks inside the United States and comments

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{181} Bjelopera, 22.
\textsuperscript{182} The Nine Eleven Finding Answers Foundation, \textit{Irhaby007’s American Connections} (Charleston, SC: NEFA Foundation, 2008).
made by the terrorists themselves reveal a discourse parallel to that of the propagandists, even when there no evidence of communication between terrorist and ideologue. In addition, exhortative violent images and videos are increasing in popularity for their power to incite action, and probably will need a category of their own in any future examination of radical Islamist rhetoric and Islamist radicalization. Finally, while action may be the final step in the radicalization process for the terrorist involved, it is not the end for the American audience, revealing a continuous and self-sustaining process.
CHAPTER 6

POST-ATTACK PRAISE AND JUSTIFICATION

Our Mujahid brother Nidal Malik Hasan - Nahsabuhu Min as-Saaliheen wa La Nuzakeehi Ala Allah: We consider him to be a righteous man and we don't purify him before Allah.

-Adam Gadahn

When an act of terrorism occurs, the intended targets extend beyond those directly affected by the violence. For example, 9/11 struck at the heart of an entire nation, not just the nearly 3,000 people killed immediately by the hijackings. In addition, as al Qaeda became the glorious vanguard of Islam’s fight against the West to sympathetic audiences around the world, the victims were not the only people impacted by 9/11. Even though the radical Islamist movement can be characterized as a “war” against the United States and the West, terrorism cannot only be characterized as merely acts of violence. The violence is a means of communication or persuasion, where the main goal of an attack is rarely only the death of those killed. These acts of violence were not just ends unto themselves; rather, they were and are part of a larger process of communicating a message, and generating a desired response. Thus, terrorism is a kind of propaganda by deed and post-attack discourse, interpretation, and response regarding the attack are just as important as the attack itself.

Chapters Two through Five have mostly discussed an individual’s personal journey through the Islamist radicalization process in the United States. While one’s own path may end at the initiation of a terrorist act, through either jail or martyrdom, American radicalization carries on with the justification and praise of the attempted or successful terrorist attack, creating a self-sustaining and self-enforcing process or movement beyond either single attacks or individuals involved in anti-American violent jihad. Chapter Six discusses why praise and justification of terrorist acts are a necessary part of the radicalization process and how Western Islamist propagandists such as Anwar al-Awlaki and

183 Truman, 31.
Adam Gadahn have worked to ensure the success of this important aspect of Islamist radicalization in America.

**WHY PRAISE AND JUSTIFICATION ARE NECESSARY**

Terrorists send a message to their target audiences by engaging in an act of violence and destruction.\(^{184}\) As has been discussed, a diametrical bipolar world that is characterized by a war between Islam and the West is a main feature of Islamist terrorist ideology. Reflecting this interpretation of the world, terrorist attacks target two core audiences: the enemy and the “good Muslims” on the path to jihad. Each audience is targeted with a specific goal in support of the war against the United States. The first target audience of an attack is America the enemy, where hurting American economy and demoralizing Americans is the goal. Second, “good Muslims,” usually at some point in the radicalization process, are also targeted for further radicalization. According to Jerome P. Bjelopera, a Congressional Research Service analyst, the success of terrorist plots may spur radicalization, and high levels of radicalization may expand the potential pool of terrorist recruits.\(^{185}\) For the purpose of this thesis, I will focus on the second audience and how post-attack terrorist propaganda boosts morale within the anti-American ranks and supports the Islamist radicalization process through praise and justification.

While terrorism as a symbol of future threat is not lost on the American audience,\(^{186}\) terrorist attacks as symbols of future opportunity are just as compelling to the radicalizing audience. The attack says, “This could be you next time!” Martyr attacks take this enthusiastic message to the extreme, becoming guarantors of the faith and champions of terrorism’s extreme interpretation of Islam,\(^{187}\) and often receive the most significant and long-running attention from terrorist propagandists in their attempts to fan the flames of radicalization. Praising a terrorist attack after it has been attempted or has occurred acts as a force multiplier to the act itself in regard to radicalizing the target audience and spurring

\(^{184}\) Truman, 32.

\(^{185}\) Bjelopera, 37.

\(^{186}\) Truman, 31.

\(^{187}\) Perelman, 77.
members on to their own actions. Perceiving the struggle between the West and Islam as a zero sum game, terrorists exhort the body politic to take any kind of violent action against the system, and praising “action” completes the discourse of values begun with blaming the system.\textsuperscript{188} In post-attack discourse of glorification, violent actions against the United States in the name of Allah become rallying points and motivational narratives. Sharing “inspirational” stories is an extremely powerful way to mobilize people,\textsuperscript{189} a fact of which terrorist propagandists are well aware and which they expertly seek to exploit.

Besides praise and glorification, after a terrorist attack, jihadist ideologues also emphasize the justice of violent acts against the United States. Whether actual or threatened, the outstanding feature of terrorism is its violence. And while this violence typically contravenes societal norms, arguing implicitly against the established order,\textsuperscript{190} in the face of such ugly violence, terrorist ideologues still need to spell out for their audiences why the violence of terrorists is just in order to more efficiently motivate the radicalization process. Not surprisingly, justification and blame are primary concerns of the terrorist speaker after an attack.\textsuperscript{191} They seek to persuade their audience members that terrorism is simply a response to an unjust and inhumane system. It is measured and equitable in nature, and even if terrorist propagandists cannot find something specific to reference, it responds to the general violence of the opposition,\textsuperscript{192} such as the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, Salafi jihadists attempt to utilize endorsements of respected scholars of Islam to show that their aims and violent means are religiously justified.\textsuperscript{193} Overall, a terrorist attack and the post attack justification and blame that necessarily follows the attack attempt to inform the body politic of the terrorist’s cause, despite the death and destruction wrought on civilian targets, and persuade them that the cause is just.\textsuperscript{194} Praise and justification for a terrorist attack both

\textsuperscript{188} Leeman, 52.
\textsuperscript{189} Brafman and Beckstrom, 118.
\textsuperscript{190} Leeman, 46.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{193} Silber and Bhatt, 18.
\textsuperscript{194} Leeman, 45.
round out the radicalization process and propel it forward for audience members who have not yet decided wage holy war against the United States.

**THE RHETORIC OF PRAISE AND JUSTIFICATION**

The post terrorist attack commentary of Western jihadist propagandists such as Adam Gadahn and Anwar al-Awlaki reflect and amplify the final and yet reinforcing step in the Americans’ self-sustaining Islamist radicalization process. They praise terrorist attacks both within the United States and abroad, increasing the grandeur of both the terrorist and the attack that was perpetrated. They even praise the effectiveness of failed attacks, arguing that the struggle or attempt itself is good in the eyes of Allah and that even thwarted efforts harm the enemy. Beyond praise, Gadahn and al-Awlaki seek to justify terrorist attacks as necessary responses against the evil of the West and through the authority of Islamic scholars. The violence of terrorism must be justified in order for those who accept and identify with the radical Islamist ideology to maintain the supposed moral high ground, something absolutely essential for propagating an ideology or movement based on moral outrage, whether applied to moving an individual vertically along the radicalization process or horizontally spreading the appeal of the ideology more broadly along the base.

The glorification of terrorist attacks aims to bolster the morale of Islamist radicals as they identify with their extremist Salafi beliefs and increases their anti-American enthusiasm. In *A Call to Arms* (2010), Gadahn refers to the 2009 suicide attack against Forward Operating Base Chapman as “the bloody deaths of at least 8 CIA operatives in a masterfully-planned and executed martyrdom operation inside their clandestine base in Afghanistan.”

The attack was a “masterfully-planned” “martyrdom operation.” While the term “masterfully-planned” is evident in its praise, “martyrdom operation” more subtly lends legitimacy and competency to both the attack and martyr attacks in general by using a word strongly associated with the actions of professional state militaries. In regards to the Fort Hood shooting, Gadahn says, “And most significantly, the Mujahid brother Nidal Hasan is a pioneer, a trailblazer and a role-model,” and, “The Mujahid brother Nidal Hasan, lightly

---

195 Gadahn, “A Call to Arms.”
196 Ibid.
armed but with a big heart, a strong will and a confident step, again brought into sharp focus the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of America, and again proved wrong those who claim America cannot be hit where it hurts."

Gadahn tells an inspiring story of a heroic figure who fought bravely against the enemy and is worthy of emulation. In Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice (2009), he describes the Palestinian terrorists, “Brothers in Gaza and the rest of Palestine: the fact is, mere words aren’t sufficient to describe your resolve, patience, sacrifices and heroics.” They are elevated beyond the level of “mere words” through their “resolve, patience, sacrifice and heroics.” Again Gadahn uses a heroic narrative to praise terrorists and their actions. Al-Awlaki follows suit and sticks to the radicalization process in his admiration of terrorist attacks. After the Fort Hood attack, Awlaki’s Web posting praised Hasan as "a hero" and "a man of conscience who could not bear living the contradiction of being a Muslim and serving in an army that is fighting against his own people."

Beyond praising successful attacks, Gdahn and al-Awlaki emphasize the importance attacks that fail. Constants on the Path of Jihad (2009) is not al-Awlaki’s original work. The jihadist tract was written in Arabic after 9/11 by the ideologue Yusuf al-`Uyayri, a veteran of the jihad against the Soviet Union. Al-`Uyayri later founded al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. Al-Awlaki’s Constants on the Path of Jihad (2009), however, expanded and revised the Arabic text to widen its appeal in the West and beyond, especially in regard to the definition of victory in the struggle against the West. He says that victory in jihad does not necessarily mean military victory and that defeat in jihad does not necessarily mean military defeat. Specifically, he says, “For instance, going on jihad is a victory over Satan, who does not

---

197 Gadahn, "A Call to Arms."
198 Gadahn, “Let’s Continue."
201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
want you to go on jihad; staying with jihad is a victory over one’s temptation to leave jihad.”

Al-Awlaki celebrates victories found in failure, such as the attempted “Christmas Day” attack. In *A Call to Jihad* (2010), he praises the success of Umar Farouk, popularly referred to as the "Underwear Bomber," who confessed to and was convicted of attempting to detonate plastic explosives hidden in his underwear while on board Northwest Airlines Flight 253, en route from Amsterdam to Detroit, Michigan, on Christmas Day, December 25, 2009.204 He says, “Our brother Umar Farouk has succeeded in breaking through the security systems that have cost the U.S. government over 40 billion dollars since 9/11.205 Gadahn makes similar praises in *A Call to Arms* (2010), saying, “We must keep in mind how even apparently unsuccessful attacks on Western mass transportation systems can bring major cities to a halt, cost the enemy billions and send his corporations into bankruptcy. This crushing blow came just a few days after the compromising of America’s supposedly airtight security in a valiant attempt by a heroic soldier of al-Qaida to bring down an American airliner over Detroit.”206 In addition, *Inspire*, the English-language magazine published by al-Awlaki and his followers, gloats over a thwarted plot to bomb UPS cargo planes, despite its conventional failure, citing the success of provoking increased security costs in the West.207 Other issues of *Inspire* discuss the relative merits of conventional victory vs. martyrdom, coming down in favor of the latter. The overall emphasis is on action and preparation rather than victory.208 Any violent action attempted, whether successful or not, against the United States is praised as a victory and glorified in the radicalization process.

While praise and glory act as a force multiplier is a process where many of the members involved are idealistic glory hunters, justification of terrorist violence is absolutely necessary to sustain radicalization. In *A Call to Arms* (2010), Gadahn religiously justifies

---

203 Berger.
205 Al-Awlaki, "A Call To Jihad."
206 Gadahn, "A Call to Arms."
207 Berger.
208 Ibid.
Hasan’s attack on Fort Hood, saying, “he knew that on the day of Judgment, all the Ulama, Mullahs, Muftis and Imams of this world put together would be incapable of saving him from divine retribution were he to have blindly followed their permissions and prohibitions in contravention of what he knew - in his heart of hearts and through honest research and careful study - to be Allah's ruling and decree.” He says that “honest research” and “careful study” revealed the truth of “Allah’s ruling and degree” in support of Hasan’s violent actions. Gadahn also says, “[Hasan] has shown the way forward for every Muslim who ... yearns to discharge his duty to Allah and play a part in the defense of Islam and Muslims against the savage, heartless and bloody Zionist Crusader assault on our religion, sacred places and homelands.” Similarly, al-Awlaki argues that no “decent Muslim” can serve in a military that "is directly invading two Muslim countries and indirectly occupying the rest through its stooges." And he adds, "In fact the only way a Muslim could Islamically justify serving as a soldier in the U.S. Army is if his intention is to follow the footsteps of men like Nidal [Hasan]."

In *Let’s Continue our Jihad and Sacrifice* (2009), Gadahn follows his religious justification by rhetorically creating an enemy that righteously deserves violent attacks, using quasi-logical arguments that blame America for the terrorist attacks against it, rather than the terrorists themselves. He says, “with the United States consolidating its cruel treatment of our brothers in Islam at new or newly expanded Muslim-only concentration camps in Illinois, Bagram and elsewhere, it is rapidly becoming clear that this already hot global battle is about to get even hotter.” Al-Awlaki takes a more direct approach in *A Call to Jihad* (2010), saying, “The operation of our brother Umar Farouk was in retaliation to American cruise missiles and cluster bombs that killed the women and children in Yemen.” Leaving absolutely no doubt that America is to blame for terrorism, he addresses the Fort Hood shooting, saying, “America refuses to admit that its foreign policies are the reason behind

---

209 Gadahn, “A Call to Arms.”

210 Ghosh.

211 Ibid.

212 Gadahn, "Let’s Continue."

213 Al-Awlaki, "A Call To Jihad."
men like Nidal Hasan born and raised in the U.S. turning his guns against American soldiers.” Terrorist propagandists argue that the United States is evil and is deserving of terrorist attacks, and therefore the United States must bear the burden of responsibility for the death and destruction wrought by these violent actions. The terrorists themselves are absolved of guilt and wrongdoing due to both the religious responsibility of jihad and America’s own awful deeds.

Finally, terrorist propagandists use the authority of radical and supposed Islamic scholars to back post-attack justifications and praise. In 44 Ways to Support Jihad (2009), al Awlaki addresses the concern that terrorist ideology is not really “Islamic” and unsupported by Islamic scholars. He says,

Unfortunately we hear some Muslims claiming that the mujahedeen lack scholars who support them and they lack a clear strategy and that what the mujahedeen are doing is spontaneous and reactionary. Such claims are the furthest from the truth. There are plenty of scholars and strategic thinkers who are supporters of Jihad today. The problem is that because they are on the true path most of them are killed, jailed or forced to go underground.

He says that scholars support jihad, but they must remain in hiding, and the audience is expected to believe him based on his own authority as a radical speaker. It is circular quasi-logic, but very effective for those who already identify with his message. Al-Awlaki continues on the topic of scholars and takes another step down the quasi-logical path, saying, “The scholars of the mujahideen made it clear that they fear no one but Allah and are willing to displease anyone if that pleases him. They refer to Quran and hadith and quote the scholars of the ummah such as Ibn Hajar, al Nawawi, al Qurtubi, ibn Kathir, ibn Taymiyyah, and the four Imams.” He references well known and respected Islamic teachers from Islam’s past in reference to supposed present-day scholars that support modern Islamist terrorism and sandwiches them between his own authority and that of uncontestable authorities out of history, while providing quasi-logical proof for their apparent absence. Without actually naming any instances of modern Islamic scholars who support violent extremism in Islam, al-

214 Al-Awlaki, “A Call To Jihad.”
215 Al-Awlaki, “44 Ways to Support Jihad.”
216 Ibid.
Awlaki brings their support to bear on his argument for the justification and praise of terrorist attacks.

While post-attack praise and justification represent the final step in the America’s Islamist radicalization process, marking it as the “end” does not fully appreciate the nature of radicalization. To survive, it requires a constant streak of new violent actions to hold the interest of potential newcomers to the movement, create an impression of visible progress toward a goal, and give potential recruits a vicarious experience before they take the initiative to engage in their own terrorist actions. It is a self-sustaining process that relies on the actions and words of others to propel followers into ever more extreme and violent interpretations of Salafi Islam. Terrorist propagandists such as Gadahn and al-Awlaki play a vital role in this process, especially at the apparent “end” when violence needs to be praised and justified so that radicalization can grow both horizontally across the following and vertically as individuals adhere more and more strictly to extremist ideology.

---

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY OF THESIS

The Congressional Research Service estimates that there have been over 53 homegrown violent jihadist plots or attacks in the United States since September 11, 2001. Furthermore, the vast majority of plots that took place between 2009 and 2013 both took place outside operational influence from organized foreign terrorist groups like al Qaeda and increased in frequency. Together, these trends likely reflect that terrorist activity is moving or has moved away from schemes directed by core members of significant terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and that Islamist radicalization in America is on the rise. As the terrorist threat continues to become increasingly homegrown, a key way to combat it is to develop an understanding of how radicalization in the United States works and to formulate ways to prevent potential radicalization from morphing into violent extremism. This thesis has examined domestic Islamist terrorism and terrorist-related activity over the last 12 years in conjunction with the Western jihadist propaganda that extols and propels such activity from two of the most verbose and respected (in radical circles) American terrorist ideologues, Adam Gadahn and Anwar al-Awlaki. Taken together, a pattern of radicalization emerged, revealing the process of how those living legally in the United States and who are immersed in American culture can turn violently against their neighbors for the end purpose of destroying this country and the Western way of life in the name of Allah.

Chapter Two discussed the opening step in the radicalization process; moral outrage, and how potential terrorists often start their way down the radicalization path with a personal anger or moral outrage at America due to perceived oppression from the system. These outrages can stem from those in authority, such as the criminal justice system or the warden of a prison, or from negative everyday personal experiences, such as ethnic and racial

---

218 Bjelopera, 1.
219 Ibid.
discrimination. When these personal perceived injustices are compounded with shared outrage from supposed crimes against fellow Muslim community members, individuals can be desperate for a way in which to interpret these seemingly uncontrollable feelings of rage. Terrorist propagandists fan the flames with vivid descriptions of American actions against Muslims around the world and then provide an ideological interpretation of them. Chapter Three showed how the extremist Salafi ideology advocated by these ideologues appeals to audience members by offering a proactive way of understanding what is believed to be an unjust world and one’s correct place in it. All of which is made to seem to be based in religious authority. Ultimately, by adhering to radical Islam in the identification phase, followers find their place in a community supposedly committed to “good” and replace an identity based on perceived helplessness and oppression with a potentially heroic one.

Chapter Four examined how terrorist propagandists use traditional anti-Western occidental rhetoric to essentially create a vision of a diametrical bipolar world at War, where the very fate of Islam and Muslims around the world is at stake. Followers must choose a side, even though there is only one possible “moral” choice due to the inherently evil nature of the “enemy,” and eventually act on that decision in this artificially created apocalyptic scenario. Chapter Five revealed the tools and methods used by jihadist rhetors to exhort their members who have already chosen the “correct” side into violent action. And, finally, Chapter Six showed that post-attack praise and justification are necessary for the continuation of American Islamist radicalization. All of these stages reveal self-sustaining process based in anti-American moral outrage and propelled by terrorist propagandists.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

A birds-eye view of the process uncovered by this thesis exposes certain weak spots in American radicalization. First, and perhaps most difficult to counter, is the moral outrage against America seen at the beginning and throughout the process of radicalization. Strong feelings of anger and outrage at the United States both initiate and continuously fuel each stage of radicalization. If steps can be taken to decrease that fuel, violent Islamist propagandists will find it more difficult to propel their followers towards terrorist activity. Unfortunately, on the personal level, most of the issues causing moral outrage such as discrimination and a seemingly unfair criminal justice system are societal in nature. Even
though these are long term projects that are unlikely to be resolved and thus hinder radicalization anytime soon, we must do everything possible to regain the moral high ground within our own borders.

Shared outrage at how the West is perceived to interact with Muslims and Muslim community can be addressed. Power politics, machismo motivations, and our own feelings of injustice must be put on the back burner if we are truly interested in deterring the Islamist terrorist threat both from our own citizens and around the world. Every perceived injustice or discrimination by a figure of authority against a Muslim American who should be able to enjoy all the rights of an American citizen is fuel for the anti-American fodder and a direct attack, in the minds of potential terrorists and according to their radical Islamist ideology. For law enforcement, this implies not treating all people who follow Islam with overt suspicion. Many terrorist plots in the United States were originally tipped off to the FBI by concerned Muslims who noticed unusual behavior in their mosque. This type of environment should be encouraged. Tolerance training and zero tolerance for infractions must be enforced at every level of government. In addition, working more closely with Muslim communities in the United States for the peace of our country should not be seen as a weakness. In that regard, we can find out what specific motivations for moral outrage exist within Muslim communities and either find alternative means of achieving our goals or lessen the blow, so to speak, with our own propaganda before terrorist speakers can put their spin on the cause of anger. We must regain control of the narrative of our actions in order to lessen the potential for manipulation and angry reactions.

The biggest shared causes of anger and dismay at the United States for potential terrorists are in response to American military action in the Middle East. Pulling out of Iraq and Afghanistan is, unfortunately, a double edged-sword. Leaving will assuredly remove a great deal of anti-American fuel, cutting down on the number and frequency of examples terrorist propagandists can point to as supposed American abuse. On the other hand, military action directly has affected the centralized control, funding, training, and safe haven of al Qaeda and its affiliates, negatively impacting their ability to coordinate another large scale attack in the United States similar to 9/11, not to mention the huge “victory” and morale booster it would offer to the violent Islamist movement in those areas such as happened after the Soviets pulled out of Afghanistan in the 1980s. At this point, even though pulling our
military forces out of the Middle East may seem like a quick fix for radicalization, the costs would most likely far outweigh any benefits. We need to define conditions for victory that negate any future state-funded or harbored terrorism, publicize those conditions, and achieve them, and then pull successfully out of Iraq and Afghanistan.

While we may not be able to disengage from the Middle East militarily at this point, we can address the issue of UAVs operating in the area in another cost-benefit analysis of the most efficient way to curb radicalization and eventually terrorism. Even though drones are a huge technological and military advantage, they unfortunately have to potential to negatively affect our chances of winning the war against terrorism. The fear, anger, and anxiety they cause simply by existing and operating in Muslim communities could have a net positive influence on the radical Islamist movement by increasing the radicalization pool more than their attacks decrease the number of terrorists. I suggest further studies on the psychological and social effects of the use of UAV both on Muslims who have directly experienced their presence and those in the United States who may share any negative feelings with perceived community victims abroad to determine a better cost-benefit analysis of their use. In addition, the narrative of UAVs must be retaken and redelivered in a positive light. As of now, they are seen as unfair and inhumane machines, bent on killing Muslims and destroying Islam on the orders of the evil United States. Emphasizing their extreme technological advantage, as the United States has done so far, only makes them more evil and more cause for anger according to extreme occidental ideology. Besides making the UAVs less alien looking and publically adding more humane missions to their repertoire, this is another opportunity to work with Muslim communities to discover how the UAV program can be portrayed to incite the least amount of outrage, if possible. Overall, government policies must be crafted in ways that do not contradict credibility, legitimacy, and goals of the war effort. Working to decrease perceived causes of moral outrage in those susceptible to radicalization through cooperation with Muslim communities, more inclusive cost-benefit analyses of our military actions overseas and retaking the narrative of the War on Terror will both decrease the pool of potential terrorists and their motivation for further radicalization.

\footnote{Waller, 77.}
Following initial moral outrage, the identification phase where one learns to interpret his anger through extremist Salafi ideology offers another area of vulnerability in the Islamist radicalization process. The U.S. government must do a better job of working with Muslim communities. Besides fostering a healthy relationship with U.S. government and law enforcement officials, positive mentor systems and social networks, both on and off the Internet, should be encouraged for young Muslims and those newly converted, working to ensure a positive environment for Muslims here. If high risk individuals have good positive religious role models and support systems they may not be as easily swayed by the violence and propaganda from ideologues such as Gadahn. This is especially true on the Internet, where radical ideologues are well established in comparison to moderate Muslims leaders and speakers and have established direct channels of communication with their supporters through web-based chat systems.221 “Indeed, Salafists dominate Muslim Internet sites, most of which are created by Muslims living in the West, predominantly the Anglo-Saxon world, and who have immigrated, converted, or are temporarily studying there.”222 There must be alternate means of support and interpreting causes of moral outrage outside of the violent radical strain of Islam that is prevalent, appealing, and available to young Muslims and those newly converted. Since, more traditional or moderate Islamic Scholars tend not to sponsor websites or encourage participation in chat rooms.223 One way this issue could be addressed is for the Department of Homeland Security should start a grant program aimed at cultural assimilation where mosques and other dedicated moderate Muslims can apply for Internet use and online social networking training and equipment. According to Tim Stevens and Dr. Peter R. Neumann of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence, “Any strategy that hopes to counter online radicalisation must aim to create an environment in which the production and consumption of such materials become not just more difficult in a technical sense but unacceptable as well as less desirable.”224 Any strategy

---


222 Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 162.

223 Ibid.

that hopes to counter online radicalization must aim to create an environment in which the production and consumption of such materials become not just more difficult in a technical sense but unacceptable as well as less desirable. It would both foster a positive relationship between moderate Muslim community leaders and the government and start countering the radical online presence.

As with the previous two vulnerable phases in the radicalization process, the praise and justification can also be countered through cooperation with moderate Muslim leaders and controlling the narrative. As discussed, the violent nature of terrorist attacks, many of which are against unarmed civilians, demands justification in order for terrorist ideologues to maintain their ostensible moral high ground just, a necessary ingredient in the radical Islamist identity. Disrupting the justification of terrorism could knock the radicalization process out of its self-sustaining and continuous loop, having a potentially huge negative impact on the process itself. The most effective way of disqualifying violent radical Islam is to show its incompatibility with other facts or truths of Islam which are more certainly established, preferable with a bundle of facts and truths which we are not ready to abandon. This requires widespread condemnation of terrorist action from respected “inside” sources. Condemnation, opposite of both praise and justification, from respected Muslim leaders, rather than news agencies’ typical sensationalization of terrorism, needs to be a dominant media feature after a terrorist attack. We can also ensure that recognized Islamic figures around the world who denounce terrorists as unbelievers are quoted as often as possible in the media and on the Internet. Again, we must retake the narrative of terrorism and our reaction to it.

Additionally, the extreme humanization and personalization of the victims and the grisly effects of the attacks against them must dominate media post-attack attention, effectively branding terrorist actions more effectively as awful and unnecessary evils, even among the followers and potential followers of violent radical Islam. A good branding


225 Perelman, 24.

226 Waller, 83.
campaign will show the photos, names, families and life stories cut short by radical Islam. \textsuperscript{227} As of now, America does not like to show the all gory details of American victims out of a sense of respect for them and their families, and has not truly shown the world the horrible realities of militant Islamism. \textsuperscript{228} But images and descriptions of their pain and deaths next to images and descriptions of them happy and alive with their families and friends would make it harder for terrorist propagandists to paint the actions of their followers as just. Effective branding will diminish enemy image among his followers and the concentric rings of sympathy and support. \textsuperscript{229} Just as they can use perceived Muslim suffering to legitimize their cause, we can show the true human effects of terrorism to delegitimize it to some degree.

Finally, in our efforts to delegitimize terrorism to a potentially terrorist audience, rallying support must be done in way that doesn’t increase the image, fame, and notoriety of terrorists and their violent actions. \textsuperscript{230} This applies to both the media and the government’s portrayal of terrorism. As discussed briefly above, news networks tend to sensationalize terrorist attacks. Attacks and constant speculation about the perpetrators and their motives dominate media attention creating a type of celebrity in the Western world, and therefore increasing the “specialness” appeal of the identification phase. Reporting on terrorism needs to become more mechanical, when not applied to the humanization of the victims. I suggest simple reporting of the facts, without image and sound embellishments and without any interviews or speculation regarding the perpetrators. Even more effective would be to take the reporters out of the picture, as well, leaving simply words on the screen reporting known and verified facts, with an option out-loud reading accompaniment. Taking away the “celebrity” of terrorism with take away an appeal of violent jihad. After 9/11, government authorities recognized the importance of not sensationalizing terrorists and raising their status as both Presidents Clinton and Bush did when they called terrorists out by name as enemies of the state in post-attack press conferences, effectively putting Osama bin Laden on the same level as the President of the United States. To this day, the government’s stance on the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{227} Waller, 83.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{230} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
Fort Hood shooting is that the attack was simply “workplace violence,” rather than lone wolf terrorism, lowering the status of terrorism to general crime rather than raising it. Unfortunately, this tactic misses the opportunity to humanize the victims as victims of terrorism, while terrorist propagandist such as al-Awlaki take the opportunity to call the America government a liar and claim the attack as a victory for violent jihad. In A Call to Jihad (2010), al-Awlaki, Obama has promised that his administration will be one of transparency but he has not fulfilled his promise. His administration tried to portray the operation of brother Nidal Hasan as an individual act of violence from an estranged individual. The administration practiced to control on the leak of information concerning the operation in order to cushion the reaction of the American public. Until this moment the administration is refusing to release the e-mails exchanged between myself and Nidal. And after the operation of our brother Umar Farouk the initial comments coming from the administration were looking the same another attempt at covering up the truth. But Al-Qaeda cut off Obama from deceiving the world again by issuing their statement claiming responsibility for the operation.231

Similar to news networks, the government needs to walk a fine line between sensationalization or empowerment and disingenuousness when discussing terrorist attacks in order to retake the narrative and delegitimize violent jihad against America.

On Patriots' Day, Monday, April 15, 2013, the annual Boston Marathon began without any indications of an imminent attack before two bombs struck near the finish line of the Boston Marathon on Monday, turning a celebration into a bloody scene of destruction.232 The victims, in addition to over 170 wounded, were identified as 29-year-old Krystle Campbell, 8-year-old Martin Richard, and 23-year-old Lu Lingzi. Martin, of Dorchester, Massachusetts, was with his family near the finish line waiting for his father to complete the marathon. Campbell, of Medford, Massachusetts, went with her best friend to take a picture of the friend’s boyfriend crossing the finish line. And Lu, of Shenyang, China, was a graduate student studying statistics at Boston University.233 Two brothers, 26-year-old Tamerlan Tsarnaev and 19-year-old Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, whose family had immigrated to the

231 Al-Awlaki, "A Call To Jihad."
United States as refugees in 2002 have been identified by authorities as the alleged perpetrators. During an initial interrogation, Dzhokhar said his brother was the mastermind, that they were motivated by extremist Islamist beliefs and the U.S. Iraq War and War in Afghanistan, and that they were self-radicalized and unconnected to any outside terrorist groups. Additionally, investigators believe that the brothers learned how to construct the bombs by consulting the radical Islamist online magazine *Inspire.*

The Boston Bombings show that violent Islamist radicalization in the United States continues, and is, perhaps, a threat now more than it has ever been in the past. This thesis showed how individuals living legally in America are spurred to take up arms against their neighbors and how Western terrorist propagandists both sustain and propel the process in the United States. Through an understanding of the path potential terrorists walk in order to get to a violent attack of their own, we can set up road blocks on that road and make it overall less appealing, so that Islamist radicalization becomes a swamp rather than a highway.

---


REFERENCES


