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INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH
**S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**
A Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University

Editorial Note

Radicalization, Deradicalization and Rehabilitation

We are pleased to present the counterterrorism research community with the March 2014 issue of Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis (CTTA), available at www.cttajournal.org and www.pvtr.org.

This month's issue of CTTA includes five articles on timely topics related to radicalization, deradicalization, rehabilitation and counter-ideology. Radicalization, in the context of extremism and terrorism, occurs when groups or individuals are conditioned through radical ideologies to accept the use of violence to bring about political or social changes. Deradicalization, which promotes restorative justice by seeking to remove violent ideologies from the minds of radicalized individuals through structured programs, and the broader concept of terrorist rehabilitation, which includes community engagement initiatives and reforms in national legislation, are strategic or long term measures of counterterrorism. Counter-ideology supports deradicalization, and works to prevent radicalization of individuals by invalidating radical ideology through exposing its contradiction to established religious principles (or historical facts).

Factors leading to radicalization are diverse, as is the case with radical pathways. Douglas Woodall offers an analysis of alternative factors which lead to radicalization, namely, negative impressions made by Americans living abroad, alternative social spaces including tertiary academic spaces and miscalculated targeting approaches against a terrorist network. With case studies, Woodall offers a way forward in developing US counterterrorism strategy in this regard. Muhammad Younas reemphasises the impact of the jihadists' online presence as a source of radicalization, and the need for continued online monitoring of online forums and social media and network websites to counter the threat. The crux of Younas' piece is the discussion on the debate involving the rights and liberties of individuals which are seen to be compromised through online monitoring, and the need for checks and balances in this regard, which Younas proposes through a broad international consensus that is needed to counter the threat from online jihadist media. Zulkifli Mohamed Sultan counters the extremist Islamist ideology propagated by Saiful Anam, one of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)'s high-ranking militants. Sultan breaks down Saiful Anam's radical ideology to expose the contradictions in Saiful Anam's narrative particularly in the use of the concept of takfir, or the practice of one Muslim declaring another Muslim a kafir or "infidel."

Emphasizing the need for moderation, Muhammad Haniff Hassan offers an elaborate discussion about wasatiyyah, which is commonly translated only as "moderation," but in actuality also includes other core Islamic values such as "justice" and "excellence," among others. Mahfuh Haji Halimi, Muhammad Saiful Alam Shah Bin Sudiman, and Zulkifli Mohamed Sultan highlight the "teacher-student" approach from the education discipline to help understand the dynamics of religious counselling sessions in terrorist rehabilitation programs. The authors find that concepts such as "functioning knowledge" and the "deep approach to learning" can lead to a transformation in cognitive thinking in radicalized individuals, which in turn could lead to their disengagement from radical thoughts and actions.

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Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis


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Understanding Radicalization and Terrorist Violence Today

Douglas R. Woodall

Going beyond the mainstream thinking, the negative images of Americans living abroad, alternative social spaces fostering radicalization and using the wrong targeting approach against a terrorist network could be considered important catalysts leading to radicalization and terrorist violence.

In the first six months of 2013, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) documented 5,100 terrorist attacks across the globe. This was a substantial increase compared to 8,500 terrorist attacks for the whole of 2012, and the wave of violence has shown few signs of ebbing in the second half of 2013. Though there are no dearth of efforts to understand the fundamental beliefs and perceptions that motivate terrorists to carry out attacks, this has done little to stem the scale or scope of violence perpetrated. Underlying these attacks are fundamental beliefs and perceptions that fuel terrorists' will to fight. Closer examination of long-term strategic objectives will help to achieve the elusive strategic outcome of winning the contest of wills. Gaining a better understanding of key factors fuelling the adversary's will to fight is the first step. Some of the important factors contributing to radicalization and extremist violence today are discussed in the following section.

Americans Abroad

It is already well-established that America's image overseas has contributed, in part, to the motivation of some extremist and terrorist groups. However, what receives much less attention is the role played by Americans living and serving overseas in exacerbating the negative portrayal of the US. Americans based abroad are not limited to interacting with local populations in government or military capacities, and therefore have the ability to influence foreigners' perceptions of America in other countries. A significant numbers of Americans live abroad, and more importantly, are engaged in activities that impact not only the politics of the concerned countries but also the social and cultural aspects of the host society. In this context, the impact of their activities, whether as an individual or as a group, may have consequences that cannot be ignored. In some cases, their perceived extravagant lifestyles fuel further misconceptions of what America represents.

American actions and attitudes abroad are also something that jihadists attempt to exploit, as was evident from the attack against expatriate communities in Saudi Arabia. One specific example is the 12 May, 2003 attacks against expatriate compounds in Saudi Arabia. Al Qaeda played a prominent role in these attacks, and the majority of the victims in the attacks were

Americans. The segregation of the expatriate communities and the local population in Saudi Arabia fuels jihadists' perceptions that amoral or corrupt lifestyles are followed by the expatriates. This may encourage thoughts that the existence of Westerners is corrupting members of the host



Figure 1 - Afghan witnesses testify at Staff Sergeant Bales' trial

Image by AP /Lois Silve ;

Image source: <http://blog.thenewstribune.com/military/2013/05/29/jblms-staff-sgt-robert-bales-to-plead-guilty-to-killing-afghan-civilians/>

nation. The attacks resulted in the killing of 36 people and wounding a further 160.

The massacre of 16 Afghan civilians by American Staff Sergeant Robert Bales fanned the flames of extremism and created a damaging public image of American Soldiers serving in Afghanistan. Even though Staff Sergeant Bales was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, Afghans have expressed outrage that Bales is not being put to death, with some calling for him to be tried in Afghanistan. The brother of Mohammad Daud, who was slain in the massacre, told CBS News

that not putting Bales to death shows that “America is encouraging its soldiers to kill Afghan people, destroy and torch their houses, then come to America (and receive) a Medal of Honour.” This example highlights challenges that arise when Americans’ actions overseas are not necessarily representative of American society, its culture and values.

Alternative Spaces of Radicalization

Since 9/11, *madrasahs* have been in focus when it comes to investigating sources of terrorist indoctrination, but other spaces also exist including those in tertiary academic institutions in the West.

The radicalization of Umar Farouk Abdulmuttalab is a worthy example. Abdulmuttalab, a young Nigerian man, gained notoriety for attempting to blow up a Northwest Airlines Christmas Day flight from Amsterdam to Detroit in 2009. Before he was recruited in the jihadist movement, he matriculated at the University College London (UCL). Abdulmuttalab was the president of UCL’s Islamic Society, and he sought to bring extremist and radical speakers to the campus. An investigation by UCL concluded that the university was not responsible for Abdulmuttalab’s radicalization and

worldview. Nevertheless, the investigating team recommended introducing a system to review the credentials of guest speakers in the aftermath of the investigation. In this particular case, access to spaces that have the ability to influence students is a strategic prize for terrorists and extremists, especially if it results in the successful recruitment of individuals to work as operatives in Western countries.

“ ... access to spaces that have the ability to influence students is a strategic prize for terror groups, especially if it results in the successful recruitment of individuals to work as operatives in Western countries.”

The key person among the 9/11 hijackers - Mohammed Atta - could be another example in this context. As reported in an article in the *Prospect* magazine in 2002, “Atta in Hamburg,” Martin Ebert, a friend of Atta at the Technical University of Hamburg-Harburg in Germany, described the academic environment as anti-American. Ebert mentioned to a reporter about a dialogue involving Atta, which gave

Ebert the impression that Atta perceived that “America is rolling over us.” This is, of course, not to say that the majority of Western academic institutions are susceptible to be exploited by radical students, but some of these could allow environments conducive to solidifying radical ideas against the West in impressionable students.

This is of a particularly serious concern, as many students may possess so-called clean passports and a generally low profile from the purview of law enforcement, which makes them strategic assets for terrorist groups looking to bypass immigration and customs entry points. At the same time, there have been cases of students (and other individuals) that support the jihadist agenda or are susceptible to radicalization by terrorists who have citizenship in Western countries. Anwar al-Aulaqi is an example of one such terrorist with US citizenship, and whose actions radicalized a large number of followers, to include influencing Abdulmuttalab.

Targeting Approaches

Another contributory factor to radicalization could be the choice of targeting approach used for neutralizing terrorist groups. Successful targeting operations in April 2010 led to the death of two leaders in Al Qaeda's Iraqi branch – Abu Ayyub al-Masri (also known as Abu Hamza al-Muhajir) and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. At that time, the deaths of al-Masri and al-Baghdadi dealt a significant blow to Al Qaeda in Iraq. This was a successful intelligence driven operation, providing critical information to facilitate the elimination of these key leaders. However, the surgical elimination of key leaders may not necessarily be the best or the only option to disrupt terrorist groups for long-term strategic effects. For instance, it is not entirely clear whether Iraq is better-off today after targeting al-Masri and al-Baghdadi.

Masri and Baghdadi were marginal leaders, and their lack of visibility among Al Qaeda's fighters could be a severe blow to the overall morale within the organization. Interestingly, the elimination of Baghdadi led to a speculation as to whether he was a real person, or a fictional leader. Their elimination nevertheless enabled a period of decline for Al Qaeda in Iraq. However, focusing on decapitation tactics without regard to careful analysis of the second order (removing bad leadership) and third order (allowing more effective leadership to advance) effects of the same, reinforced a focus on leader elimination for counterterrorism operations. While this strike was a resounding tactical and operational success, removal of these leaders eliminated their rather ineffective leadership, and opened a path for more



Figure 2 – Abdulmuttalab, the Christmas Day Bomber

Photo source: <http://www.examiner.com/article/raw-video-umar-farouk-abdulmutallab-arrives-at-court-for-attack-on-flight-253-watch-video>

charismatic/ committed leadership to emerge and re-energize a declining organization. The new leader, Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali Badri, also known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Abu Dua, is currently one of the most wanted terrorists in the world, with a US \$10 million price offered for his killing or capture by the United States.

Abu Dua's operations in Iraq and expansion of his group's influence into Syria not only demonstrate his own effectiveness in terms of increasing lethality of Al Qaeda in Iraq under his leadership, but also the counterproductive nature of a pure

attrition strategy from a counterterrorism perspective. In this case, the removal or neutralization of ineffective leaders led the way for more dynamic leadership to assume control, with noticeable impact.

In this context, it is also interesting to examine the case of Muhammad al-Khulayfi, a member of Takfir wal-Hijra, a radical Islamist group linked to Al Qaeda based in Egypt. In February 1994, al-Khulayfi declared Osama bin Laden an infidel and attempted to assassinate him. Even as the group failed in its attempt, the attempt served as the catalyst for bin Laden to portray a purer and more radical image to reconstruct how his organization and its supporters perceived him, such as devoting more energy to avoiding extravagant displays and living an austere lifestyle. Thus, elimination of terrorist leadership is not a panacea in counterterrorism. Better strategic outcomes may result from manipulating the internal dynamics of the group, including the promotion of ineffective leadership to precipitate the groups' implosion, or accelerating its destruction by internal turmoil. The timing and objectives of counterterrorism operations against terrorists at the leadership level should therefore be tempered with the consideration of the long-term strategic and possible counterproductive outcomes if any.

Way Forward

There is clearly a need to improve America's image abroad in coordination with aggressive

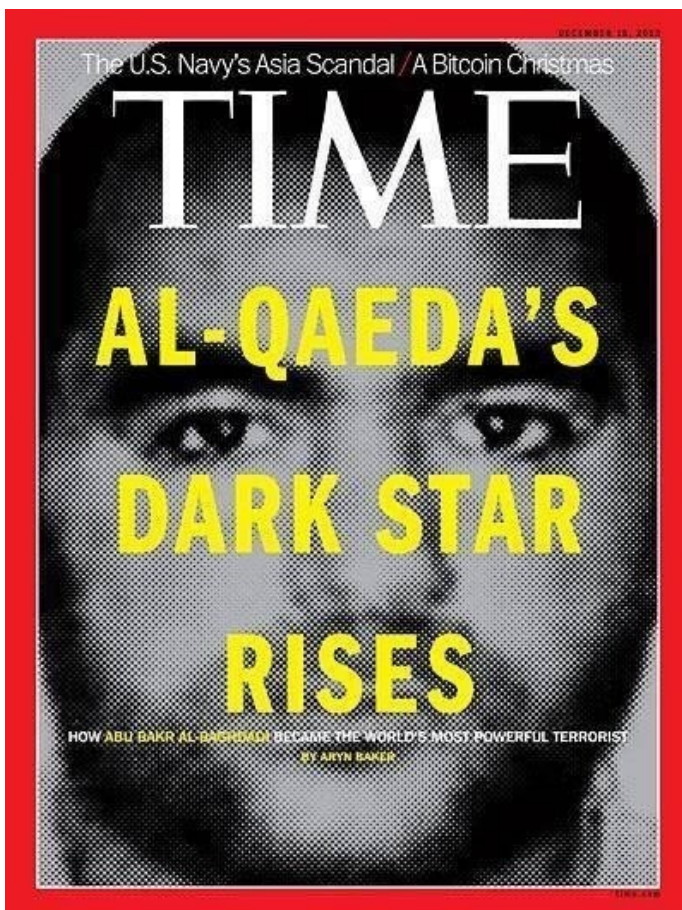


Figure 3 - Abu Dua: An Improved and More Effective Leader

*Photo by National Counterterrorism Center ;
Image source: <http://content.time.com/time/covers/europe/0,16641,20131216,00.html>*

information operations to project positive American values or positive ideas about America. More specifically, initiatives designed to build international trust through the personal example, conduct and professionalism of Americans living and serving abroad will help to mitigate the negative perceptions of America abroad. Spaces that provide environments enabling terrorists to grow and solidify their uncompromising beliefs should receive more public scrutiny. More importantly, a long-term strategy for counterterrorism should not rely exclusively on the speed of targeting or on the ability to neutralize terrorist leaders. Rather, careful analysis and understanding of social systems and the internal dynamics of terrorist groups could lead to better strategic outcomes. Allowing terrorist groups to implode through poor leadership or creating the conditions for popular movements against them are alternative options that merit consideration. Successful tactical and operational victories in the short-term must not be the goal when the risks of more lethal threats persist in the long-term.

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“... neutralization of ineffective leaders led the way for more dynamic leadership to assume control ...”

“Digital Jihad” and its Significance to Counterterrorism

Muhammad Ahsan Younas

Background

In December 2009, five young American boys from Virginia, Ramy Zamzam, Ahmad Minni, Umar Chaudhry, Waqar Khan, and Aman Yemer, aged between 18 and 25, were detained by Pakistani Police of the Punjab province on suspicion of terrorism. These boys had slipped from their homes without intimating to their parents about their destination or their decision to follow a jihadist career against the United States of America, although, reportedly, they had left video showing images of wars in different countries where the US was involved. Subsequent investigations revealed that these boys were lured by an online jihadist recruiter named Saif Ullah with links to Al Qaeda. Minni got noticed by Saif Ullah for his repeated “liking” of jihadist videos posted on *YouTube*.

The boys were convicted by the Anti-terrorist Court in Pakistan and sentenced for ten years of imprisonment. They have filed an appeal in the High Court against this judgment in hope of a reduced sentence, which is presently under hearing (which is a probable reason for the delay in the request for their extradition to the US). This incident reverberated in the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence of the Committee for Homeland Security in the House of Representatives and was the subject of its hearing on “Jihadist Use of Social Media: How to Prevent Terrorism and Preserve Innovation” on 6 December, 2011. Although it was observed that jihadist media is not a game changer in the US, it was concluded that the monitoring of social media is essential because of the impact on viewers, which has been confirmed by a

Online sites are used by jihadists and terrorists as forums for the discussion on the state of global jihad, propagation of anti-US sentiments and related issues. Social media has certainly increased jihadist appeal and following. For example, the *Facebook* page, *Ansarullah Urdu*, which posts radical content, has 24,740 “likes” (members who can follow the page) as of November 2013. Presently, jihadist groups such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and Al Qaeda mostly use online social media and network sites such as *YouTube* and *Facebook* to post detailed reports of their activities, photographs, videos, policy statements, future plans and responses to criticisms of their organizations. For example, in December 2012, Al Zahwari threatened to take the jihadist fight to the cities of Kenya to take revenge upon the Kenyan Army for curbing terrorism in Somalia, and subsequently the Westgate shopping mall terrorist attack was carried out the following year in September 2013. General content that is beneficial for counterterrorism efforts are also posted. For example, the cover page of the June 2012 issue of *Nawa-i-Afghan Jihad* posted on the *Facebook* page of *Ansarullah* included a world map which

highlighted in red, countries and regions in which Al Qaeda has a presence: Afghanistan, Central Asian countries, Xinjiang region of China, Turkey, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Palestine, Libya, Algeria, Mali, Somalia and Indian subcontinent. Presently, it is evident through the study of jihadist media that the jihadist leadership has begun to focus its attention on Morocco and Sudan.

Rise of Jihadist Media



Figure 1 – Extremist content posted on Bab-ul-Islam jihadist online forum (<https://bab-ul-islam.net>)

Translation of Urdu on image: “An introduction and overview of the important victories of ‘the Movement for Caliphate and Jihad’ waging an armed struggle in Pakistan for last two-and-half years.”

Image source: <https://bab-ul-islam.net>

In *The State of Global Jihad Online* (2013), Aaron Y. Zelin stated that jihadists are using web forums, websites and social media networks for their routine conversations, exchange of tactics, socialisation, propaganda and recruitment. Osama Bin Laden, in his letter to

Mullah Omar in Afghanistan in 2002, emphasized the importance of media and observed that, “It is obvious that the media war in this century is one of the strongest methods; in fact, its ratio may reach 90% of the total preparation for the [our] battles.”

Zelin divided the progress of jihadist media into four phases.

The first phase started in 1984, when important jihadist leaders such as Abdullah Azam delivered

sermons, wrote essays, printed magazines and newsletters. They also made use of audio-visuals by making audio and video tapes to circulate their lectures and sermons. The second phase started in the 1990s, with websites owned by individuals connected with Al Qaeda and similar radical groups. *Al Neda* is considered to be the first jihadist website linked to Al Qaeda. The third phase started in the 2000s, with the introduction of interactive online forums such as the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), where the administrators who managed the sites and their content were from jihadist groups. Content was contributed to these forums by the members of these groups as well; as done for example in the online forums *Al Hasbah*, *Jamia Hafza*, *Urdu Forum* and *Al Ansar* by Al Qaeda. This phase was important as these forums empowered the jihadists to control and influence a group of supportive or susceptible individuals, thus allowing them to extend their sphere of influence and expand their membership. The fourth phase, which we are experiencing today, started in 2007, with the worldwide mass popularization of online social network/ media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *YouTube* as well as personal blogs. In this phase, the individual has become more important as the jihadists' online audience has expanded

“A study of the emerging languages used in jihadist media is important in assessing future trends of jihadist activity and presence.”

exponentially.

Languages of Jihadist Media

While Arabic is the main language used in jihadist online sites and propaganda material such as DVDs, the English language is widely used in jihadist media for global outreach and is presently deemed the second most commonly used language in jihadist media by some analysts. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)'s magazine, *Inspire*, available online, is a clear manifestation in this regard. This magazine was the initiative of Anwar Al Awlaqi and Sameer Khan who developed jihadist media into having transnational appeal. Since Awlaqi and Khan were killed by drone attacks, US-born Mujahid Sheikh Adam is now leading this mission. The Global Islamic Media Front (GISM) is one of the oldest jihadist media houses in English language. The *Ansarullah* and *Bab-ul-Islam* online forums of Al Qaeda are operational in multiple languages, and they are also available on *Twitter* and *Facebook*. Various segments of Al Qaeda have their own media houses like Al Sahab (in Central Asia), Al Andulus (in Morocco), Al Malahim (in the Arab Peninsula), Al Kataib Media of Mujahideen Youth Movement (Al Qaeda Central) , Al Qadsia (in Libya), Al Furqan (in Iraq and Syria) and Omer Media (in Afghanistan).

In his testimony before the US House of Representatives on 6 December, 2011, Brian Michael Jenkins stated that Al Qaeda is the first terrorist organization to fully exploit the internet, and that it regards itself as a global movement and sees its mission as not simply creating terror among its foes, but “awakening” the Muslim community. Jenkins said that its leaders view communications as 90 percent of the struggle.

The other two major languages used in jihadist media are Bahasa Indonesia (the language of Indonesia) and Urdu, spoken in Pakistan and the Indian subcontinent. A study of the emerging languages used in jihadist media is important in assessing future trends in jihadist activity and

presence. Pashto, the native language of the Pashtun people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, has gained importance in jihadist media, as many jihadists are Pashtuns from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pashto is used in inspirational jihadist songs and interviews, including for propaganda material distributed in CDs/DVDs. The use of Bangla (Bengali) and Turkish is also increasing; as almost all major contributions in jihadist media are being translated into Bangla and Turkish. Bangla is spoken in Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal, and Turkish is spoken mainly in

“While the respect for individual liberties is extremely important, intelligence gathering is greatly augmented through online monitoring ...”

Turkey with small communities of speakers also in Central Asia and the Caucasus (and other parts of Eastern Europe as well as in Germany, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Northern Cyprus and Greece). This is perhaps indicative of regions where jihadist influence is growing, as readers/ viewers seem to be following jihadist media vigorously. The Russian language is also used as many jihadist works have been translated into Russian regularly since the year 2009. Al Qaeda in Qokaz (the

Caucasus) has always tried to show itself as a relevant and active organization attacking the Russian Army. In recent months it has suffered serious losses including the death of its leader Shiekh Doku Umrof, President of the Islamic Emirate of Caucasus, popularly known as the Bin Laden of the Caucasus. However, there have been very few contributions

to jihadist literature in French or Spanish, which may indicate that France and Spain (or other French or Spanish-speaking countries) are presently not inclined to be theatres of jihadist terrorism in the near future.

Online Monitoring Justified?

Snowden’s leaks on the US government’s expansive surveillance programs have triggered a great debate on the justification of surveillance of all types of communications, including internet/

web-based communications by intelligence agencies, and its consequences on the rights and liberties of citizens. While the respect for individual liberties is extremely important, intelligence gathering is greatly augmented through online monitoring as described above. To further illustrate, Al Shabab was tweeting on seven accounts of Twitter during their attack of the Westgate mall in Kenya. Thus, if continuous monitoring of these accounts had existed, authorities may have been in a position to respond to the crisis quicker and more effectively.

Moreover, terror threats have been successfully curtailed by effective monitoring of jihadist chat rooms and social media. The arrests of Hosam Smadi (2009), Antonio Martinez (2010), Awais Younus (2010) and Khalid Ali (2011) in the USA, are just a few examples of terror plots foiled by counterterrorism practitioners through effective monitoring and follow-up operations. Effective monitoring of online jihadist sites and forums including social media and network sites have led to more accurate threat assessments, and therefore, jihadist media are considered to be an easy and important source of intelligence. In May 2013, a plot to bomb the Embassy of Myanmar in

Indonesia was detected and foiled when one of the terrorist perpetrators, Separiano, a.k.a. Mambo Wahab, revealed his plans to execute the attack through a Facebook status update (Separiano and the other conspiring militants claimed that the planned attack was to avenge the plight of Rohingya Muslims). The monitoring of online Jihadist media has also been supportive in terrorism investigations in unearthing terrorist networks and their sympathizers, as every upload

and download leaves a trace.

Monitoring jihadist sites have also been used for launching sting operations to capture terrorists, including new recruits to terrorist groups.

However, checks and balances should exist by way of, for example, making it compulsory to obtain approval from the court after authentication by a responsible officer, and then imposing subsequent

accountability mechanisms. It can be noted here that jihadists are at present more aware of the possibility of getting tracked by the authorities through the internet, and are thus engaged in an effort to launch encryptions and authentications to secure online communications between members, although the encryptions are far from perfect. Anwar Al-Awlaqi is believed to have started this process by advising his followers to download such encryptions to secure their communications.

“Presently, there are scarcely any counter narrative media on social media and network sites that is administered by authentic Muslim scholars or Islamic governments.”

The monitoring of jihadist social media can be helpful in devising counter narratives for Al Qaeda’s version of jihad, especially in Muslim countries, as the jihadist propaganda is often wholly devoid of truth in relation to Islam. The creation of counter narrative or counter-ideology and its widespread availability on the internet, including on social media and network sites, are crucial for the prevention of radicalization of individuals which leads them to support or commit acts of violence. To effectively curtail the jihadist appeal, counter narrative media must be produced in a manner which appeals to the youth. Thus, its availability on social media and network sites is crucial. Presently, there are scarcely any counter narrative media on social media and network sites that is administered by authentic Muslim scholars or Islamic governments.

Blocking of Extremist Sites and its Constraints

In many countries, state response has been to block sites managed by terrorist organizations, as the material posted on these sites such as bomb-making manuals are extremely dangerous, and the content of these sites fall under the category of hate material directed at inciting violence and extremism. However, states are aware that, as Jonathan Kennedy and Gabriel Weimann in “The Strength of Weak Terrorist Ties” (US Institute of Peace Press, 2006) assert, there is no guarantee that these initiatives are effective in minimizing Al Qaeda’s use of the internet. For example, when

the Pakistani government blocked jihadist online forums such as *Ansarullah* and *Bab-ul-Islam*, the activity manifested on *Facebook* and *Twitter*. China has also not been fully successful in blocking its spree of jihadist (micro) blogs. As Brian Jenkins also noted in his testimony before the US House of Representatives Committee on 6 December, 2011, “Faced with the shutdown of one site, jihadist communicators merely change names and move to another, dragging authorities into a frustrating game of “whack-a-mole,” and depriving them of intelligence while they look for the new site.”

Thus, blocking can never be a complete solution in countering the online presence of terrorist organizations, although it can be effective if applied selectively. In addition to passive monitoring of websites to gather intelligence, authorities can create confusion and mistrust between forum members by contaminating the contents, for example by producing fabricated statements by terrorist organizations. However, sites that publish materials on tradecraft involving bomb-making and other types of violence (also called “Do-it-Yourself Jihadist” sites or “DIY Jihadist” sites) should be blocked at once before radicalization occurs and violence is incited.

In fighting the jihadist propaganda tactics, governments are also constrained by the rights and liberties of their respective citizens. The “freedom of speech” as practiced in the West, for

example, which is considered sacrosanct and inviolable by the populace, is at the same time viewed by Muslims across the globe as a factor which encourages hate speech, as exemplified by the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad published in a Danish newspaper. This is exploited by the jihadist media as they claim to represent the cause of Islam and Allah by releasing analytical essays against the West and audio and video productions on subjects such as Islamic Law (Shariah), issuing religious decrees (*fatwa*) and conducting lessons on Islam, all based on their radicalized beliefs.

Conclusion

The monitoring and analysis of jihadist media has shed insight into the organizational structure of jihadist groups such as Al Qaeda, and their affiliates, ideology, goals and future plans in the agenda for global jihad, and continued monitoring will shed further light. The study of jihadist media gives a glimpse into how these groups function, which are otherwise shrouded in mystery. The understanding gained has contributed to the development of strategies and counter narrative to overcome this challenge. The continued utilization of these sites will facilitate intelligence collection in terror and criminal investigations and counterterrorism operations in the future. Thus, state authorities, while blocking sites which incite violence directly, should not ignore the monitoring of these forums and chat rooms for respect of civil

liberties, for it is in the pursuit to protect civilian life that online monitoring is conducted.

Just before he was killed, Sameer Khan, as one who revolutionized jihadist media, stated that the present leadership in the jihadist movement understands the importance of media in modern warfare and the need to use it as an important tool in jihad. He said that a forceful media release is equal to an operation because of its impact, and that the success of the media is measured by the spread of hatred towards the US among Muslims. He boasted that even though there are a number of mainstream media outlets, like *Al Jazeera*, *CNN*, *BBC* and *Fox News*, the US is beginning to lose the battle on the media front. Sameer attributed the success of the jihadist media to factors such as hard work, technical know-how, superior production, continuous availability on the internet and failure of the US to respond promptly. The speed of production of the contents in the jihadist media matches that of international media houses. The content itself has been attractive, which include details of an operation from the planning stage to its completion, which has increased the credibility and popularity to jihadist media in the eyes of their supporters. Thus, to support national counterterrorism initiatives, it is apparent that a cooperative and responsible transnational monitoring mechanism should be developed involving all the international community, in order to counter the transnational nature and media reach of terrorist organizations at present.

Encouragingly, the US and Turkey are creating the Global Fund for Community Engagement and Resilience (GFCER) to stem extremism. The US \$200 million fund aims to undercut the ideological and recruiting appeal of jihadists in places like Somalia, Yemen and Pakistan. This article advocates the creation of a “Global Centre for Research and Monitoring on Terrorism and Jihadist Social Media” under GFCER, which would be helpful for counterterrorism operations and intelligence worldwide as well as in countering the terror rhetoric and terrorist radicalization strategies propagated internationally through online media and social network sites.

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Takfir in Indonesia: Analysing the Ideology of Saiful Anam

Zulkifli Mohamed Sultan

Radical ideology involves the demonization of mainstream society through false allegations; that “the other” is on the wrong path, while the terrorists or extremists represent justice and truth. In this regard a book written by Saiful Anam, a.k.a Mujadid, a.k.a. Brekele, a top Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) militant, warrants attention. In his book, ‘Hukum Anshor At Thaghut’ (“Legal Rulings for Supporting the Transgressors of Boundaries”), Saiful Anam proclaims that all personnel working in the Indonesian national armed forces, Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI), and the Indonesian national police, Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia (POLRI), are “kafir” or “infidels” for their allegiance to the Indonesian government.

The Issue of *Takfir*

Saiful Anam, a key figure belonging to Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) was sentenced to 18 years of imprisonment in 2007 for his involvement in the Tentena market bombings in May 2005 in Poso, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, which killed 22 people and injured more than 50 people. While serving his prison sentence, he wrote *Hukum Anshor At Thagut* (“Legal Rulings for Supporting the Transgressors of Boundaries”) which was published in April 2013.

Termed *takfir*, the practice of one Muslim declaring another Muslim a *kafir*, an infidel, an unbeliever, is a very grave allegation and an act that has serious implications for both. The accused, once judged an infidel, is considered to be denounced from Islam. On the other hand, if the accusation is untrue, the judgement will be placed on the accuser instead. As mentioned in a *hadith* (statement made by the Prophet Muhammad), “Whoever calls a man a

kafir (infidel) or said ‘O, enemy of Allah,’ when he is not one, [the accusation] will rebound to him.” Religious scholars therefore, constantly warn of the repercussions and the damage *takfir* can cause, and are always cautious when dealing with this issue.

Thus, most *ulama*’ (religious scholars) refrain from engaging in the act of *takfir* and many try to avoid it completely for fear of the repercussions as declared by the Prophet. There is thus a need for the Islamic authority at least, within the Islamic legal system, to look into such an issue. As *kufr* (“infidelity”) is a very serious matter in Islam, the community needs to be educated on its true meaning and how to identify acts of *kufr*. It is the responsibility of the Islamic authority to admonish an individual who commits acts of *kufr*, and then try to lead the individual back to the mainstream. The religious authority could pass judgement or a *fatwa* declaring an individual as a *kafir* if he fails to listen to the counselling.

Though designation of an individual or an entity as engaging in *kufr* is a religious practice conducted by a religious authority, the radicals and extremists have hijacked both the concept and the practice of

takfir to indiscriminately denounce their enemies, so as to attract attention and possibly recruit from a pool of sympathizers. In this perspective, it is useful to analyse how Saiful Anam used the concept and the practice to denounce the Indonesian national armed forces (TNI) and Indonesian national police (POLRI) personnel to be infidels. The precedent to this is set by the fact that some of the terrorist and extremist groups in Indonesia hold the view that the individuals in the

seats of power in the Indonesian government are or have become infidels.

Thus, in his book, Saiful Anam alleges that every officer of TNI and POLRI, from the highest rank to the lowest, is an ally of the “infidel government,” who renders his or her service by following the government’s “infidel rules” and achieving its “infidel goals.” They are deemed guilty of “infidelity” by association. Saiful Anam seems to claim a true understanding of Allah’s Laws and that he is seeking to implement them.

More specifically, Saiful Anam states that (as translated from Bahasa Indonesia):

- All personnel of TNI/POLRI are transgressors of boundaries (*anshor at-thaghut*) supporters.
- All personnel of TNI/POLRI formed the many causers of infidelity (*kufr*).
- All personnel of TNI/POLRI are to be fought according

“As mentioned in a hadith, “Whoever calls a man a *kafir* (infidel) or said ‘O, enemy of Allah,’ when he is not one, [the accusation] will rebound to him.”

to the nature of warfare, without having to examine whether or not they fulfilled the conditions (of being fought) and without having to ask them to repent, as they are a group of apostates under the leadership of an apostate government.

All personnel of the TNI/ POLRI from the lowest rank to the highest rank are infidels (*kafir*), polytheists, pagans, apostates by name and law, inwardly and outwardly, in this world and in the hereafter.

It is allowed for anyone who has the ability to perform and carry out the legal consequences of their disbelief and apostasy, without needing to look at it except the benefits and harms which may arise from the impact of its implementation.

Islam vis-a-vis Saiful Anam's Ideology

There are two dimensions to the perversion of Islam in Saiful Anam's version; the inability to generalise *kufur* or "infidelity" and the lack of distinction between "clear" and "hidden" allegiance to infidelity.

Generalizing *Kufur* or "Infidelity"

An individual cannot make a general declaration denouncing a person or an entity as a *kafir* or infidel under the rule of any government that he perceives to be not ruling according to his own version of *Shariah*. More significantly, under Islam, *kufur* or "infidelity" exists in a person's heart, the intentions of which nobody knows except Allah. Thus, Muslims, including religious leaders, need to be very cautious in umpiring on issues associated with the heart and judge matters that are certain

and not those without definite knowledge: "Pursue not that of which you have no knowledge..." (The Quran, 17:36); "O you who believe! Avoid suspicion as much [as possible]." (The Quran, 49:12).

Designation of a person as *kafir* simply cannot be generalized, and can only be determined by the intentions of the concerned individual. Outward acts alone cannot validate the *takfir* designation, except when there is unquestionable evidence (*dalil*) to support it. General loyalty to, or association with the state, does not render an individual a *kafir*, as faith is a personal experience that cannot be judged based on suspicion or assumption according to the Quran, as described above.

Moreover, government officers differ in rank and authority. Some hold greater authority and may have the ability to influence the formulation of government policies, while others are compelled to follow those policies by order of duty. Also, certain officers, such as some from the police, actively promote justice by dealing with wrongdoing in accordance with the law of the land. According to Islam, everyone should be fully responsible in carrying out his or her daily tasks, and as much as possible, adhere to *Shariah* in the course of establishing justice and order. As Prophet Muhammad has said, "Anyone among you, who witness vice, should change it with his hand. If he

“...under Islam, *kufur* or “infidelity” exists in a person’s heart, the intentions of which nobody knows except Allah.”

is not able to so, then with his tongue, if he is not able to so, then with his heart, and that is the weakest of faith.” Thus, an act of justice done with one’s hands, as may be done by law enforcement officers, acquires the highest of Allah’s blessings.

“Clear and Hidden Allegiance”

As explained by *Al-Gamaah and Al-Islamiyah* of Egypt in their book titled *Forbidding Extremism in*



Figure 1 - Saiful Anam, a.k.a Mujadid, a.k.a Brekele (dressed in white)

Photo by Zulkarnain; Image source: <http://store.tempo.co/foto/detail/P2809200700154/syaiful-anam-alias-brekele-alias-mujadid-alias-idris>

Religion and the Use of Takfir against Muslims, allegiance towards even an “infidel government” can be “hidden” or “clear.” Hidden allegiance is when loyalty and faithfulness (or disloyalty and unfaithfulness towards Islam) is given completely with the heart and soul. This has been clearly exemplified by the case of the *munafiqin* or “hypocrites” during the days of Prophet Muhammad, who secretly and continuously conspired with the infidels against Muslims. There were undeniable evidences of their hatred for Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims. Hidden allegiance would thus constitute the betrayal of Islam.

“Clear allegiance” is when loyalty and faithfulness is given only to rules pertaining to worldly affairs, but one’s faith in Allah and in the religion are not affected. This is validated by an episode involving a companion of Prophet Muhammad, Alhatib ibn Abi Baltaáh. Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir, in his Quranic exegesis wrote that the circumstances for revelation of the *Surah Al-Mumtahanah* (chapter “The Woman to be Examined”) in the Quran, revolve around the story of Alhatib who was one of those who migrated from Mecca to profess his faith in other lands, leaving behind some of his family members. While he participated in the battle of Badr which took place in the Hejaz region of western Arabia (present-day Saudi Arabia) against the Meccan infidels and continued to strive alongside Prophet Muhammad, his sensitivity towards his family in Mecca led him to secretly send some confidential information on the plan to attack Mecca to his family members. His action was revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad, who caught hold of Alhatib’s letter. When questioned, Alhatib replied, “O Prophet, I was once one of them, but now I am not. But I do have family members within them and I just want to caution them of the dangers ahead so they can protect themselves. I am not doing this because I have abandoned my faith nor am I pleased with their infidelity.” Prophet Muhammad believed and accepted Alhatib’s explanation, which was a case of “clear allegiance.” The story of Alhatib helps to differentiate between giving allegiance to infidels in worldly affairs versus in religious affairs, his being

the former. Imam Al-Qurtubi supports this in his book, *Al-Jami' Li Ahkam Al-Qur'an (The Compendium of Legal Rulings of the Qur'an)*: "One who exposes secret information of the Muslims to the enemies cannot be deemed as an infidel if his intent of this was worldly purpose, while his heart remains rooted to the faith. Such is the case of Alhatib who did extend his assistance to the infidels but never intended to denounce his faith in doing so."

In light of the above, the designation of *takfir* made against those serving in the government bodies and organizations in Indonesia, including its military and police forces, is manifestly unwarranted.



Figure 2 - Members of TNI and POLRI working together to combat terrorism

Photo by Andri Haryanto; image source: <http://news.detik.com/bandungreadfoto/2009/05/27/190806/1138259/501/4/>

In the context of Indonesia, the members of the armed and police forces can be categorized into any of the following categories:

- Those who work to benefit from worldly gains and but whose jobs do not violate *Shariah*;
- Those who do not have the authority to

execute absolute justice in their workplaces, but their presence helps to minimize injustices against Muslims;

Those whose work involves injustice and corruption but while doing so, never intend to dispute the *Shariah* nor prioritize infidelity above their faith;

Those who clearly support infidelity and bear hatred against Islam, and constantly cause injustices towards Muslims.

TNI and POLRI officers (and of course any other Indonesian) may fall into any of the above four (or other) categories, and it is therefore impossible to generalize infidelity by decreeing it upon all the officers. Since the issue of *takfir*, is a delicate one, it is utterly exploited by extremists in the advancement of their radical ideologies. Thus, it behoves upon the mainstream Muslim scholars and clerics to ensure that the act of *akfir* should be exercised with severe caution and done only within an Islamic judicial system.

Implications for Counterterrorism

Since late 2010, terrorist and extremist organizations in Indonesia have changed their targets from Western interests and visitors to the Indonesian army and police personnel. This transformation in terrorist strategy has posed a formidable challenge to the Indonesian government in its efforts to crack down on terrorist activities in the country. The number of self-radicalized individuals with potential to engage in violence is also rising in Indonesia. The growing

presence of radical Islamic scholars who engage in hate speech and profess an extremist and narrow understanding of Islam with strong support from their followers, compounds the threat. The consequence of radical propaganda, such as the book written by Saiful Anam, in terms of an increase in hostility and violence towards the Indonesian government, cannot be underestimated.

Moreover, the sweeping and forceful views as expressed by Saiful Anam could sway the belief of individuals with less educational attainment, especially those who have little knowledge of Islam and belong to vulnerable socio-economic segments. Thus, Indonesian authorities must and without further delay, ensure that those convicted of terrorism are not in a position to propagate radical or perverted ideology, especially while serving a prison sentence. From a religious perspective, more attention should be on those who misappropriate the authority to sit in judgement of religious issues such as determining who is a *kafir*. These entities may not formally belong to a terrorist or extremist group, which camouflages their presence and also complicates counterterrorism or counter-extremism measures to be taken by the Indonesian government.

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Wasatiyyah as Explained by Prof. Muhammad Kamal Hassan: Justice, Excellence and Balance

Muhammad Haniff Hassan

The post-9/11 era has catapulted the issue of ‘wasatiyyah’ or moderation in Islam, among others, as an important research subject with two key objectives: (1) to correct the image of Islam that has been tarnished by extremism, and (2) to overcome the spread of extremism among the Muslims of the world. Prof. Kamal Hassan’s research calls to be revisited in this regard as it offers a valuable conceptualization on the meaning of wasatiyyah, especially as presented in his address at the Second International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience in Singapore (26-27 March, 2013). He speaks of justice, excellence, goodness and balance as well as other Islamic values as attributes of ‘wasatiyyah,’ which is commonly, translated rather simplistically as “moderation.”



Figure 1 – Prof. Kamal Hassan

Image source:

Malaysian Institute for Translations (ITBM),

http://www.itbm.com.my/images/uploads/DSC_0473_1.JPG

Introduction

Many measures have been taken in various countries for the study and promotion of moderate Islam or *wasatiyyah*. It is instructive to review some selected noteworthy contributions made in this regard.

A book entitled *Moderation in Islam in the Context of Muslim Community in Singapore* was published in 2004 by the Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association for the purpose of clarifying the meaning of moderation in Islam and guiding the Muslim community towards it, as a result of significant events such as the 9/11 attacks, the arrest of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) elements in Singapore and the consequent non-Muslim reactions to both incidents.

Al-Qaradhawi Centre for Islamic Moderation and Renewal was established in Qatar in 2008 under the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies with the mission of dedicating itself to research and the promotion of moderation and the renewal of the Islamic spirit and intellectualism for the purpose of combating extremism and promoting inter-faith/culture dialogue. The International Centre for Moderation of Kuwait, a government linked institution under the Ministry of Islamic Endowments and Affairs, was established, also for the purpose of research and training on the promotion of moderation and combating extremism.

The Moderation Assembly for Thought and Culture was established under the patronage of the King of Jordan and the Royal Academy of Jordan as an outcome of a conference held in 2004 and 2006. In Malaysia, the Wasatiyyah Institute was established in 2005 and the Global Movement of Moderates was introduced in 2010 by its Prime Minister, Mohamad Najib Abdul Razak for the purpose of promoting moderation at the local and international level respectively.

In addition to the idea of moderation, these initiatives themselves have become a subject of interest and attention for those who are interested in the study. One of the important questions often asked is: What does moderation/*wasatiyyah* really mean? Like many ideas and concepts, the answer to the question is not monolithic even among Muslim scholars. However, this should not be the reason for one not to explore its meaning in order to provide a coherent understanding that would be useful in guiding the society at large.

Prof. Kamal Hassan's Research on Moderation

Prof. Kamal Hassan's research on the meaning of moderation is very valuable as it seeks to present a complete conceptualization of the meaning of moderation. Prof. Hassan is an eminent intellectual in Islamic Studies in Malaysia, specializing in Contemporary Islamic Thought, particularly pertaining to the Southeast Asia region. He was the rector of the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) from 1999 to 2006.

In 2013, Prof. Hassan presented his idea of moderation/ *wasatiyyah* at the Second International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience in Singapore (26-27 March, 2013). He explained the concept of moderation using a graphic representation (see Figure 2) which was profound, yet clear to understand, unlike the usually heavy and convoluted academic works on the subject.

First and foremost according to Prof. Hassan, moderation as an Islamic concept must be

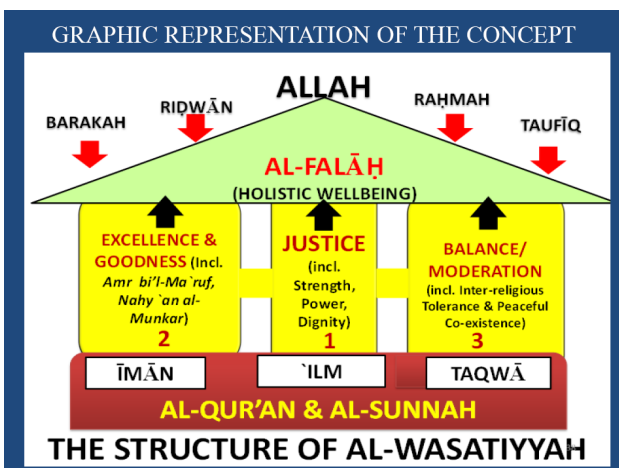


Figure 2 – Prof. Kamal Hassan’s Graphical Representation of the Concept of Wasatiyyah

Image source: Prof. Kamal Hassan’s slide presentation in the Second International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience in Singapore (26-27 March, 2013)

grounded on Islam’s two primary sources: the Quran and the Sunnah (the Prophet’s tradition). Based on these two primary sources, Prof. Hassan premised the concept of *wasatiyyah* on three key values of Islam: (1) *iman* (belief), (2) *ilm* (knowledge) and (3) *taqwa* (compliance to divine guidance). Prof. Hassan does not elaborate much

on these three values. However, it can be safely deduced that, by *iman*, he primarily refers to belief in Allah as the only God (monotheism) and Muhammad as His final Messenger. This is a standard belief held by every Muslim and there is no reason to believe that Prof. Hassan is different in this regard.

It is also not difficult to understand the reason why he positions knowledge as the foundation for *wasatiyyah*. The importance of knowledge in Islam - and thus, its position as one of the key foundations for such an important concept in Islam as *wasatiyyah* - can be easily deduced from the fact that it was mentioned together with the issue of belief in “Allahin,” the first revelation to Muhammad (96:1-5). Furthermore, knowledge presupposes everything in Islam. One can never believe in the true God without knowledge; what more to uphold the concept of *wasatiyyah*.

As of *taqwa*, its importance and centrality in Islam is also an undisputed issue among scholars. Thus, it is understandable that Prof. Hassan does not elaborate on this too. What is more important, from Prof. Hassan’s illustration, is his conception that *wasatiyyah* is not the only concept from which everything in Islam is built upon, despite its importance and centrality. This has important implications:

to be moderate or to practice *wasatiyyah* is important but it must not be at the expense of the more important pillars of Islam;

a Muslim's understanding and practice of religion must be shaped by the right understanding of *wasatiyyah* but that understanding itself is not free from any intellectual and conceptual bindings;

wasatiyyah or moderation cannot be pursued at all costs or interpreted without binding parameters.

Based on this, it should be deduced that the meaning of the word *wasatiyyah* itself must be based primarily on what these two sources say about moderation and being moderate, and not just based on superficial philosophical thinking or the perceptions of Muslim laypersons. Here, the key

reference point from the Quran is the verse, "And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way (*ummatan wasatan*), so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you....." (The Quran, 2:143). The key word that becomes the reference for all scholars on this issue is the Quranic expression "*ummatan wasatan*" from which the term *wasatiyyah* emerged. Both, the expression and the term, were generally translated as "a moderate nation" and "moderation" respectively.

“A Muslim’s understanding and practice of religion must be shaped by the right understanding of *wasatiyyah*.”

However, Prof. Hassan has reservations about the close association between *wasatiyyah* and moderation. Similarly, he is also not inclined to interpret *wasatiyyah* as merely wholesale manifestations of “non-violence” or “non-radical” or “non-militant” as often used by political leaders in Western as well as in Muslim countries. To him, *wasatiyyah* is more than just moderation, non-violence, non-radicalness and non-militancy.

Prof. Hassan's is of the view that, based on his review of the Quran, the Sunnah which speaks of the same topic and the works of Muslim scholars, the meaning of *wasatiyyah* must encompass three key attributes or pillars: (1) justice, (2) excellence and (3) balance /moderation.

The attribute of justice is based on a Sunnah that was reported by Ahmad on the authority of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudari that the Prophet interpreted the word "*wasat*" in 2:143 to mean "justice" (*al-'adl*). Although "justice" connotes "balance," "equilibrium" or "moderation" that is similar to the third attribute, it appears, according to Prof. Hassan, to mean more than that and thus deserves to be a separate attribute. "Justice" requires an objective mind that is not swayed by emotions, biases or prejudice that would favour any of the disputing sides in making judgments, decisions or solving disputes. This is supported by

the meaning derived from the word found in another verse of the Quran that has the same root with *wasat* (2:143), "Said one of them (*awsat-u-hum*): 'Did I not say to you, Why not glorify [Allah]?" The word *awsat* in the verse, according to Prof. Hassan, has been interpreted by many commentators of the Quran to mean "the most just (*a`dal*) amongst them."

The basis for incorporating excellence into the meaning of *wasatiyyah* is due to its usage in the Arabic language and a *Sunnah*. Prof. Hassan pointed to the fact that Arabs understand the word *wasat* (from which *wasatiyyah* is derived) to mean "the best" or "excellence" too. This can be understood from the term *Awsat Al-`Arab* to describe the Quraisy tribe to which the Prophet belongs. The term means "the best" or "noblest" tribe among Arabs. A similar point can be found also in a *Sunnah* which reports that the Prophet was the *wasat* among his people, which scholars have interpreted to mean "the noblest among his people genealogically."

The relevance of the third attribute of "balance"/"moderation" is not an issue for debate, for it has been widely accepted and used by Arabs in the past, and continues today. In fact, it is the most

explicit meaning that one can derive from the word *wasat*, which explains its popularity and prominence. However, its popular and prominent use also masks the other two attributes that are essential and important for the right understanding and practice of *wasatiyyah*. Prof. Hassan observes that the qualities of justice and goodness/excellence are being neglected, sidelined or forgotten due to the over-emphasis on moderation.

Not only that, he also observes certain skewed understandings of moderation that require correction, for they cannot be said to represent *wasatiyyah* which incorporates all three attributes. The first misunderstanding and that he warned against, which is popular among the political elites, is *wasatiyyah* as "justification for indulgence (*tasahul*), carelessness or an excuse to be negligent in the performance of religious obligations" or in other words, the non-practicing of Islamic obligations for the sake of being "moderate."

To Prof. Hassan, moderation is not a stand-alone principle or one that needs to be attained at all costs. *Wasatiyyah* is defined with the Quran and *Sunnah* being its overall underlying foundation, as illustrated in the graphical representation (Figure 2). There is no moderation, if there is no justice, and there is no justice by transgressing the

“There is no moderation, if there is no justice, and there is no justice by transgressing the definitive injunctions of the Quran and Sunnah.”

definitive injunctions of the Quran and Sunnah. If not, “moderation could be understood as a license or permission...to be lax in the performance of religious duties.”

Moderation is also not about being in the supposed median of everything to the extent that it justifies being average or mediocre, as understood by many ordinary Muslims. Prof. Hassan asserts that Islam enjoins the value of excellence and hard

work and makes these central to its teachings. Thus, mediocrity and being contented with an average achievement is against the teaching of Islam, and is not moderation. Moderation is the assumption of a middle position in between two forbidden extremes often defined by Muslim scholars as the modes of excessiveness (*ifrat*) and laxity (*tafrit*). It is in this

regard that moderation is a just, excellent and balanced concept. This is a far cry from the common understanding of being in the middle of two goods or assuming a middle ground between a worst condition and an excellent one, when excellence should be the rational choice of a righteous Muslim. Moderation is striving to uphold all that is good and commanded in Islam and to achieve excellence (*ihsan*) in everything.

“Moderation is the assumption of a middle position in between two forbidden extremes often defined by Muslim scholars as the modes of excessiveness (*ifrat*) and laxity (*tafrit*).”

Prof. Hassan highlights that the Quran in 2:143 relates *wasatiyyah* with “witnessing unto mankind.” The latter implies divine injunction upon a Muslim to be the example and standard for human civilization as a manifestation of being *rahmah li al-`alamin* (“mercy to the universe”) as in 21:107 and *khayr ummah* (“the best nation,” as in the verse in the succeeding paragraph). Thus, “to fulfil this key “civilizational witnessing” and leadership mission,

the Muslim community has to strive for comprehensive excellence in religious and worldly sciences, in the spirit of absolute and uncompromising monotheism (*Tauhid*), fulfilling the Divine Trust (*Amanah*) [and] performance of comprehensive worship of Allah (*Ibadah*)...”.

One important aspect of Prof. Hassan’s conception of *wasatiyyah* is the twinning of the concept with the concept of *khayr ummah* as stated in the Quran, “You are indeed

the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind: you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and you believe in God. Now if the followers of earlier revelation had attained to [this kind of] faith, it would have been for their own good; [but only few] among them are believers, while most of them are iniquitous.” (The Quran,

3:110). These are two inseparable sides of being Muslim (see Figure 3). The *khayr ummah* concept affirms the excellence attribute of *wasatiyyah* and, in addition, entails its important role to mankind – to enjoin all that is good/right and prohibit all that is bad/wrong.

In Prof. Hassan’s mind, there is no *wasatiyyah* or



Figure 3 – The Quranic meaning and the connotations of Wasatiyyah

Image source: Prof. Kamal Hassan’s slide presentation in the Second International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience in Singapore (26-27 March, 2013)

“civilizational witnessing” without Muslims playing this role. In fact, he warns, “It should be remembered that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) had warned that dire consequence would befall Muslim communities who fail to fulfil or neglect” this obligation.

From the above illustration, Prof. Hassan lists a few tangible manifestations of *wasatiyyah*:

Amr bi al-makruf and nahy `an al-munkar (“to enjoin all that is good/right and prohibit all that is bad/wrong”) as mentioned above,

Possession of power and strength because justice

cannot be realized without them,

Tolerance and peaceful co-existence with other religions and cultures,

Dignity as a result of the three attributes of *wasatiyyah*.

By the above, Muslims attain a holistic well-being (*al-falah*) which qualifies them for blessing (*barakah*), pleasure (*ridwan*), mercy (*rahmah*) and success (*taufiq*) from Allah.

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The Teacher-Student Approach to Religious Rehabilitation

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Muhammad Saiful Alam Shah Bin Sudiman
Zulkifli Mohamed Sultan**

The teacher-student approach of the education discipline is used in the religious rehabilitation programs for radicalized individuals in Singapore. Concepts such as “functioning knowledge,” the “deep approach to learning” and “constructive alignment” can be used to describe methodologies that are being used in religious rehabilitation in relation to Islamist ideologies, to cultivate a higher level of learning within the cognitive domain.

Religious rehabilitation programs are generally directed at countering the radicalization of individuals with the aim of reintegrating them back to society. Also known as deradicalization programs, these initiatives seek to reverse the viewpoints of individuals who are wholly or partially radicalized. Radicalization, in the context of extremism and terrorism, occurs when groups or individuals come to accept the use of violent means to mitigate certain grievances and/or change the status quo in favour of an alternative system which they perceive or believe to be more acceptable. Thus, the focus of deradicalization programs in relation to Islamist ideologies is to remove the negatively imbibed ideologies from the minds of radicalized individuals, and then introduce a positive understanding of mainstream religious concepts through religious counselling.

Religious counselling in the context of Islam, involves attempts to familiarize the radicalized individuals with the Islamic intellectual heritage, which is far greater in scope than the narrow radical ideology they have been exposed to. Deradicalization programs are meant to induce changes in the radicalized individuals in three different domains, namely the cognitive, affective and behavioural. The challenge, however, is to ensure that religious rehabilitation programs successfully wean these individuals from the radical worldview. Religious rehabilitation programs must also ensure that the individuals that have gone through these programs will be able to interact well with other members of society, especially those that they had previously been hostile towards, and ultimately integrate them with the broader community.

To meet these goals, religious rehabilitation programs activate higher cognitive levels through established educational concepts such as “deep learning” and “constructive alignment.” However, it

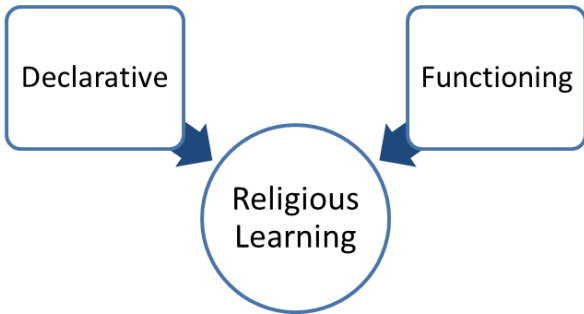


Figure 1 – The two types of learning/ knowledge: declarative (surface) and functioning (deep)

should be noted that cognitive, affective and behavioural changes in an individual are interrelated. Religious rehabilitation programs adopt a teacher-student approach, where the counsellor plays the role of the teacher, and the

teacher. Thus, the following terms will be used interchangeably in this article: religious counsellor also referred to as a teacher, a radicalized individual also referred to as a student, and a religious counselling session also referred to as a religious learning session. In taking a teacher-student approach to rehabilitation, two key aspects are focussed upon: how the student learns and how a religious learning session supports his or her learning.

The Importance of Functioning Knowledge in Religious Rehabilitation Programs

A religious counsellor, taking the role of a teacher, would have a clear goal of what he or she wants the student to learn. This means that the teacher should be able to stipulate how well each topic on Islam needs to be understood by the student on a topic by topic basis. As a teacher, he or she must also be able to make a distinction between “declarative religious knowledge” and “functioning

Levels of Cognitive Complexity

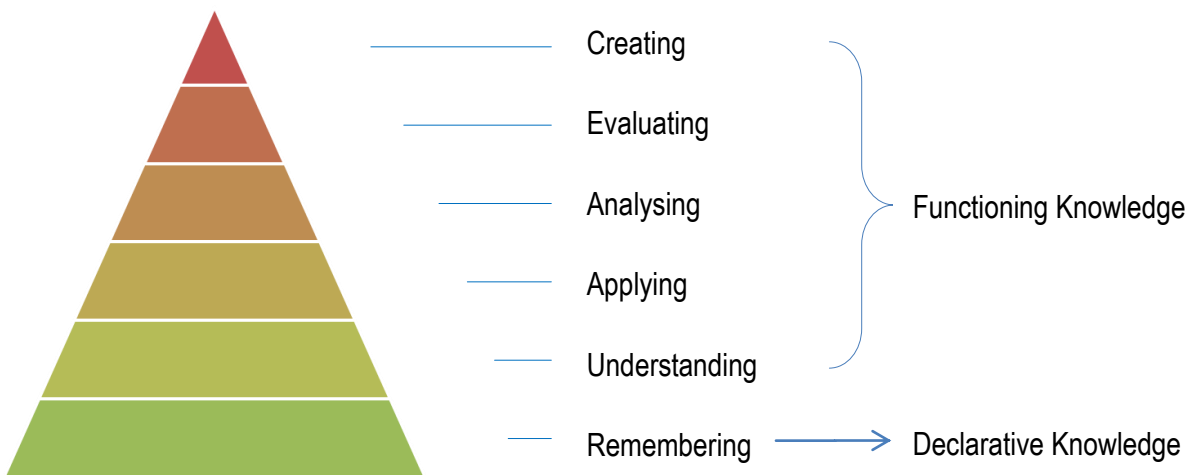


Figure 2 – Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning Domains

radicalized individual, the role of the student. Similarly, a religious counselling session is treated as a student-centred religious learning session, where the focus is on the student’s learning rather than the teaching or counselling imparted by the

religious knowledge,” as described in the article “Aligning Teaching for Constructing Learning” (2003) by John Biggs. Declarative religious knowledge refers to religious knowledge that can be communicated orally or in writing. Religious learning sessions usually attempt to instil declarative religious knowledge in students. While

this may be effective in some cases, limiting the students' learning to declarative religious knowledge in lessons needs to be done selectively, as it is the lowest of the six levels of cognitive complexity in Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating. Learning outcomes at the level of "remembering," means that the student is able to recall or recognise information, ideas and principles in the approximate form in which they were learned.

To gain declarative knowledge means that the student is able to articulate to others the religious knowledge he or she has learned. It also means that the student is able to express in his or her own words what the teacher has recently been teaching about religion. However, lessons based on imparting declarative knowledge do not stimulate the student to achieve a higher level of learning where the student can apply the religious knowledge gained to think critically about religion or deepen his or her understanding of the religion independently (of the teacher). Thus, in many religious rehabilitation programs in Singapore, a higher level of learning is achieved though the transferring of functioning knowledge, which allows the student to also understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create based on the knowledge gained.

To stimulate a deep or functioning approach to learning religious knowledge, the student is encouraged to understand fundamental Islamic religious concepts and underlying principles first. This enables the student to relate new religious

ideas as well as life experiences to these concepts. In taking the deep approach to learning religion, the student also checks for evidence and examines the logic of an argument cautiously and critically before reaching a conclusion. Thus, the deep or functioning approach allows the student to not only critically analyse radical religious ideas, but also evaluate these ideas with established Islamic concepts and principles. Functioning knowledge ensures that the student's thinking patterns are changed, allowing him or her to perceive ideas and issues which caused his or her radicalization in perspective. In fact, an individual who has been successfully deradicalized will also

speak and otherwise behave/function within an elevated cognitive domain, indicating also his/her readiness to be reintegrated back to society.

“ ... religious learning sessions should be tailored to suit the way in which a student learns, as a student may respond better to a particular learning style ... ”

Factors which Support Functioning Religious Learning

Functioning religious knowledge is developed in a student when religious learning sessions embrace a "deep approach to learning," where the student is able to ascribe

meaning to the new (religious) knowledge gained. This requires the teacher to guide the student in building personal meaning and "real world" connections to the learned religious knowledge. By doing so, the student will not only remember, understand and apply the religious knowledge gained, but also use it to analyse and evaluate the different life circumstances he or she will face. Learning in this manner provides the student with the ability to comprehend the world by constantly re-applying the religious knowledge he or she has gained during a religious learning session. Thus, the learning outcome of a lesson, and the focus of

learning activities in it, should be to develop in a student the ability to apply religious knowledge gained in the lesson to the real world.

The teacher must also pay close attention to how a student learns most effectively, as the effectiveness of a lesson is judged not by how the teacher delivers the religious content, but rather by how well the student absorbs the content. Thus, religious learning sessions should be tailored to suit the way in which a student learns, as a student

periods.

This is the manner in which the student should be actively involved in religious learning sessions. The deep approach requires that the student is placed in a learning environment that is conducive to remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and building upon the religious knowledge imparted in a lesson.

However, it should be noted that the higher the student's cognitive capacity, the deeper the level of understanding he or she will gain from lessons which impart functioning religious knowledge. As stated previously, the teacher is responsible for setting the stage for effective teaching which encourages active learning in the student. A crucial learning outcome for the teacher to consider is the ability of the students to think critically. If the religious learning sessions are centred only on what the teacher does, it is far more difficult to achieve the intended learning outcomes. There are also other additional "personal transferable skills" for the student to gain among the desired learning outcomes, such as problem-solving skills, communication skills and working cooperatively with others. These additional skills are required to allow religious knowledge and understanding to be used

appropriately and effectively in the student's future interactions and collaboration with others.

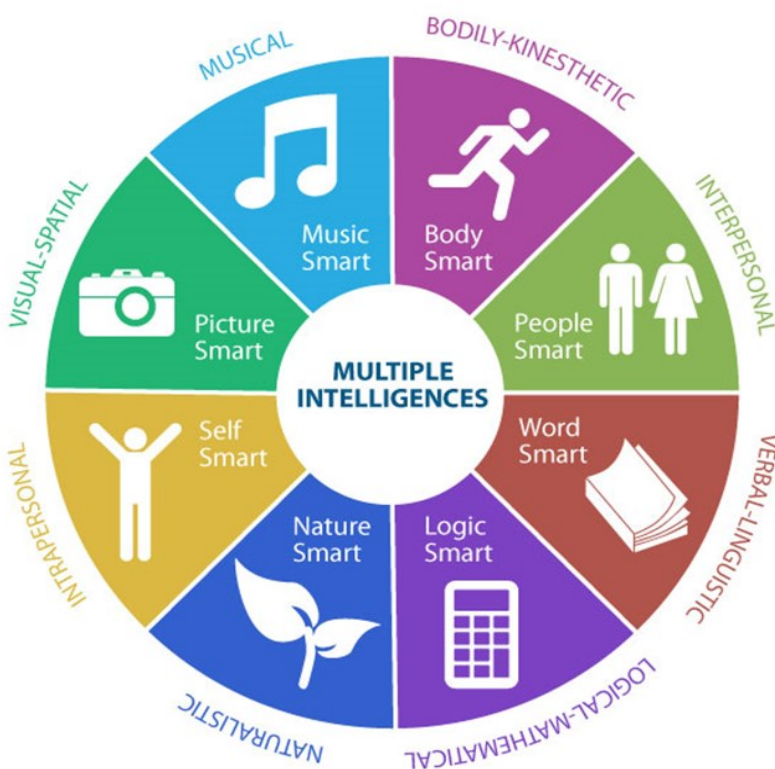


Figure 3 - Different Styles of Learning

Image source: ConnectionsAcademy.com

may respond better to a particular learning style which could be verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal or naturalistic, among others. Effective religious learning sessions will accommodate different learning styles, which adds variety to the learning activities as well as retains the attention of the student for longer

Quality Learning through Constructive Alignment

The deep or functioning approach to learning religious knowledge depends on the teacher's

ability to set an effective learning environment and design lessons that are outcome-based and employ constructive alignment.

Students will not be able to take a deep approach to learning in the absence of a clear alignment between the intended learning outcomes, teaching methods, learning activities and assessments. In the context of religious rehabilitation, constructive alignment is achieved when teaching methods, learning activities and assessments support the ultimate learning outcome of deradicalization. It has proven helpful for the teacher to indicate to the student the desired outcomes of a religious learning a session, including the level of understanding the teacher expects the student to achieve on each topic. The teacher can also assure the student that by fully engaging in the lessons that the teacher has designed, the student is more likely to attain intended learning outcomes. It will also help the teacher to continuously assess the student's progress towards attainment of these outcomes.

In conclusion, successful rehabilitation programs encourage functioning or deep learning of religious knowledge by students. In order for religious learning sessions to support deep learning, the religious counsellor must ensure constructive alignment of lessons where the intended learning outcomes, teaching methods, learning activities and assessments are in agreement with each other. In so doing, the deep approach to religious rehabilitation leads to the cognitive, affective and behavioural transformation required for the

deradicalization of an individual.

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“The deep or functioning approach to learning religious knowledge depends on the teacher’s ability to set an effective learning environment and design lessons that are outcome-based and employ constructive alignment.”

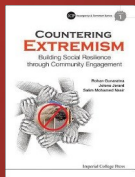


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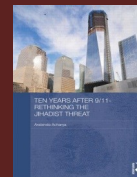
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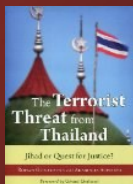
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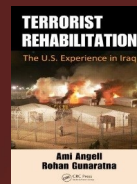
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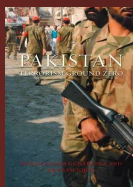
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For further inquiries regarding subscription and access to the Global Pathfinder database, please contact Elena Ho Wei Ling at isewlho@ntu.edu.sg.