

Countering the virulent Islamist ideology espoused by Al Qaeda will reduce current terrorism more than addressing any other cause.

108; 132

General Description of the Literature:

Davis and Jenkins adamantly contend that the principal root cause of contemporary terrorism is the “virulent form of Islam adopted by al Qaeda” (2002, 28). The importance of ideology to the recruitment for and perpetuation of terrorist organizations is well-documented (Byman 2003; Davis and Jenkins 2002; Jenkins 2007; Rana 2008). Thus, for counterterrorism strategies to be successful, they must first address and target this ideology (Carpenter, Levitt, and Jacobson, 2009; Davis and Jenkins 2002). Tibi asserts that moderate Muslims (especially Sufis) can confront malignant forms of extremism by accentuating moments in the Islamic narrative history that highlight secular order (1998). However, Trager and Zagorcheva note that the emphasis placed on virulent ideologies espoused by VEOs such as Al Qaeda make it almost futile to direct deterrence efforts at changing their behaviors. These authors are not arguing that deterrence and counterterror efforts directed at ideology should be abandoned, but that caution should be used in the development of counterterror programs (2005/06). Emerson argues that the United States must counter radical Islamist ideology by fostering relations with partners who oppose it, rather than facilitate it (2008). Rana notes that in certain societies, such as in Pakistan, counterterror efforts directed at shifting extremist ideologies to more moderate ideologies might not be accepted either by the targeted extremists or by the general population supporting these individuals due to the economic, political and cultural environs (2008). However, Blaydes and Rubin argue counseling and rehabilitation programs may help create moderate voices (2008).

Detailed Analyses

108: *Countering the virulent Islamist ideology espoused by Al Qaeda will reduce current terrorism more than addressing any other cause.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Blaydes and Rubin discuss the concept of ideological reorientation, or modifying the extremist ideology so that it coincides with societal norms. Using Egypt as a case study, in which rehabilitation efforts focused on changing ideology through expanding basic and religious education, the authors illustrate how counseling and rehabilitation can be successful in this effort. Aiming to create moderate voices to counteract the effects of extremist ideologies might be more successful than coercion and torture, although causal ordering could not be determined in the study (2008). Granted, the outcome of the Egyptian case study must be considered in a different light after the Arab Spring.

Empirical Support Score: 4 = Single systematic case study supporting the hypothesis.

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Blaydes and Rubin’s case study is directly in the VEO context.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs.

132: *Creating a debate in the VEO milieu by engaging the VEO’s narrative with moderate voices can undermine the VEO’s narrative.*



Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: N/A

Empirical Support Score: 0 = No empirical support (for or against the hypothesis)

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: N/A

Applicability Score: Not Applicable – There is no empirical support in any context.

Bibliography:

- Blaydes, Lisa, and Lawrence Rubin. 2008. "Ideological Reorientation and Counterterrorism: Confronting Militant Islam in Egypt." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20(4): 461-479. doi: 10.1080/09546550802257168.
- Byman, Daniel L. 2003. "Al-Qaeda as an Adversary: Do We Understand Our Enemy?" *World Politics* 56(1): 139-163. doi: 10.1353/wp.2004.0002.
- Carpenter, J. Scott, Matthew Lewitt, and Michael Jacobson. 2009. "Confronting the Ideology of Radical Extremism." *Journal of National Security Law and Policy* 3: 301-327. <http://www.jnslp.com/2010/02/15/confronting-the-ideology-of-radical-extremism/>.
- Davis, Paul K., and Brian Michael Jenkins. 2002. *Deterrence and Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on al Qaeda*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND. http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/2005/MR1619.pdf.
- Emerson, Steven. 2008. "Fighting Global Islamist Ideology the Key to War on Terror." The Investigative Project on Terrorism. <http://www.investigativeproject.org/643/fighting-global-islamist-ideology-the-key-to-war-on-terror>.
- Jenkins, Brian M. 2007. "Building an Army of Believers: Jihadist Radicalization and Recruitment." Paper presented as a testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorist Risk Assessment, April 5.
- Rana, Muhammad A. 2008. "Counter-Ideology: Unanswered Questions and the Case of Pakistan." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2(3): 3-5. <http://terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/29/html>.
- Tibi, Bassam. 2002. *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Ltd.
- Trager, Robert, and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva. 2006. "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done." *International Security* 30(3): 87-123. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/international_security/v030/30.3trager.html.