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Trends in Terrorism Series

Militant Jihadism: Radicalization, Conversion, Recruitment

Introduction

Radical Islam poses many threats, only one of which is violent acts of global terrorism. There are radicals, for example, who advocate intensive religious discipline as the solution to Islam's ills. This non-violent, personal strategy, based on strict and literal imitation of the life of the Prophet Mohammed, seeks the conversion of others through individual promotion of the *dawa* (the call to Islam). Radical Muslims, for whom the dawa is central, oppose the values and the political and economic power of the West, but instead of militant jihad (struggle), focus on peaceable means by which to restore the purity of Islam and achieve fundamental changes in society. Their goals are no less radical than violent jihadis, but the means are different. Peaceful political activism, grounded in religious principles, is another strategy for redressing the declining power of the *ummah* (Muslim community). Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, a 19th-century Muslim revivalist, advocated a pan-Islamic movement of political solidarity to counter the values and domination of the West. The various strands and movements comprised by radical Islam share a common faith, but espouse different goals and means. When political activists demand the imposition of Shariah (strict Koranic law) in Muslim states and urge personal and communal jihad to bring that about, they become militant jihadis.

For the purposes of this paper, 'radicalism' is defined as: 'The active pursuit of and support for far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to the democratic legal order through the threat or use of violence or other undemocratic means'[1]. The focus will be on the process by which Muslims, or converts, become 'radicalized' – that is, they come to accept the legitimacy and necessity for ongoing violent jihad against the governments and peoples of both Muslim and non-Muslim countries.

Violent acts of global terrorism, and the support activities which underpin them, daily threaten the safety and values of citizens in both the West and the East. Dependence upon external funding from Saudi Arabia, for example, leaves many Arab and Muslim institutions in the West vulnerable to the influence and inflammatory rhetoric of extremist clerics – a point made later in this paper. This is as true in Canada as it is elsewhere, and relevant in the context of formulating policies and practices to reduce the incidence of radicalization within the larger, moderate Muslim community. This paper seeks to provide readers with accessible information on the key elements of militant global Salafism and the radicalization process in order to generate interest and inform debate.

Any analysis of radicalism requires an understanding of Islam as a political and social system within which religion is dominant. Islam does not recognize the Western concept of the separation of religion and politics. While some scholars like Keppel view the development of political Islam in historical and cultural terms,[2] others place[3] their emphasis on sociological factors.

The overwhelming majority of radicals within the Islamist political spectrum do not advocate violent jihad

Political Islam has two interconnected aims – solidarity with the ummah (the Muslim community worldwide) and the re-establishment of Islamic polities under a Caliph (a pan-Islamic ruler). The next section attempts to trace the development of militant global jihadism as a prelude to the review which follows of the catalysts, causes and categories of radicalization. However, Faisal Devji[4] maintains that there is no clear genealogical process which has produced global militant jihadism: it is the product of "the fragmentation of traditional structures of Muslim authority within new global landscapes".

Political Islam and Global Salafi Jihadism

The overwhelming majority of radicals within the Islamist political spectrum do not advocate violent jihad as a means of establishing an Islamic form of government. Some movements, Hizb ut-Tahrir for example, officially do not condone the use of violence but are nevertheless ready with potent anti-Semitic and conspiratorial explanations when young Muslims seek answers to questions of faith. Others, like the nationalist Muslim Brotherhood, now eschew violence and not only participate in the political process, but have been so successful at doing so in Egypt that at some point in the future, the democratic process may well deliver what previous violence could not.

Advocates of violent jihad as a means to a political end come from all manner of national and religious backgrounds, but they share the belief that the strength of Islam resides in the values and practices of the Prophet and his pious companions (the *salaf*). While Salafism, as a diagnosis and prescription for Muslim revivalism, is compatible with peaceful political activism and non-violent proselytizing, those Salafists who concluded that peaceful activism was not a viable strategy for the establishment of a true Islamist state called for jihad to achieve violent revolution.

Their inspiration came from Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966)[5] who drew upon the concept of *jahiliyya* (a state of barbarism and ignorance about the Prophet Mohammed's revelations) and *Wahhabism* [6] (a militant effort to purify Islam) to justify the necessity for eternal jihad in order to "abolish injustice from the earth, to bring people to the worship of God alone".[7] Qutb asserted that jihad was not just a means to defend Muslim lands and peoples but an offensive, proactive and permanent revolution against internal and external enemies who usurped God's sovereignty. Striving through the use of the sword could clear the way for striving through preaching.

The global Salafi jihad is now "a worldwide religious revivalist movement, which aims to re-establish past Muslim glory in a great Islamist state stretching from Morocco to the Philippines"[8] through a strategy of violent jihad to restore authentic Islam. Global Salafi jihadism wages war not only upon apostate Muslim rulers, the 'near enemy' but upon those Western powers, 'the far enemy', whose support has prevented the establishment of true

The global Salafi Jihad aims to re-establish past Muslim glory in a great Islamist state stretching from Morocco to the Philippines

Islamist states based upon the Shariah. The unique contribution of Al Qaeda ("the base"), which is the vanguard of what is now an affiliated network of global Salafist movements, was to take jihad beyond the local struggles of religious nationalists to the global war against the United States and its allies, among which Canada has been specifically named. The loose affiliation of Islamist groups which broadly share Al Qaeda's ideology, aims and objectives gives it a global reach and reputation beyond any that its own core membership would otherwise warrant. Salafi ideology determines the mission, sets the goals and guides the tactics.

Al Qaeda's global strategy purports to be religiously inspired: an interpretation of jihad not as a collective or political obligation, but as an individual ethical duty which goes beyond pragmatic politics and gives it the status of worship. Jihad is a fundamentalist 'born again' doctrine: a personal quest for a pure Islam and a universal religious identity. While advocates are deeply concerned with personal faith, repentance and salvation, Roy[9] nevertheless sees Al Qaeda's use of religion as politically motivated - a means to reinvigorate jihad following the failure of nationalist struggles in the Middle East and the participation of religious nationalists in the political process after 1996.

A common feature of all revivalist movements is anti-intellectualism and a greater readiness to accept dogma and fideism. Both Islam and Christianity have been facing a growing discrepancy between established religious authorities and charismatic movements which have proved attractive to those looking for certainties and meaning in their lives. Few of Al Qaeda's operatives have had a religious education, and most have been trained within secular institutions in the technical fields. Fundamentalist doctrine rejects modern Muslim traditions and practices as deviations from the path of God, and scorns traditional intellectual and scholarly debate on religious issues. It is no coincidence that the growth of Muslim militancy has been accompanied by the waning influence of traditional Sunni teaching institutions and a breakdown of traditional forms of authority in the Muslim world.[10]

Furthermore, globalizing jihad has 'de-territorialized' Islam: 'nationalist' jihadis have been recruited for a global and purer form of struggle aimed at the establishment not of particular Muslim states but of a Muslim caliphate. Islam as a religion is being detached from any given culture so that Muslims and converts alike, whether from Arab, Maghreb, South East Asian or diaspora communities, can identify with and fight for a global rather than national or regional *ummah*. In this sense, Al Qaeda's very existence depends upon the erosion of traditional political and religious allegiances. Jihad aims to subvert other forms of Islamic devotion.

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Radicalization – Catalysts and Causes

Contemporary events, arising from the foreign and domestic policies of both Western and Muslim governments, have had significant effects on the politicization of Muslims, especially those in the diaspora. Identification with the *ummah* and resentment at the perceived oppression of Muslims worldwide have had unforeseen repercussions.

The Iranian revolution in 1979 was the beginning. No matter that Shias rather than Sunnis deposed the secular and autocratic Shah, Muslims were united in seeing this as a victory for Islam and evidence that at last a pure Islamic state could be established despite corrupt Arab governments and their Western supporters. The effect on Muslim consciousness and sense of identity was immense. Revolutionary Iran galvanized Muslim politics and also gained the support of the most militant Sunni elements within it. Similarly, Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, following the publication of his book *The Satanic Verses*, was another turning point in the politicization process, one which generated a new sense of empowerment and fuelled an active interest in Muslim revivalism.

The effects flowing from the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, which coincided with the Islamic revolution in Iran and the rise of militant political Islam in general, cannot be overestimated. Thousands of Muslims from across the world traveled to Afghanistan for the specific purpose of expelling Soviet infidels from Muslim lands. Both mainstream and radical clerics and scholars approved and encouraged the jihad as a defensive struggle which pitted Muslims against atheist (communist) non-Muslims. Afghanistan provided training opportunities and a secure base for aspiring jihadis to learn the skills they needed in local struggles; it allowed religious nationalists fleeing the security authorities of Muslim regimes to regroup; and critically, it provided a small fringe group of extreme Islamist revolutionaries with face-to-face opportunities for selecting and indoctrinating mujahideen and seasoned nationalist fighters for global jihad. While many volunteers were shocked at the extent to which jihadists like bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri hijacked the jihad for their own political purposes, others were radicalized by their global ambitions. The Islamist victory against the Soviets re-energized Salafi jihadism and moved it from a local to a global struggle: the inward-looking doctrine of bin Laden's Salafi-Wahhabism was transformed by the transnational jihadism of the followers of Qutb.

Afghanistan was only one of several arenas where radical Islamic ideas were taking root and practical military skills were being acquired: Algeria, Egypt, Kashmir, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Chechnya were others. The slaughter of Muslims in Bosnia by Serbs (Christians) was interpreted as an attack upon the *ummah*, who despite being European, were not protected by the UN against Serb attacks. Resentment and fear of religious persecution elsewhere was particularly effective in recruiting diaspora Muslims for jihad in defence

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of Dar-al-Islam (Muslim lands or communities). Some of these mujahideen were later recruited to global jihadism.

Anger and resentment towards the West was further inflamed by the establishment of a US operational base in Saudi Arabia, from which the Gulf War to eject Iraq from Kuwait was prosecuted. The "polluting" American presence in "the Land of the Two Holy Places" resolved bin Laden to target the West, in opposition to the view held by the majority of radical Islamists.

Harnessing the anger and resentment of the ummah to win support for global jihad was key to Al Qaeda's attacks against the United States on 9/11, which were devised and executed specifically to identify the US as the enemy of the *ummah* and galvanize the global jihad. The subsequent decisions by the US and its coalition partners to intervene first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq was a gift to Al Qaeda: mujahideen and religious nationalists could come together to strike both at the global enemy and in defence of Muslim lands. Insurgents in Iraq now comprise not only Arabs and Muslims from the Middle East but jihadis from Muslim diaspora communities around the world.

The Doctrine of Jihad

Muslim belief and practice is based on the words of the Koran, but Islamist discourse in interpreting the meaning of those words is contentious and fractured. Nowhere is this more true than with respect to jihad, about which there is no single, universally accepted doctrine. Jihad can be taken to mean any form of personal activity undertaken in an attempt to follow the path of God, but is more often interpreted as participation in a collective armed struggle or holy war. Mainstream Islamic scholars consider jihad to be a collective duty for Muslims, to be undertaken only in defence of Dar al-Islam (House of Islam). For them, it is never an end in itself. When Qutb's justification for jihad as an offensive means to establish an Islamic state was later adopted by bin Laden, it became a personal and permanent duty for every Muslim to wage war against the governments and populations of both the 'near' and the 'far enemy' in both Muslim and non-Muslim lands.

Jihadis fall into one of three categories: a) volunteers or mujahideen, b) religious nationalists, c) global Salafi jihadists. Volunteers for jihad are not doctrinaire jihadis and have no commitment to wage war against either their own government or Western nations. They engage in jihad as part of a collective religious duty, authorized by parents and respected *ulema* (scholars), to defend Muslim lands and peoples.

The majority of jihadis are religious nationalists, members of 'traditional' political Islamist groups who have waged local wars unsuccessfully since the 1970s against Muslim regimes in an attempt to establish an Islamic state or form of government. Having failed, and faced with oppression and

imprisonment, many sought political asylum in the West from where they have continued their nationalist activities. Others, a small minority, were recruited to global jihad. Rivalry for the leadership of jihad between nationalists and transnationalists was and remains bitter.

Around the mid-1990s, a few fringe militant groups, led by Al Qaeda, shifted the jihad away from the local to the global and were later joined by some former nationalists, such as Ayman al-Zawahiri, who had come to accept that the struggle for an Islamic state could not be fought just on a regional level. Global or transnational jihadis are doctrinaire in their commitment to use violent rather than non-violent strategies in order to establish an Islamic polity and convert non-Muslims or destroy them. They do not consider that their eternal confrontation requires the sanction of qualified and representative ulema. While Al Qaeda was weakened by the elimination or arrest of many of its leaders when the US-led coalition overthrew the Taliban in Afghanistan, it continues to influence and direct in broad terms the activities of affiliated local terrorist networks. The Dutch report *From Dawa to Jihad* [11] asserts that local networks in Europe interpret Al Qaeda's ideology more radically than does its own leadership. Individual cells see themselves as engaged in a "mythical, apocalyptic final battle with Evil" (the Western world) which may lead them to participate in nihilistic acts of destruction.

The main threat to the West derives from global jihadism rather than the activities of mujahideen or religious nationalists, but to the extent that these two groups share the link to jihad and are a pool from which recruits to global jihadism are drawn, they are of concern. For many, but not all, experience of traditional jihad is the first step to radicalization. Before the weakening of Al Qaeda, and the communications revolution of the 1990s, jihad was predominantly the means by which new foot soldiers were personally selected for global jihad missions. Now, members of affiliated networks 'join', rather than being recruited after being sensitized to Al Qaeda Salafi propaganda.

Social, Pyschological and Situational Analyses of Radicalization

Terrorism is the extreme consequence of radicalization, the early signs of which are likely to be involvement in a variety of support activities, including criminality.

Individual profiles based on such personal characteristics as sex, age, national origin, religion, education and socioeconomic background are of little value in identifying future terrorists, but pattern analysis identifies broad groups from which recruits to global jihad have been drawn. Marc Sageman's[12] empirical work, based on the biographies of 172 global Salafi mujahideen, attempted to shed light on the specific characteristics and behaviour of individuals who joined the jihad. His research examined

the explanations advanced by each of the three general approaches: social, psychological and situational. The first hypothesizes that terrorists share a common social background; the second, that terrorists share a common psychological make-up; and the third, that terrorists become terrorists because of their particular situation at the time of recruitment.

Sageman found evidence to dispel many of the common myths which allegedly account for radicalization. Members of the global Salafi jihad were generally middle-class, educated young men. The 'central staff' met and bonded together during the Soviet-Afghan war; the South-East Asians who became members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) were mostly disciples of JI's leaders; the Maghreb Arabs who grew up in France experienced isolation and sought friendship in local mosques; and the core Arabs who felt keenly the lack of spiritualism when they moved to lands and societies with a utilitarian culture, sought a self-sacrificing cause that would restore their pride and provide spiritual comfort. Before joining jihad, prospective mujahideen, who in general were not particularly religious, became more observant and devout.

In terms of 'social' explanations, they were not disadvantaged or poorly educated, although they may have suffered relative deprivation and lack of opportunity in foreign lands; neither were they were brainwashed into fanaticism, nor were they hardened criminals, although many had been involved in petty crime. Most were married and had children and were apparently well-integrated.

In terms of 'psychological' explanations, there was no sign of emotional trauma in their past nor evidence of any pathological hatred or paranoia. The 'frustration-aggression' hypothesis which suggests that radicalization of well-educated and affluent young men stems from their experience of discrimination and alienation after being sent abroad to study or work was found to be too vague to be tested or refuted. However, it seemed that many mujahideen were positively motivated to join jihad to serve a larger cause worthy of self-sacrifice rather than as a reaction to negative experiences.

Generating a common profile for the global Salafi militant was not possible. Southeast Asians differed from the core Arabs, who in turn were found to be distinct from the Maghreb Arabs. Leaders of the movement were unlike their followers. Nevertheless, there were patterns. Identifying the ways in which people become engaged in militant jihadism helps to explain why the same movement can attract and engage people in divergent ways whether they are homegrown or experienced insurgents, whether from Africa or Europe. Radicalization is a process which is shaped by ideology both at the content and behavioural levels.

Sageman's thesis is that identifying how the link to jihad was made is likely to illuminate the radicalization process more than by asking why. In doing so, he discovered that the process was accomplished through friendship,

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kinship and discipleship links. These were the means by which progressive intensification of beliefs ultimately led to an acceptance of the global Salafi ideology. Social bonds are the critical element and precede ideological commitment. They provide mutual emotional and social support; they develop a sense of common identity and they encourage an adoption of or a return to the faith. They are also critical in facilitating a link to the jihad or its training camps. Relative deprivation, religious predisposition, and ideological appeal are all necessary but not in themselves sufficient conditions to account for the decision to become a mujahideen. In short, Sageman suggests that it is factors internal to the group rather than external ones which are most significant in the transformation of potential candidates into global jihadis.

Sageman's study was published in 2004 and, while unique and invaluable, it is possible that some of his observations with respect to the characteristics of mujahideen are less true today than they were during the period of his research. He had already noted the changes which were taking place in the process by which mujahideen joined the Jihad.

Categories of Recruits

The following section describes some of the common groups or categories from which mujahideen emerge.

a) Young volunteers

"What is so notable about most Al Qaeda terrorists being slain or captured is their youth. The youth of every generation are idealistic and believe they have the power to change the world. It is this normal stage in young men's intellectual and psychological development that bin Laden and his followers seize and manipulate so insidiously."[13]

The median age of the Muslim community in Canada is twenty-eight, the youngest demographic group of any major religion. While challenging the accepted values of community leaders, teachers and parents is part of any youth culture, the tendency is strengthened in the diaspora when it is coupled with the search for Muslim identity, dignity and self-respect. In the formative years, the influence and approval of the peer group, friends and charismatic imams is strong, especially when young people have a propensity for rebelliousness, lack fluency in Arabic, are ignorant about the basic principles of Islam and feel rejected by their families and society. Inflamed by the rhetoric of propagandists, whether in local mosques, in religious study centres, at schools or universities or through video and audio tapes or the Internet at home, young people are susceptible to being 'brainwashed'. "They are given interpretations of Koranic verses that have been [deliberately] chosen so as to lead them to rebel against their parents, their families, and even against the society in which they live."[14]

Sageman's study did not support this 'immaturity thesis', in that he found the median age of his subjects when they joined the Jihad to be around twenty-six. Equally, the ages of jihadis involved in more recent acts of terrorism have also been well past adolescence. While statements by the families and friends of recent suicide bombers which attribute extremist actions to 'brainwashing' are to be expected, they are not necessarily reliable. Radicalization may not lead immediately to jihad but to lower-profile support activities and time spent recruiting other cell members. A cell leader is likely to be older than the 'foot soldiers', as in the case of Khan and the London suicide bombers.

b) Religious nationalists

The majority of jihadis are religious nationalists whose own local and regional struggles against Muslim regimes collapsed in the face of harsh security measures or changed post-Cold-War allegiances. Many left their homelands to seek a safe haven in the West and Europe in particular. Intelligence agencies once felt confident that, by tracking local and regional nationalist struggles, they could identify radical Islamist networks and activists who, for the most part, remained focused on national and regional conflicts with Muslim regimes. However, a minority of religious nationalists, experienced jihadis and insurgents from these regional struggles, were converted to the global ideology of Al Qaeda. They began to support, plan and participate in operations against global targets from Western host countries. Setting up recruiting networks was just one of those activities. In the UK, the influx of Algerian Muslims in the 1980s marked the beginning of Islamist activity which later spread to Muslims of other ethnic groups.

In Canada too, Sunni Muslim extremists from Algeria and other North African nations have figured prominently in active terrorist networks. The arrest of Ahmed Ressam, following his attempt to blow up Los Angeles Airport in 1999, heightened concern that transnational terrorists might strike in Canada. He was a member of the Groupe Fateh Kamel, an extremist Montreal-based faction of the nationalist Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) which had ties to bin Laden. A split in the GIA in 1998[15] led to the formation of the Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat (GSPC) which, in addition to its nationalist aims to establish an Islamist government in Algeria, became affiliated to Al Qaeda in support of global jihad. An alleged Toronto GSPC cell was dismantled in 2005.

c) Homegrown terrorists

By provoking the United States to a military reaction which bin Laden has been able to portray as a war against Islam (rather than global jihadis), the ummah's collective sense of injustice, fear and anger has been intensified. In the charged atmosphere of distrust and suspicion following 9/11, Muslim diaspora communities have become fertile recruiting grounds for radical

Islamism. Keppel maintains that the battle for Muslim minds is likely to be waged not in the Middle East, but in European diaspora communities where Muslims tend to be less prosperous and more confined to ghetto areas than in North America. Roy[16] describes Islamist fundamentalism as a product of the diaspora and a consequence of reaction to sociological changes rather than cultural or historical factors. While genuine grievances and resentments exist as immigrants struggle to obtain citizenship and are faced with racism and unemployment, such preconditions for radicalism are not new; what is new is that they are now being used by extremists to recruit recent immigrants for confrontation with the West. The discovery and disruption of a proliferating number of recruiting networks in Europe suggests that for some Muslims born or raised in the West, Europe may now be the front line for that confrontation.

But it is not only recent immigrants or the offspring of first generation immigrants who failed to integrate who are perceived as a potential threat: integrated second-generation ethnic minorities and educated professionals are also giving rise to concern.

Theo Van Gogh was murdered by a homegrown terrorist in Holland in November 2004. The perpetrator was a 26-year-old, Dutch-speaking, well-educated Muslim who was born in the Netherlands. He became involved in radical Islam through a local mosque after the death of his mother, but had previously come to the attention of the authorities for low-level criminal activities and contacts with hardcore activists. The murder has had implications for other countries where there has been significant immigration over the last forty years: Muslims who were once considered assimilated into the adoptive country of their parents are now regarded as potential recruits to radical Islam.

The leaders of the German Al Qaeda cell which carried out the 9/11 attacks were neither poor nor socially disadvantaged, but well-educated professionals who, in their own communities, ranked among the more privileged and successful. The homegrown terrorists who carried out bomb attacks against London's mass transit system on July 7, 2005 also seemed to be assimilated. Three were born in the UK and the fourth was a Muslim convert from Jamaica. Shehzad Tanweer was said by friends to be devout, thoughtful and generous but shared his community's resentment that neither Muslim leaders nor the British government were doing anything to protest or change policies perceived to be unjust and oppressive of the Muslim *ummah*.

Bernard Lewis has attributed the rise in radicalism to the deep-seated sense of humiliation which Muslims feel about the failure of Islam over the past two centuries to successfully deal with the modern world.[17] Fundamentalism is an attempt to remedy this failure. In video testimony released by Al Qaeda, Tanweer's friend and fellow suicide bomber Mohammed Sidique Khan spoke of the West's responsibility for injustices in the world and poured scorn on "so-called scholars, content with their Toyotas and semi-detached houses". Like the 9/11 bombers, Khan and Tanweer appear to have been indoctrinated

to the point where their only allegiance was to an extreme fundamentalist faith which promised to change the world.

According to a classified CSIS report quoted last year by Toronto columnist Stewart Bell, a "high percentage" of the Canadian Muslims involved in extremist activities were born in Canada, a marked shift from the past when they were mostly refugees and immigrants. Bell gives the examples of Mohammed Jabarah of St. Catharines who joined Al Qaeda and tried to blow up the American and Israeli embassies in Southeast Asia; his brother Abdul Rahman, a member of a Saudi Al Qaeda cell, who was killed in 2003; Canadian-born Momin Khawaja, who was arrested in Ottawa last year on charges he was part of a British bombing plot; and Canadian-born Omar Khadr, who faces US charges that he was a member of an Al Qaeda faction in Afghanistan which killed a US soldier.

d) Friendship and Kinship Networks

Sageman's research on known Islamist extremists[18] indicates that peer group friendship and kinship connections have been influential factors in the radicalization process, whether as a means of introducing radical ideas, maintaining commitment to them through comradeship in jihad, or providing trusted contacts for operational purposes. A degree of 'radical one upmanship' between friends can lead incrementally to extremist actions. This may have been the case with Khan and Tanweer who grew up in moderate, pro-Western families with only a cursory interest in Islam. Lionel Dumont, an Islamist radical recently convicted in France, professed to be influenced by a fellow convert, a charismatic and violent man who persuaded him first to enlist in an international brigade of Muslim fighters in Bosnia and then to join the radical/quasi-criminal 'Roubaix gang' in France. While the radical views of parents can be imposed upon children (as in the case of the Canadian Khadr family), kinship influence more commonly works at the level of the same generation, i.e. siblings or cousins.

e) 'Reverts'

Shahzad Tanweer and Mohammad Sidique Khan were born in the UK and apparently assimilated into British society. Only in young adulthood did they become observant in their Muslim practices and beliefs. As recent 'reverts' to Islam they, like others, may have felt the need to test or prove their new-found commitment by adopting an interpretation of the faith which was the most extreme and made the greatest demands upon them. Tanweer spent time at a terrorist training camp in Pakistan run by the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen group in 2004. This was probably arranged by Khan, who had previously been to Pakistan.

f) Converts

French authorities have reported an increase in the number of converts to Islam whom they say are not only being recruited as foot-soldiers for Al Qaeda but are taking on leadership roles in planning and directing attacks. Al Qaeda now considers converts as full members. According to Roy, "For Al Qaeda, converts are not just tools to get past security. It's a way for them to become a global movement. In just about every Al Qaeda cell over the past eight years, we have seen converts. It's structural, not just accidental." Converts are prized by radical Islamist groups because of their ability to operate freely in Europe, Asia and North America without arousing the suspicion of security authorities. Like reverts, they are usually eager to accept dangerous assignments as a way of proving their new-found commitment. They are among the most aggressive of Islamist activists. Germaine Lindsay, one of the July 7 London bombers, was a Muslim convert from Jamaica.

g) Women

While for years women have committed suicide attacks in places such as Chechnya and the Palestinian territories, European networks aligned to Al Qaeda have been shaped by fundamentalism and strict separation of the sexes. Nonetheless, a youthful Dutch militant extremist network has included aggressive European female extremists who were suspected of plotting suicide attacks, either alone or with their husbands. The Dutch group had links to a Belgian network which was responsible for sending Muriel Degauque, a native European female convert to Islam, to carry out a suicide bombing in Iraq - the first to do so for a network affiliated to Al Qaeda. (US commandos killed her husband a day later as he was reportedly preparing a suicide attack near Fallujah, Iraq.) At least one female suicide bomber had struck in Iraq before Degauque, and another was implicated in the bombing of three hotels in the Jordanian capital. Belgian police also arrested another couple allegedly preparing to go to Iraq to become "martyrs".

A willingness to use women as foot-soldiers for global jihad may signal an acceptance by male Al Qaeda leaders that women can be full-fledged partners in jihad, since all Muslims have a duty to defend the faith against attack; or it may just reflect the spontaneous nature of decision-making by affiliated networks which need foot-soldiers for Iraq. Since in the patriarchal world of Islamist extremism men are in control, the induction of women is likely to reflect either local pressures and exploitation or a defiant and self-assertive response by women seeking an elevation of self-worth and a change in the subordinate status and role of their sex. Recent female recruits have included daughters of immigrant families who appear to have been motivated by the rediscovery of their Muslim roots. So far, women have not been used for attacks in the West.

h) Prisoners

Muslims represent a disproportionate share of the populations of prisons in many Western countries, and Islamist activists often have criminal records. In France it has been suggested that Muslim youth represent over 20% of the prison population. Radical Muslim clerics have been very active in visiting prisons to mobilize alienated and angry youths for the jihadist cause and to proselytize Islam among prisoners of other ethnic and faith communities. In addition, where prisons contain a number of extremists, they can become 'schools' where Al Qaeda militants pass on or impose their violent ideology on others. Richard Reid, the "shoe-bomber" who attempted to destroy a passenger aircraft on December 22, 2001, was radicalized in a young offenders' institution. For him, Islam offered a new start and a more meaningful way of life. In explaining his actions[19], he referred to the immorality and self-fulfillment of Western society as a threat to Islam.

Foreign Fighters in Iraq

The US invasion of Iraq has radicalized both mainstream and militant Arab and Muslim public opinion. It has had the effect of recruiting as insurgents not just Al Qaeda militants but mujahideen from over forty countries, many of whom had not previously belonged to any Islamist, let alone paramilitary organization. The US National Counter-Terrorism Center believes Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, chief of Al Qaeda in Iraq, has developed links with twenty-four militant groups around the world. Zealous foreign fighters, transformed by their experience in Iraq as were their counterparts in Afghanistan, sooner or later are expected to return to diaspora communities in the West and continue their militancy.

No Single Explanation

Lionel Dumont refuted the suggestion of friends that he was in search of spiritual reassurance and declared "There is no explanation". It is not difficult to identify the broad socio-political preconditions for a climate that is conducive to fundamentalism, but only a minority of Muslims will be led by that climate to support such movements, let alone the violent jihadism of Al Qaeda. Racism, social isolation, unemployment, and frustrated personal and political ambitions have been used to explain and justify radicalism. They may well be a contributory factor but the reasons why some people and not others are disposed to accept extremist ideologies and belief systems are likely to run deeper and are perhaps unanswerable. Psychologists suggest that for all terrorists, involvement is attributable to the supportive qualities of extreme movements, for the individual, for the group, and the relationship which these have with each other and the surrounding environment[20].

No single factor or process leads to radicalization

No single factor or process leads to radicalization; for each individual the transformative influences are unique. Once begun, however, there appears to be a momentum which leads recruits inexorably from support activities to violence.

Recruiting Strategies

Militant Islamists have in common their decision to make a link to jihad. Prior to 9/11, a type of formal recruitment took place in the camps in Afghanistan. The dismantling of those facilities by Coalition forces weakened Al Qaeda to the point where it metamorphosed into a loose affiliation of terror networks, a development which has had an effect on recruiting strategies. Rather than a top-down formal recruitment procedure, there is now a bottom-up process whereby potential new members are sensitized to Salafist ideology through the dissemination of propaganda. They join decentralized networks of dispersed cells that talent-spot cell leaders and recruiters. It is they who provide the contacts that link the recruit, jihad, and training camps. While camps like Mansehra in Pakistan near the Kashmir border continue to provide radicalized Muslims with instruction in handling arms and explosives, there are also indications that camps have now been set up in Western Europe for homegrown terrorists.

Structural developments in the recruitment strategies of Islamist groups have affected the composition of new adherents by broadening the pool from which they are drawn. This change has been in parallel with and facilitated by an explosion in the dissemination of propaganda. While Salafi propaganda has many channels, including university campuses, the battle for Muslim minds has been waged through two key agents: the internet, and the mosques which give a platform to radical Wahhabi clerics.

The Internet

Al Qaeda has been called a web-based phenomenon. The web's independence of national boundaries and ethnic markers fits exactly with bin Laden's founding vision for Al Qaeda as a base from which to stimulate revolt among the worldwide Muslim *ummah.* Led by educated engineers and other professional technology enthusiasts, it adapted early to the technologies of globalization and used them to sensitize potential recruits to global Salafi jihadism. The internet, chat forums, videos, cassette tapes and cell phones are used as recruitment tools to disseminate propaganda. They spread the myth and promise of the jihad to alienated young Muslims in search of a collective social identity. Living rooms are transformed into radical madrassas as audio and video files of sermons, communiqués, poetry, songs, martyrs' testimony, Koranic readings and scenes of battle and suicide bombings are downloaded   The message projected is that there are two ways to remedy

Muslim grievances: to participate in jihad in non-Western conflict zones and work towards the establishment of the rule of the Caliph (in order to prepare for the future consolidation of the Islamic state and conquest of non-Muslim ([Dar al-Harb] lands); and to participate in violent jihad against all 'enemies of Islam' as advocated by Al Qaeda. Online videos of jihadists in combat often accompany such a call to arms.

Internet connections create a bond between individuals and a 'virtual' Muslim community which is an approximation of an ideal Islamic society: one that is all that is just, egalitarian, and universal in its simplicity and purity. Sageman refers to this relationship as one which fosters 'disembed-dedness'. On the one hand, it connects isolated individuals to others who share their intense views; on the other, it leads them to spend more time with a virtual community at the expense of interaction with a real one - their immediate social environment. The internet connection can thus impede assimilation. While the internet does not provide individuals with a direct means to contact the leaders of Al Qaeda affiliated organizations, it does facilitate networking and by connecting dispersed individuals, enable them to form their own cells.

The Mosques

The fundamentalist religious debate has been taken outside of traditional institutions in the diaspora and removed from mainstream scholars. This secularization has resulted in traditional values being left behind so that they no longer exercise a moderating influence or provide the alternative inter-pretations which could check the radicalization process. Fundamentalists dismiss the teachings of learned *ulema* as apostate, and mainstream clerics and scholars accuse radicals of 'hijacking' Islam for their own political pur-poses. There are signs that the traditionalists are beginning to address this problem.

Moderate Muslim organizations in Canada have disavowed the extremist and provocative comments made by Younus Kathrada, a teacher at an Islamic centre in Vancouver, and Mohammed al-Masri. Kathrada was trained in Saudi Arabia where clerics and teachers follow a strict, intolerant and mili-tant Wahhabi interpretation of the Koran. Many of the radical teachers and clerics who come to the West are funded by Saudis through Islamic charitable organizations. Despite a clamp-down by Saudi authorities on the sources of these funds, dependence on external funding leaves many Arab and Muslim institutions in the West vulnerable to the influence and inflammatory rheto-ric of extremist clerics and their materials. Charismatic imams such as Abu Hamza al-Masri, who took over the formerly moderate Finsbury Park mosque in the UK, preach an intolerant Wahhabi interpretation of the Koran which incites Muslims to engage in violent acts. Unconfirmed reports linked Khan to the Finsbury Park mosque.

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Whereas both mainstream and radical clerics urged thousands of young Muslims to jihad in Afghanistan in defence of a Muslim land, radical fundamentalists have used mosques in the diaspora to give implicit and explicit approval to the 9/11, Madrid and London bombings as well as those in Jordan, Bali and elsewhere. Testimony from Abu Hamza's trial has provided evidence that he encouraged, condoned and legitimized suicide attacks as a means of waging jihad against apostate Muslim regimes and the West. Yet freedom of speech legislation in many Western countries makes it difficult to prevent such extreme views from steering the impressionable in a fundamentalist direction.

Conclusion

Despite the setbacks which Al Qaeda suffered in Afghanistan after 9/11, it has metamorphosed into a fluid, loosely structured and decentralized organization, which uses the internet and other communications technologies to influence and direct a network of Islamist terrorist organizations committed to global Salafi jihadism. The radicalization process has required new strategies and technologies to propagandize and harness old grievances. While the transformative process is gradual and personal to each individual, radical fundamentalist ideology has appealed to a cross-section of Muslims for whom it offers some perceived rewards such as self-worth, the admiration of others, excitement, and a sense of purpose coupled with feelings of mutual solidarity and comradeship. Al Qaeda has had some success in the battle for Muslim minds, but attracting future recruits will depend upon its continuing ability to create and foster positive perceptions of violence as a viable strategy for advancing the aims of global Salafism in the face of the negative impacts on the Muslim *ummah*, and the management of internal strife, tensions and rivalries among jihadis[21] themselves. ◆

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Endnotes

1 Adapted from a definition given in the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations Report "From Dawa to Jihad: The Various Threats from Radical Islam to the Democratic Legal Order", 2005, p.13.

2 Gilles Keppel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*, Cambridge:Belknap, 2004

3 Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004

4 Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad*, Cornell University Press, NY 2005

5 Sayyid Qutb, hanged in 1966 by Egyptian authorities for his alleged subversive preaching and plotting against the nationalist regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser.

6 Mohamed ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791) founder of Wahhabism - a puritanical religious doctrine founded in Saudi Arabia in the 18th century which preaches strict adherence to Islamic values, religious orthodoxy and correct ritualistic practice, especially as it pertains to the seclusion of women. Adherents are Salafists.

7 Sayyid Qutb, *"Milestones"*, Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Mother Mosque Foundation, n.d, p.65

8 Marc Sageman, *"Understanding Terror Networks"*, University of Pennsylvania Press 2004, p.1

9 Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam*

10 Dale Ekelman and James Picatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton University Press, 1996

11 From Dawa to Jihad, p33

12 Marc Sageman, *"Understanding Terror Networks"*, Ch. 3

13 Saudi Arab News, "Catching them Young", 29.9.05

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15 Stewart Bell, "Terror Cell Suspects Named", *The National Post*, November 11, 2005.

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18 Marc Sageman, *"Understanding Terror Networks"*

19 Letter, written by Reid from his prison cell in America on October 24, 2002, to Noel Young, journalist for the Scottish legal magazine *The Firm*

20 J.Victoroff, Ed. "The Psychology of Terrorism: Proceedings from a NATO Advanced Research Workshop", Tuscany, 2005

21 Fawaz A Gerges, "The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global", Prologue 15, Cambridge University Press, 2005