The Terrorist Mindset: Motivations for Political Violence

9/11: Ten Years After: Evolving Threats and US Responses
National Security Studies Program
University of New Mexico
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Outline

1. Political Violence in Authoritarian Islamist Regimes Before the Internet

2. The Internet and Transparency

3. Quick Tour of the Factors that Lead Radical Groups Towards Violence

4. Some Example Data

5. A Politically Charged Growing US Domestic Terrorism Threat
Causality Analysis:
--difficult to infer dynamics based on econometric analyses alone

Socio-Economic Indicators Show Very Little Correlation with Islamist Insurgencies

(1980 - 1992)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Avg Annual GNP Growth Rate</th>
<th>Population Growth</th>
<th>Urban Growth</th>
<th>Rural-Urban Migration</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Urban Pop. Below Poverty Line</th>
<th>GINI Index</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>-0.50%</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>4.90%</td>
<td>43.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>7.30%</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
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<td>2.40%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
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<td>6.00%</td>
<td>38.00%</td>
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<td>16.00%</td>
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<td>35.00%</td>
<td>16.00%</td>
<td>7.30%</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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Algeria, Egypt --> Islamist Revolts and Attacks
Jordan --> Islamists accommodate regime
Morocco, Tunisia --> Islamists retreat from political confrontation
Dynamics need to be understood versus only looking at (static) factors (Correlation does not imply causality…)

Figure 2.1: Islamist militant activism in Algeria and Egypt (number of violent incidents)

Source: The data were collected from the MEJ quarterly chronologies, MEJ, ACR, and MECS and episodes reported by Roberts (1988), Al-Ahmad et al. (1991), Lamchichi (1992), Ayyash (1993), Willis (1996), and Burgat and Dowell (1997).
Political Participation and Repression Factors in Authoritarian Islamic Regimes

Diagram:
- Government
- Indiscriminate Repression
- Political Participation
- Socio/Economic factors
- Increase Grievance
- Inclusive Islamic organization
- Support
- Social Organizations (ex. Bazaars)
- Split
- Extremist, secret exclusive I. G.
- VIOLENCE
- Civilian Population

Flow:
- Government decreases political participation, affecting socio/economic factors.
- Indiscriminate repression increases grievance.
- Islamic NGO's and informal organizations provide support and recruitment.
- Inclusive Islamic organization splits, creating extremism.
- Extremism leads to violence, affecting the civilian population.
Important Factors of Host Regime:
Repression -- **Targeting** and **Timing**

- Selective
- Indiscriminate
- Reactive
- Pre-emptive

**Target of Repression**

**Timing of Repression**

**Repressive Regimes**
Example Case Study: Jama’a al Islamiya (Egypt)

Jama’a al Islamiyya Case Study (1975-2000) Upper Egypt

**REACTIVE REPRESSION**
By time the state intervenes it is too late:
1. Jama’a has sense of confidence
2. Allowed Jama’a opportunity to develop, consolidate strength, expand to rural to control citizens and police
3. Jama’a organized social services from Mosques

"Our work was conducted and expanded without any provocation or intervention from the security apparatus, which gave us a better opportunity to grow. After a short while Jama’a became an influential force in Limba and everyone took account" -- quote from Jama’a activist

Violence escalates to point where state has to intervene

**RED INDICATORS & WARNINGS**
- CONTROL of mosques
- CONTROL of neighborhoods
- Political conferences at mosques
- "Social Policing"
- Social Services based on Islam

**GREEN INDICATORS & WARNINGS**
- Impoverished neighborhoods
- Urbanization
- Conflict in neighborhoods
- Islamist Mediation of local conflict

**BLUE INDICATORS & WARNINGS**
- unpunished acts
- acts did not make national news
- initial “blind-eye”

Jama’a runs free in Dafrut, Asyut District. Controls 159 mosques

1970
1980
1990
2000

Jama’a expands into shantytowns outside of Cairo (1985-1990)

Jama’a held regular anti regime and pro Muslim conferences outside mosques
- repetition of slogans
- challenge the law

Jama’a set up roving bands of “forbidding vice”, especially in Dafrut, segregating sexes, and

(Cecarelli, 1994) "The New Arab-Islamic State and the Question of Power in Egypt", World Politics, 46
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The Game Changers:
The Internet, Social Media, and Ubiquitous Transparency
Social Media Driving Transparency in News Reporting
(Civilian Killings by Rogue 5th Stryker Brigade in Kandahar)

May 21: Seattle Times
• May 24: AP
• June 17: Story in UK Telegraph and Army Times
• August 24: Seattle Times again
• August 25: One day later, reported on USA Today and CNN. (Washington Post?) • September 9:
  AP, Seattle Times, CNN, The Guardian UK.
• September 10: NY Times "The Lede" news blog.
• September 18: Washington Post
• September 20: NY Times

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Results from our Social Media Extraction on “Egypt” for 10,000 Tweets between Jan 23-29, 2011 (uprising started Jan 25th)
A 32 Factor Model of Terrorism

- Does not predict “when” or “how”
- Instead systematically tracks trends and the potential for political violence

Indicators & Warnings for Groups to Become Violent

1. Historical, Cultural, and Contextual Features
2. Key Actors Affecting a Potential Radical Group
3. The Group Characteristics, Processes, and Structures
4. Triggering Events and the Immediate Situation

Jerrod Post, et al 2002

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Analog: Factors that Increase the Potential for Wildfire

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Historically Rooted Culture of Violence

1. Historical, Cultural, and Contextual Features

1.1 Historically Rooted Culture of Violence

Indicators

a) A region has a HISTORY OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT along ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS, or SOCIO-ECONOMIC class lines
b) The region has a history of FREQUENT & VIOLENT COUPE d’etat
c) The region has a HISTORY OF INSURGENCY or REVOLUTION
d) The region experiences HIGH LEVELS OF VIOLENT CRIME.
e) Communal groups in the region CELEBRATE PAST VIOLENT EVENTS
f) Cultural heroes are extolled for their bravery in conflict

1.2 Current Communal Conflict

1.3 Political, Economic, and Social Instability

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1. Historical, Cultural, and Contextual Features

1.1 Historically Rooted Culture of Violence
   - Indicators
     - Ethnic
     - Religious
     - Socio-economic class
       a) A majority or dominant group openly discriminates against a minority or subordinate group
       b) A majority or dominant group actively persecutes a minority or subordinate group, including violence and harrassment
       c) Communal leaders politicize and exploit historical conflict and divisions
       d) The region is currently experiencing conflict along ethnic, religious, or class lines — especially if conflict has escalated to violence.

1.2 Current Communal Conflict
   - Indicators

1.3 Political, Economic, and Social Instability
1.3 Political, Economic, and Social Instability

Indicators

a) POLITICAL INSTABILITY in the region
   a-1) A government that pursues and supports unpopular policies
   a-2) High levels of corruption within government
   a-3) A government that is prosecuting an unpopular war
   a-4) An unstable government (frequent changes in leadership, coupe d’etat)
   a-5) A change in the political system (i.e. communism to democracy)

b) POLITICAL UNREST in the region
   b-1) Large scale protests
   b-2) Riots
   c-1) Rapid economic changes, urbanization, industrialization, modernization, and globalization
   c-2) High rates of unemployment or underemployment, especially with youth
   c-3) High degree of income disparity (Gini Index)
   c-4) Economic recession or depression

The pace of reform
   d-1) Slow pace of reform
   d-2) An increase of "unpopular" minorities into the area
   d-3) A significant refugee presence or increase in asylum seekers
   d-4) Increase in majority-minority tensions
   d-5) Failure of government to provide adequate social services to a significant portion of the population
   d-6) Coexistence of two or more different cultures with significant differences in cultural practices
2.1 Opponents to the Radical Group

2.1.1 The Regime as the Opponent to the Group

- a) The regime promulgates unpopular policies that negatively impact the group or its constituents
- b) Regime representatives publicly criticize or otherwise verbally attack the group.
- c) The regime attacks or threatens core symbols of the group identity
- d) The regime blocks access to political decision-making structures for group members and their constituents
- e) The regime discriminates against and suppresses the group and its constituents
- f) The regime explicitly rejects the demands of the group.
- g) The regime security forces actively engage the radical group

2.1.2 Other Opponents to the Group

- a) Opponents of the group publicly criticize or verbally attack it.
- b) Opponents of the group pursue policies, legal action, or sanctions that negatively affect the group or its constituents
- c) Opponents of the group rise in strength, number, and influence
- d) Opponents of the group discriminate against, harass, or otherwise act to restrict the group.
- e) Opponents of the group physically attack group members, their constituents, or their property

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Constituents, Supporters, and Competitors to the Radical Group....
Looking at the Group Itself Now..
Indicators Related to the Ideology of the Group

3.1 Group Ideology and Goals

Indicators

No secret, usually found on the group's websites and propaganda

The more a group defines itself as victims of repression, the more likely the group is to turn to retaliatory violence

If the group's goal is to overthrow the regime, or eliminate its opponents, it will be more likely to turn to terrorism FOLLOWING the FAILURE of NON-VIOLENT MEANS!

a) The group increasingly believes that change is not possible in existing society and that a radical change is necessary

b) The group's ideology calls for and legitimizes violent actions against enemies

c) The group's ideology specifies targets

d) The group's ideology increasingly expands the spread of targets from specific (e.g. the police) to the general public (e.g. all members of a group associated with the police)

e) The group's ideology emphasizes the historical sins of a designated group

f) The group's ideology characterizes group members as righteous and uniquely empowered to rectify the perceived ills of society

g) The group idealizes the goals and means of a terrorist group, revolutionary nation, or leaders associated with violence, terrorism, or revolution
### 3.3 Personality of the Group Leadership

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| 3.31 Narcissistic Personality | a) The group leader is sensitive to or does not accept criticism  
                             b) The group leader is surrounded by sycophants  
                             c) The leader overvalues his chances of success and underestimates the strength of his opponents |
| 3.32 Paranoid Personality | Paranoids are highly represented among Right-Wing Racists and Ethnic Separatists  
                             a) The group's leader is OBSESSED WITH SECURITY AND SECRECY  
                             b) The group's leader blames and demonizes opponents of the group  
                             c) The group's leader advocates the stockpiling of weapons to defend against imminent attack  
                             d) The group's leader frequently purges his inner circle |
| 3.33 Sociopathic Personality | a) The group leader has a history of criminal activity not motivated by politics  
                              b) The group leader focuses his wish for violent action on establishment |
| 3.34 Malignant Narcissism | Most dangerous personality constellation in terms of risk of violence. Combination of narcissism, paranoia, sociopathy |
|                       | Shoko Asahara of Aum Shinrikyo  
                             a) The group's leader displays no compunction regarding the use of violence  
                             b) The group's leader has dreams of glory and lacks empathy or concern regarding the impact of his acts on others.  
                             c) The group leader focuses his anger for group setbacks on others, especially the establishment |
Charismatic Leaders

3.41 Charismatic Leader–Follower Relationship

- e.g. Osama bin Laden of al Qaeda
- e.g. Abimael Guzman of Shining Path in Peru
- e.g. Shoko Asahara of Aum Shinrikyo
- e.g. Reverend Jim Jones
- e.g. David Koresh and Branch Davidians
- e.g. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Osho)

a) The followers uncritically follow the leader’s directives
Leadership Style and Organizational Decision Making

3.41 Charismatic Leader–Follower Relationship
- e.g., The Japanese Red Army
- e.g., The Red Army Faction
- e.g., The Provisional Irish Republican Army

Indicators
- The radical group is headed by an authoritarian leader advocating violence
- An authoritarian leader advocating violence consolidates his/her decision-making control over the group
- The radical group adopts a hierarchical group structure modeled after a military organization and fashions a military identity — AND the leadership of the hierarchy advocates violence.

3.42 Authoritarian/Totalitarian Leadership & Strong Central Organizational Decision Making
- Scattered groups or individuals that share common values but lack coherent command structure
- Communicate through meetings, Internet, radio, or other channels
- May only share common beliefs through specific books, events, or idealized leaders
- Lack of organizational control can spawn unstable followers
- e.g., The Turner Diaries
- e.g., Hitler
- e.g., Montana Freemen
- e.g., Timothy McVeigh

Indicators
- Lack of organizational control often forms over differences in nonviolent vs. violent strategies
- e.g., Jamaat al Islemay in Egypt

3.43 Communities of Belief
- Lack of organizational control can spawn unstable followers
- e.g., Montana Freemen
- e.g., Timothy McVeigh

Indicators
- Factions often form over differences in non-violent vs. violent strategies
- e.g., Jamaat al Islemay in Egypt

3.44 Factionalization and Split
- e.g., Closed religious cults
- e.g., Underground social revolutionary group

Indicators
- The group experiences internal debate and factionalization over the use of violence
- A faction supporting more violent means splits from the parent organization.

3.45 Open vs. Close Group
- Group members’ communication with the outside world is restricted with no access to friends and family
- Exit from the group is severely restricted or blocked
- e.g., Aum Shinrikyo incinerated defectors in large microwave ovens
The Radical Group’s Sense of Humiliation, Threat, Negative View

From the point of view of the group!
Sparks that Trigger the Final Moves to Violence

4. Triggering Events and the Immediate Situation

4.1 Triggering Events

a) Members of the group, their constituents, or a prominent figure idealized by the group are attacked, arrested, tortured, or assassinated by the regime or other opponents.

b) The radical group is blocked from running in an election, either because the regime has cancelled the election altogether or has declared the party illegal.

c) The party representing a radical group believes it has been deprived of a victory at the polls because of the regime overthrowing the election results or fraudulently securing its own victory.

d) Anniversaries or "red letter days" commemorating a significant violent event for the group.

- e.g. targeting of Hamas military leaders by Israel
- e.g. nullification of the FIS election victory in Algeria by the military regime
Dramatic Changes in Expected vs. Actual Increases Likelihood of Revolt

Income Disparity since World War II – the Gini Index
where 0 is perfect equality, and 100 is perfect inequality (i.e., one person has all the income)
The Taxonomy of Radical Group Types

- Religious Fundamentalists
- Social Revolutionaries (Left Wing)
- National Separatists
- Non-Traditional Religious Fundamentalists
- Right-Wing Extremists
- Single-Issue Groups
The Importance of Identity

Identity

Collective Identity

What sort of group do I belong to?

Is my group valued?

Is my group listened to?

Does my group matter?

What sort of person am I?

Am I valued?

Am I listened to?

Do I matter?

Personal/Self Identity

Self identity questions filtered through group identity

group

Individual

Questions
Definition of “Hate Group”:
All hate groups have beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics.
Mosaic of Hate Groups In the USA

Voter Turnout

Violent Crime Rates

Gini Coefficient

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Inside the DHS: Former Top Analyst Says Agency Bowed to Political Pressure

Interview conducted by Heidi Beirich

Daryl Johnson has been battling extremist groups for two decades. He got his start in the field in 1991, when he worked on counterterrorism for the U.S. Army. In 1999, Johnson left the Army for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, where he was a subject-matter expert on violent antigovernment groups. In 2004, officials at the newly created Department of Homeland Security (DHS) approached Johnson to take a key post as the senior domestic terrorism analyst. He accepted and, for six years, Johnson led a team of experts on domestic extremist groups.

While at DHS, Johnson and his team wrote the April 7, 2009 report, "Right-wing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment." The report, intended for law enforcement only, was quickly leaked and caused a firestorm among a political right who accused DHS of painting all kinds of conservatives as potential定时。In fact, it has merely pointed out that some domestic extremists focused on single issue immigration and abortion and also noted that extremists were interested in recruiting returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Its analysis of the causes of the surge of right-wing the election of the nation's first black president and the economy, among other things—completely accurate and is in line with similar findings by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

But DHS ultimately reacted to criticism from conservative columnists and groups like the American Legion by withdrawing the report. (Ironically, given the criticism of his report, Johnson describes himself as a registered Republican who "personifies conservatism.")

In the months following the leak, Johnson says in the interview below, DHS gutted its domestic terrorism analysis unit.

Events in the immediate aftermath of DHS suppression of its report seemed clearly to corroborate its conclusions. In late May 2009, abortion provider George Tiller was shot and killed by an anti-abortion fanatic—just the kind of person the DHS report had warned of in one section. In June 2009, neo-Nazi James von Brunn killed a security guard at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., while trying to storm into the building. Many similar attacks and planned attacks by the radical right have followed, right up until now.

Homeland Security Department curtails home-grown terror analysis

By R. Jeffrey Smith, Published: June 7

The Department of Homeland Security has stepped back for the past two years from conducting its own intelligence and analysis of home-grown extremism, according to current and former department officials, even though law enforcement and civil rights experts have warned of rising extremist threats.

The department has cut the number of personnel studying domestic terrorism unrelated to Islam, canceled numerous state and local law enforcement briefings, and held up dissemination of nearly a dozen reports on extremist groups, the officials and others said.
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Summary

• Many inter-related factors in a systematic model

• Concerns about US domestic political violence
  - Not OK to discuss this… (identity theory in action)
  - Data show large increases in number of hate groups
  - Many of these scientific factors are present in the US now
  - “The System is Broken” – anti-system framing seen in historical terrorism and political violence
Thank You