

These are some of the major reasons for extremism and radicalization, most of which are based on what the terrorists groups in the Middle East have been saying for years.

They may not be valid to the reader but its worth knowing what extremist groups use to validate or justify the use of terrorism.

**Terrorist groups are not monolithic.** Different groups have different reason for extremism and radicalization. Issues that cause terrorist reactions vary from one group to another. Palestinians' reaction, for example, is caused by Israeli occupation and loss of their homeland. Algerians' is caused by stripping certain groups of their political rights. Al-Qaeda cites different reasons like injustice to the Palestinians, cruelty in Iraq; U.S. presence in Islam's holy land; repressive regimes in the Middle East; and the U.S. support for some of those regimes.

**Reaction to U.S. government's foreign policy** issues which affect Muslims directly. The vast majority of Arabs and Muslims established that Israel can get away with everything from occupation to killing civilians and demolishing houses. They accuse the U.S. of not only the support but turning blind eye to Israeli actions.

**Unhealthy society:** The Middle East is infested with massive problems. Unresolved conflicts, oppression, lack of freedom and rights, economic stagnation, and above all extreme poverty, all created unhealthy society where it becomes acceptable for citizens to vent their frustrations on foes and friends of foes using everything from protestation to violence.

**A cultural or religious ideology** that obligates the followers to react to what they perceive to be a local or global threat to their country, identity, or way of life. For an example, dictatorship in the Arab and Islamic world creates political and eco-

nomic injustice to the citizens of those countries. Citizens feel obliged, culturally and religiously, to oppose this system. Some people use terrorism to oppose such governments.

**Political, financial, and religious support** by the community to radical groups. Without the acceptance and empowerment of communities, ideology alone can't move the opposition into practice. Terrorist groups rely heavily on all needed support from their communities.

**Persistent efforts in recruiting vulnerable youngsters** using their suffering as an appealing tool to employ violence against others. In many Arabic and Islamic countries, political and especially economic conditions are so desperate that unemployment can go as high as 35%. Groups like Al-Qaeda use this condition, with a good degree of success, as a recruitment tool of the affected youth.

**Absence of clergy institution** in the Islamic doctrine and the absence of educated religious leaders for spiritual guidance. This paved the way for unqualified individuals, like Osama Bin Laden, to rise to a leadership level of immense influence on the pious — misusing religious text and history to re-invent the religion. Moreover, the presence of different religious leaders with different textual interpretation creates more than confusion among the followers.

In Shi'a Iran, there are more than 75 Ayatollahs, and 5 Grand Ayatollahs. Each one has hundreds of thousands of followers

and each leader has different commentaries on Islam. You can imagine what impact this would have on Iranian Shi'a.

**Active cultures:** by their nature, most active cultures are outward, discontent, territorial, and distrusting. If an active culture (that once thrived and prospered) is in decline now, faced or felt threatened by another active culture that is stronger and more developed, a cultural conflict is inevitable. While most citizens' reaction is political, some individuals or organizations react with extremism and violence.

**Gap between doctrine and practice.** There always will be a difference between religion and practice. What might the religion preaches might be contradicted by what people do. In the case of Islam; it becomes a politicized religion, coupled with unqualified leaders, who can issue contradicting fatwas on the same matter. Moreover, and as a way of life, it's easier for extremists in Islam to convince youngsters to join in their extremist organizations.

**Aggressive nationalism:** Most active cultures adhere to aggressive nationalism which in turn produces, in many circumstances, acts of terrorism. Since 9/11/01, terrorism has had nationalistic dimensions. The insurgency in Iraq provides a good example of aggressive nationalism.

**Cultural crisis** is an essential agent in creating terrorism. Most developing countries suffer from a "crisis of identity" - especially in the aftermath of a colonial experience or the pressure of imitating

advanced countries. Old cultures striving to preserve their cultural identity are faced with ideologies that threatens their identity. While most citizens react by rejecting outside influence, some reaction might be violent as in the case of Islamic extremists who keep citing westernization, which they view as an unethical culture, as one reason to resist the west. Al-Qaeda has been using terrorism as a reaction.

**Lack of trusted cultural and political leadership** in the Islamic world.

**Lack of alternative ideologies** to Islamic radicalism. One reason for the success of Islamic radicalism with the average moderate Muslims is their challenge to countries like the United States. Extremists consider the United States as a political and economic colonial power in the Middle East ruling over propped up regimes. Extremist appeal is in their success defining Middle Eastern governments as weak and complicit with the West.

**Violent reaction to extremism.** Any violent reaction to extremism produces more extremism because the reaction failed to offer solutions to the grievances of the extremists.



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## How can the government work with the Islamic community?

The government can and must work with the Islamic community especially in the aftermath of 9/11/01. Since terrorism targeted the U.S. in 2001 and since statistics show that more than 7 million Arab and Muslim Americans live in the United States, a cultural dilemma arose in the popular culture.

Most mediums of communication elevated the already existing negative misconception on both Islam and the Arabic culture. Despite the efforts of the U.S. government to distinguish between extremists/ terrorists and the Islam culture, religion and followers; they were demonized and vilified in the news and in the entertainment industry. Millions of Arabs were afraid of cultural backlash reminiscent of the Japanese Americans' experience in the aftermath of WWII.

Consequently, Arabs and Muslims became mostly isolated and secluded; the "usual suspect" concept emerged; and "guilty by name and appearance" was practiced by some. Communication between Arab/ Muslim Americans and law enforcement ceased to exist at a time when it was needed most. The government needed to connect with the communities for help, and protection.

The government has to:

- Establish a relationship with the community mosques and the imams of the mosques.
- Work with youth and women organizations, especially among the recent immigrants.
- Coordinate with various agencies to provide helpful, educational cultural programs.
- Identify cultural and religious organizations in Ohio.
- Identify leadership of all organizations and groups.
- Gain trust of the community: This is the most difficult to achieve since a long standing distrust exist toward governments in general among diverse communities.
- Invite the communities to join in the fight against terrorism.
- Ensure the communities' rights and duties, including civil rights, and help the community against prejudice and discrimination.
- Hold regular and open town hall meetings inviting the communities and representatives of government, media and other relevant entities to discuss and answer questions by both sides.
- Form advisory councils with members from the communities as chains of representation and communication on issues of concern.
- Work with the people from the communities to be active members of society to educate the public on cultural and religious issues.
- Coordinate interfaith dialogue between leaders and followers of different faiths.
- Work with various agencies in public and private sectors to sponsor cultural events and exchange programs of students, businesses, farmers, etc.

- Work with the media to initiate public announcement services on global issues and support the participation of community leaders to speak on their issues.
- Be open and honest about your communication.
- Be curious about the cultures and religions of the communities and make sure to respect their traditions to insure maximum cooperation and communication.
- Emphasize ideals of civic society and the principles upon which successful society have or aspire to have.
- Remind the Arab and Muslim communities of their cultures' legacies and its impact on human history.

## How is the Muslim Community combating terrorism?

The presence of American Muslims in the United States goes back to the 19th century but their contribution to the United States goes back much earlier. Jamaal Baadani was the first Arab American killed on May 23rd, 1776 in the revolutionary war, according to the Department of Defense. They're deeply seated within the culture and most are assimilated American citizens. Statistics show that have a higher income, higher education, and vote more than the average citizen in the United States. Their issues are very similar to that of any American citizen. They are subject to terrorism just like all that are targeted, as evident in the number Muslims killed in the attack on the World Trade Centers.

The success of American Muslims has created a sense of belonging and loyalty for most. The American system treats them with equality and empower them with rights and all the freedoms granted to everyone. Ohio's Office of Multicultural Relations outreach to the Arab/ Muslim Americans, throughout the state, generated positive response and cooperation in every meeting and gathering. The leadership in mosques and organizations reject the presence of radicals who want to inflict harm on the very country in which they live and to which they belong. In early 2006, the community in Toledo was the first to turn in potential terrorists who wanted to do harm to this country.

We think working closely with the community will be a very effective tool to bring them on board to join in the fight against terrorism. A real danger still exists in recruiting future terrorists, but engaging the communities in a continuous dialogue is one of the ways to minimize the recruitment success of terrorist groups.

### Some of the organizations we are working with:

- Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)  
Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA)  
Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)  
Muslim Alliance of North America (MANA)  
Muslim American Society (MAS)  
Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)  
Muslim Student Association (MSA)

## Some of the programs we're using in working with the community:

- The establishment of the Office of Multicultural Relations office within Ohio Homeland Security was seen as a very positive step by most mosques and organizations in Ohio.
- Creating literature on factual information on the Arabic and Islamic cultures has been helpful for both first responders and the community.
- Engaging all willing organizations within the Arab/ Islamic communities has succeeded in bridging the gap between the government and the community.
- By coordinating between the community and law enforcement agencies, the community felt valued as an important part of the system. As a result, they are voicing their opinions, discussing their issues and relating to first responders in a positive manner.
- We are in the process of forming an advisory council with representatives of the communities from all over Ohio. The idea of the council has been welcomed as another tool of communication and interaction.
- Holding regular town hall meetings in all cities where the communities live is supported by Arab/Muslim Americans. The first open meeting held shortly after the attack on 9/11/01, in which representatives of all local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies were invited to meet with the community in a question and answer format. It was a highly successful event and we're planning 4 similar events this year.

### Depending on funding and expanding the office of multicultural relations, we propose:

- Working with Arab/Muslim youth through cultural and educational programs
- Coordinating with Islamic schools on educational programs in the classroom
- Regular interfaith meetings between followers of all faiths
- Working with women organizations on women and family issues
- Initiate an international exchange programs in which we can invite Muslim citizens to meet with Muslim groups in Arab and Islamic countries,
- Establish summer camps for students from Islamic and Middle Eastern countries to participate and interact with American students during the summer months in Ohio
- Initiate exchange programs for people in both public and private sectors in both Islamic countries and the United States.

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# Agents of RADICALIZATION

