

Global “Jihadi” Terrorism: Radicalization & Evolution

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Radicalization

- Path to political violence (behavioral definition)
- Dynamics
 - Young men chasing thrills, fantasies of glory and sense of belonging to group and cause
 - Bottom up process
- Four major factors
 - Sense of moral outrage
 - Specific interpretation
 - Resonance with personal experience
 - Mobilization through networks

Radicalization (I)

1. Moral Outrage:

- Global: Foreign Intervention (Iraq)
- Local: arrests, killings
- Activates Muslim collective identity (global & local reinforce each other)

2. Interpretation: frame

- War against Islam (sound bite Islam)
- Splinter from Salafi version, but now mostly Takfiri
- Consistency with conventional beliefs
 - American Dream & Melting Pot undermine frame

Radicalization (II)

3. Resonance with personal experiences

- Personal grievances (“root causes”)
- Wide local variation & different historical legacies
- Socio-economic conditions & opportunities
- Political contribution (welfare policies & xenophobic backlash)

4. Mobilization through networks of trust

- Diaspora phenomenon (> 80%; in Europe, >90%)
- Extension of everyday interactions: 70% friends, 20% kin
- Self-selection: spontaneous, self-organized BOGs
- Self recruitment: mutual proselytism (15% wannabes)
- No brainwashing: “Jihadi cool” youth culture

Mobilization through networks

- Face to face:
 - Gangs; student/expatriate groups; religious study groups
- Gradual shift to online networks: no space or time limits
 - Transformation of the threat: more women & teenagers
 - Link to global social movement (vision & guidance)
 - Chat-rooms: virtual “invisible hand” organizing operations: C2
- Group dynamics: increased commitment via interactivity
 - “Echo chamber” encouraging mutual escalation
 - For comrades (collective identity) & cause (script)
 - Slide into violence: in-group love & out-group hate

Evolution of the Threat (I)

1st Wave: AQ Central Leadership (~ 2 dozens left in FATA)

- Upper middle class/Well educated/
- Egyptian predominance, average age 30
- Afghan Arabs, companion of UBL, created AQ in 1988
- Khartoum phase: switch of strategy from near enemy to far enemy
- Return to Afghanistan ('96) to present

2nd Wave: AQ Cadres (~ 150 left in FATA)

- Middle class, educated, religious, Muslim identify, average age 25
- Expatriate dominance (West); homegrown (ME)
- Went to Afghanistan for training (Bosnia, Chechnya Kashmir)
- Afghan Golden Age of AQ: 96 to 01
 - Controlled Islamist revivalist violent social movement & focused it on the far enemy
 - Sanctuary & floods of resources & recruits

Evolution of the Threat (II)

Transition Phase: 9/11/01 to 3/03

- Post 9/11 CT campaign eliminates sanctuary, funding, key leaders
- Physical break up of formal terrorist networks
- AQ Central confined to Afghan Pakistani Border
- Partial activation of local networks of friends & relatives
- Dangerous: Istanbul, Madrid, London (Crevice, Overt, Sauerland)

3rd Wave: Leaderless Jihad

- Increased worldwide vigilance against terrorists
- Wannabes having trouble linking with AQ Central (except Brits)
- Local autonomy, no formal training, local financing
- Lower class, not religious/*takfiris*, average age 20
- Poorly educated/youth gangs, high level of criminality
- Mostly homegrown, informal with loose boundaries
- Attempt to travel to Iraq to die & Pakistan for training

Leaderless Jihad

- Darwinian structural evolution of process of radicalization in a hostile habitat, but enabled by the Internet
 - Organic survival & growth in a hostile habitat
- Self limiting threat:
 - No state sponsors
 - Limited intrinsic appeals (Taliban, horrors committed)
 - Inability to graduate to offline political party or impose discipline
 - Will decay for internal reasons

Policy Implications

- First two waves
 - Deny sanctuary
 - Eliminate leaders, cadres & transition networks
- 3rd wave: containment & accelerate internal decay
 - Main goal: prevent radicalization of next generation
 - Take glory out of terrorism (alternative youth culture)
 - Reframe by focusing on victims instead of perpetrators
 - Counter process of radicalization
 1. Smaller footprint in Iraq/Reduce local moral violations
 2. Challenge frame (“war on Islam”)/Benefits of immigration
 3. Reduce discrimination in labor markets/racism
 4. Eradicate local terrorist networks (transition wave /vigorous international cooperation)